Planting in Partnership

HJ Nel 8 January 2019



After finishing school, I was not quite sure what to do with my life, and decided to go study law. In 2012, at the end of my first year, God spoke to me while I was packing apples in Israel as a holiday job. At that time, I felt Him call me to serve Him full time – I did not wait. I left my law studies and signed up at Timothy Ministry Training (TMT). By the next year, I joined them for a three- year course and soon fell more in love with Jesus and His Church.

> ...every time a conversation sprung up about churches being planted, there was an excitement in my heart.

At the age of 22, I came onto eldership, and the next thing I knew I was thrown in the deep end, planting a Joshua Generation Church ("JoshGen") congregation in Wellington. This was not something that took me by surprise, however, as I'm reminded of how every time a conversation sprung up about churches being planted, there was an excitement in my heart. I knew that planting a church was something God had for me. As a young TMT student, I always told my friends that I wanted to plant a "Mega Church". In my mind, I always thought that the bigger the church, the healthier it is. In leading a small JoshGen congregation of 60 people, I learned so much that can be summarised in a quotation I read recently: 'Ultimately our goal is much more than creating a large attendance; it's making disciples.' God was faithful and gave me a lot of grace to lead that wonderful congregation.

In early 2018, during a quiet time with God, I heard God saying that we should go and plant a

church in Bloemfontein. I knew this must be God, because after growing up in Bloemfontein, I always said that I wouldn't go back but had always secretly hoped that someone else would plant a Four12 partnering church there. That being said, when God spoke, my heart was filled with faith for Bloemfontein. Suddenly, I started seeing the potential within the city. When I told my wife, she just laughed and said, 'Well, I'll go with you' (marry a wife like that)!

Our hearts were always to be 'team players', though, and we believe that it is vitally important to always be under authority. So we shared this dream with some of the elders around us and agreed that we should give it time. Our hearts were for the church and we laid our future (and even what we felt God say) in our leaders' hands, trusting that they too hear the Lord and that He would release us when it was His time.

> A month later, a strong prophetic word conveyed that we were not going to be in Wellington for much longer

A number of prophetic words followed throughout the year, which we continuously submitted to the local eldership team. One evening I had two dreams, after which I woke up with such a deep sense that God had spoken to me. In the first one, I was busy preaching, and when I looked up, I saw a bunch of familiar faces – of those I lived with in Bloemfontein. In the second one, I phoned my parents (who live in Bloemfontein) and told them that we were moving to Bloemfontein to plant a church. It was as literal as that.

A couple of months later, two ladies prayed for Johanri, my wife, and while praying they felt that God wanted to show her what He had in store for us. As soon as they said that, she received a vision from the Lord of an aerial view of Bloemfontein. Just as she saw the vision, the lady said that she saw us putting our feet on dry desert land, and everywhere we walked, streams of living water burst through (for those that don't know, Bloemfontein is a very arid area in the Free State province of South Africa). The vision Johanri was seeing continued, and she zoomed in to a specific street in Bloemfontein that she remembered from studying there. I was just so excited that God had spoken to her as well.

A month later, a strong prophetic word conveyed that we were not going to be in Wellington for much longer and that we were going to have a geographical shift. Prophetic words were streaming in, and we had such a deep sense that this was God. Still, we held firm to our value of being in team and waited on our leaders to make the call to release us into this new God-venture.

> To be honest, there were often times when we felt that we were too young to plant a

> church, or even be involved in a church plant

After a couple of months, the elders asked Johanri and I whether we still had faith for the church plant in Bloemfontein. We were so excited, as things started to happen quickly. An eldership couple from JoshGen Sunningdale, Konrad & Marjolein Vosloo, relocated to take over from us in Wellington. We stayed on for a month to make sure the congregation transitioned properly. We were blown away by how smooth the transition went, as the saints saw the bigger picture and that the Kingdom was advancing. Over 60 “JoshGenners” from all over Cape Town joined the service in which we were released and sent to plant the church.

To be honest, there were often times when we felt that we were too young to plant a church, or even be involved in a church plant, but I was reminded of a Scripture where Paul writes to Timothy, ‘Don’t let anyone look down on you because you are young, but set an example for the believers in speech, in conduct, in love, in faith, and in purity’ (1 Timothy 4:12). This encouraged me greatly, and these words apply to anyone, regardless of age. Andrew Selley once said that we should be willing and available to ‘Go Anywhere, Anytime’. This should always be our attitude.

Now we are planting a **Four12 partnering church in Bloemfontein**, called **Unity Life Church**. We are so excited for this journey ahead, and we can clearly see how God has prepared our hearts for what He wants to come and do in the city of Bloemfontein.

Follow them on Facebook: facebook.com/unitylifechurch/
Visit their Website: unitylifechurch.co.za/