

# THE CHURCH PLANTER

Fall A Newsletter of Church Planting International 2006

Church Planting International, 9815 E. Gypsy Lane, Bowling Green, OH 43202, (419) 353-7437 email [cpi@wcnet.org](mailto:cpi@wcnet.org)

## Behind the Scenes New Growth in CPI

- By Steven Shepard

In between mission trips I have spent time developing the needed structure to enable CPI's ministry to expand. As a result a number of advancements have been made:

- Enlarged Board of Directors
- CPI Missions Manual and Great Commission Plan
- New full color brochure
- New website: [ChurchPlantingInternational.org](http://ChurchPlantingInternational.org)

### The Story of Church Planting International

Church Planting International grew out of our missionary work in Mexicali, Mexico. I met my wife Christy at theology school in Anaheim, California, and we were married in 1978. During those years we participated in "street evangelism" and in short evangelistic trips to Mexicali, Mexico. I was deeply moved by both the openness of the Mexican people and by the shortage of laborers for God's harvest fields. I also became increasingly grieved by the superficiality of the evangelistic methods then commonly used. Often people were pressed for quick decisions and then forgotten. I began to see that the work of the Great Commission can only be effectively done by local churches that are established in each community. But as I looked around Mexicali in the late 1970s, I found no churches where I felt comfortable sending the people. So much was happening on the short trips. Crowds listened eagerly to the Gospel and many seemed to respond. Yet there was no opportunity for follow-up. I wondered, "What might

*(Continued on page 2)*



### CPI Board of Directors

*(From left to right)*

1. **Glenn McIntyre** (Perrysburg, OH) is a teacher, church elder, and has been a speaker at CPI's pastors' conferences in Lima, Peru.
2. **Dr. Clayton Holmes** (Perrysburg, OH) is the Chair of the Dept. of Physical Therapy at the Health Science campus of the University of Toledo.
3. **Steven Shepard** (Bowling Green, OH) has served as a church planting missionary in Mexicali, Mexico, a pastor in Ohio, and is now the full time director and president of CPI.
4. **Dr. Logan Sparling** (Kokomo, IN) has worked in pastoring and missions since 1968, is the director of Christian Life Ministries International, and works with CPI in the Peru Tribal Project.
5. **Brian Navarette** (Toledo, OH) is a pilot, church deacon, and has been involved in CPI's mission trips to Peru and Mexico.
6. **Gary Ackerman** (Oregon, OH) is a raspberry grower and has been a frequent participant in CPI's mission trips to Tepic, Mexico.
7. **Jeff Palmer** (Bowling Green, OH) is President of DayMark Safety Systems and is active in the support of a Mexican orphanage through CPI.

**"I WILL BUILD MY CHURCH"**

*(Behind the Scenes continued from page 1)*

happen if we could live down here full-time?" So Christy and I moved down to Mexicali in 1982. We had two small children with another one on the way and only \$15 a month pledged in monthly support. I did not realize at the time how reckless or bold my actions appeared to others. I was convinced that there was a great opportunity to reach people for Christ and, as we put God first, He would provide. This is not the ideal way to go to the mission field, but God used our unique experience to build a faith necessary for our calling.

Our goal was to start a church. I worked very hard and tried a lot of things. Yet the work always seemed to be hanging by a thin thread. Often I felt like giving up. Then God showed me that I needed to stop all activities that made the work dependent upon me. The key was to work toward a self-sufficient church dependent entirely on God and led by national leaders. All I can say is that God had mercy and formed a work which is still going strong to this day. During our four and a half years in Mexicali, we saw the supernatural provision of God. He not only provided for our personal needs, but also for the construction of a two building church facility. Many of the people who attended this church were among the poorest of the poor, sometimes living in cardboard shacks or even in the city dump.

In 1985, Doyle Claxton heard me speak at his church in California and offered to start a tax-exempt organization for the support of our ministry. He asked me to write a statement of purpose, give the organization a name, and he would do the rest. Though I barely knew Doyle, we decided to go forward. By the time the organizational work was done in 1986, Christy and I had concluded it was time to return to the States and we moved our growing family to Ohio. Still, I felt that the Lord had a purpose for the organization. During those first few years, my involvement with CPI was only part-time. I worked as a painter and pastored a small church. CPI was used only for our church plant in Toledo, occasional projects, and short-term mission trips. In 1996, I began to devote myself full-time to CPI, and we established our current office in Bowling Green, Ohio. Initially we did mostly short-term mission trips. Interest spread rapidly and soon we were doing numerous trips a year. We could have easily become exclusively a short-term mission trip agency, but I needed to return to my original vision and passion for church planting. CPI continued to work in Mexico and in 1999 expanded to Peru. As of 2006, CPI works with more than 40 native Christians in Mexico and Peru who are laboring in over 30 communities that have little or no Christian witness. We believe that God has given us a biblical message, a clear vision, a comprehensive plan, and sound missionary methods. CPI is now poised to go into the entire world to proclaim the Gospel and to aid in the planting and multiplying of churches wherever God calls.



Shepards in Mexicali about 1983.

**Vision for the Future:  
Where Are We Going?**  
*“Building a global missionary community.”*

- **New mission fields.** Right now CPI works in Mexico and Peru. Our vision is to expand the ministry into many more fields throughout the entire world as the Holy Spirit leads.
- **Co-workers.** CPI has numerous Mexican and Peruvian co-workers, but needs staff and on field missionaries. These co-workers will help us reach out to foreign nationals, proclaim the Gospel, and further the development of the indigenous church in multiplied fields.
- **Leadership training.** Leadership is key to the Great Commission and to church planting. For this reason, CPI’s vision is to establish Church Planter Training Centers in strategic mission fields in order to help equip national workers to reach out to thousands of unreached villages.



Mexicali church in 1986.  
The church is pastored today by Cesar Coronado.

# “I Will Build My Church” –By Steven Shepard

**Matt 16:13-18** When Jesus came into the region of Caesarea Philippi, He asked His disciples, saying, "Who do men say that I, the Son of Man, am?"<sup>14</sup> So they said, "Some say John the Baptist, some Elijah, and others Jeremiah or one of the prophets."<sup>15</sup> He said to them, "But who do you say that I am?"<sup>16</sup> Simon Peter answered and said, "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God."<sup>17</sup> Jesus answered and said to him, "Blessed are you, Simon Bar-Jonah, for flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but My Father who is in heaven."<sup>18</sup> And I also say to you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build My church, and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it.

Through the years in my work as a missionary “church planter” and now as director of CPI, I have sometimes been asked the question, “How do you plant churches?” I like to point people to what Jesus said in Matthew 16:18, **“I will build My church, and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it”**. In the early days of my ministry, I tried to plant churches. I visited many people and tried to talk them into following Jesus and coming to church. Often they would come for awhile, but I would see no real change in their lives. I now understand that the planting of the Church is the supernatural work of Christ alone. No earthly person can plant churches.

Jesus said, “I will build My church”. What is the Church? The Church is Christ’s “ecclesia” or “called out ones”. It consists of the community of all true believers from all places and all times whom Christ redeemed with His blood. Various images are given to us in the New Testament to help us understand the Church. These include the Body of Christ, the building or temple of God, God’s household or family, and the Bride of Christ. Every one of these images points to the same reality of **union with Christ**. In the Church, all of the members are in spiritual union with Jesus Christ. All are partakers of His life. Therefore, man cannot establish the Church by constructing physical buildings, creating legal corporations, or by holding meetings. Christ is the only one who can build His Church. He does this by inwardly calling a people to Himself. Without this call no one would ever come to Him. We were all dead spiritually, enslaved to our old sin natures, and enemies of God - until Christ inwardly draws us and calls us to Himself. Through this calling, Christ reveals Himself to us, gives us the gift of faith, breathes into us His life, changes our hearts, joins us to Himself, and makes us part of His Church.

The Pharisees and Sadducees did not believe even after hearing the preaching of Jesus and witnessing His mighty works. Jesus asked His disciples, “Who do men say that I, the Son of Man am?” They said some thought that Jesus was John the Baptist, some Elijah, and some Jeremiah or another prophet. Then Jesus asked His disciples directly, “But who do **you** say that I am?” In verse 15 Simon Peter gives his answer, “You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.” Peter saw something in Jesus that the Pharisees and the Sadducees did not. He

saw more than a man. Peter saw the Christ, the Messiah - God in human form. But how did Peter know? Was it because Peter was smarter than the others? Was Peter a better person? Jesus answers this question in verse 17, “Flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but My Father who is in heaven.” It took a revelation from God for Peter to know who Jesus is. It is the same for each one of us. Without a revelation from God, no one can understand spiritual things. **(1 Cor 2: 14)** It is through this work of the Spirit that Jesus builds His Church.

Jesus guarantees that He will build His Church. This is a great comfort to me as a missionary “church planter”. I know that **He will do it!** The Church is in fact God’s primary purpose through out world history. When Jesus is finished building it, this world as we know it will end. Time will end. Christ will return both to judge the world and establish His eternal Kingdom. Amazingly, God has chosen to use His people as instruments to fulfill His purpose. To be effective in this task, we must be convinced that the work is all His. Otherwise our confidence will be upon our own methods and abilities. What we build will be a man made imitation. So what is our part? Our part is to believe, worship, pray, preach the pure Gospel, and love one another. As we do these things, Christ will supernaturally build His Church, and when He does “the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it.”

What does this mean “the gates of Hades”? In Jewish thought, the word Hades refers to the realm of the dead. So the “gates of Hades” are the gates of death. Everyone must submit to death, but there was one person that the gates of death could not contain. In Rev 1:18, we read, “I am He who lives, and was dead, and behold, I am alive forevermore. Amen. And I have the keys of Hades and of Death.” Death could not hold Jesus and death cannot hold any person who is in Jesus. What a glorious promise! Christ will build His Church, and the Church that He builds, the gates of Hades, the gates of death shall not prevail against it. Local churches may come and go, but **not one member of Jesus’ Church will ever perish.**

It is only as we are convinced of our victory in Christ that we will be empowered to be the Church that God intended. It is only then that we will be emboldened to rise up and once again shake the world with the Gospel. We have eternal life. Through Christ we are forgiven. We are permanently accepted as sons and daughters of the living God. When we grasp these truths of the Gospel, we will live like the victorious people that we are. We will know who we are and where we are going. We will live boldly and fervently, always advancing the Kingdom of God, always remembering that our time on this earth is short, and knowing that a day of judgment is hastening upon a lost and dying world. Soon, very soon, an eternal day will dawn when as Revelation 21:4 states, “There shall be no more death, nor sorrow, nor crying, there shall be no more pain, for the former things have passed away.”

# CPI's Current Projects

## 1. Solar Audio New Testament

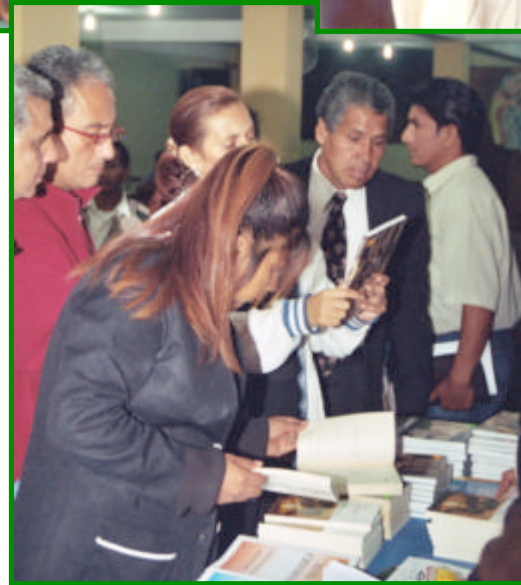
**Outreach:** Record an audio version of the N. Testament in the Huichol language of west central Mexico and distribute 1,000 solar powered listening devices to remote villages.

**2. Peru Tribal Project:** Church planting and leadership training with remote Peruvian jungle tribes in partnership with Bible translators.

**3. Leadership Training Conferences:** Conferences and seminars to provide Biblical and ministerial training for church leaders along with the distribution of quality books and tapes.

**4. Micro-enterprises:** Helping the needy in underdeveloped countries to begin small businesses.

**5. Esperanza Project:** Regular support of the Emmanuel Children's Home in Juarez, Mexico.



## Statement of Faith

- **God** is the Sovereign Creator, Sustainer, and Ruler of the universe. He eternally exists in three personalities: the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.
- **Jesus Christ** is the Son of God and is both fully God and fully man. As our Redeemer, Jesus lived a sinless human life and offered Himself as the perfect sacrifice for our sins by dying on a cross. He arose from the dead after three days demonstrating His power over sin and death. Christ will come again to judge the world in righteousness and reign as King of Kings, and Lord of Lords.
- **The Holy Spirit** is co-equal with the Father and the Son of God and lives in all Christians from the moment of regeneration.
- **The Bible** is God's inspired Word. It is truth without any mixture of error.
- **Human beings**, though made in the spiritual image of God, are born with a sin nature, and within themselves have no ability to please God.
- **Salvation** as God's free gift is received by *faith* alone in Jesus Christ completely apart from any good works or human merit of any kind.
- **Regeneration** is the reception of new spiritual life from God and is necessary for salvation.
- **In Eternity** man will either experience eternal punishment in Hell or eternal life and union with God in Heaven.

*A more detailed statement of faith is available at:*  
[ChurchPlantingInternational.org](http://ChurchPlantingInternational.org)

## CPI's Commitments to Our Donors

### Stewardship

We consider all funds given to CPI as belonging to the Lord and entrusted to us for His exclusive use. We are committed to making the most of every dollar for His purposes.

### Integrity

Communication about CPI's past accomplishments as well as current and future ministries, projects, and fund raising efforts will be truthful and accurate. Funds will be used strictly for the purpose for which they were raised or as designated by the donor.

### Accountability

Information will be provided to donors about projects or programs that they have supported. The staff will willingly speak to those who have concerns and questions about CPI or its ministries. A copy of CPI's financial statements is available upon request.