



EXTENDING A LEGACY OF CHURCH PLANTING

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In 1861,

Rev. William Wiatt pastored both Union and Providence Baptist Churches in Gloucester Point, VA. When the Civil War broke out, a regiment of soldiers from the middle peninsula was formed into the 26th Virginia Infantry Regiment. Along with members of the community and his churches,

Wiatt enlisted as a private and was made chaplain, a position he held throughout the war. During wartime, Wiatt passionately preached biblical sermons and led many soldiers to faith in Christ. As these soldiers returned home, they became the nucleus for the birth of at least three new churches. When Wiatt returned to Gloucester, he helped start six churches, one of which being Petsworth Baptist Church (1881).

Fast-forward to the present day, and Petsworth Baptist Church is a healthy church, reaching its community with the Gospel and averaging 400 in weekly worship. In the past eight years, Petsworth has participated in the partial support of three church plants (in Williamsburg and West Point, VA and in Boston, MA). Once again, the church family is stepping out in faith to co-sponsor yet another new plant with one of its daughter churches, Three Rivers Community Church in West Point.

The newly formed church plant is BridgePoint Church of Gloucester Point. Church planters Eric and Amy Ashley and Daniel and Jennifer Speer came to Virginia from South Carolina, believing God had called them to start this new work. Amy grew up in Gloucester and was baptized as a teenager at Petsworth.

Several of her family members have even joined the launch team that is working to establish BridgePoint. At the time of this article, the team has already led 22 people to faith in Christ and baptized 13.

Petsworth's passion for planting can be attributed, in part, to its former pastor of 14 years, Dr. Dennis Hollandsworth.

Under his leadership, the church sponsored its first three plants. When Hollandsworth resigned in 2010 to become the pastor of Seaford Baptist Church, the church did not wane in its heart for church planting. Its new sponsorship of BridgePoint is evidence!

Continuing with the vision and passion established by Hollandsworth, senior associate pastor David Edgell has taken up the mantle to lead the church to continue its legacy of church planting. "I began talking about the heart and passion of our founding pastor, William Wiatt, and his heart for church planting. I used sermons to cast a vision for great Kingdom work in our community, one of which was 'Planting Seeds of Faith,' where I cast a vision for church planting." Edgell goes on to explain, "Many leaders see [BridgePoint] as an opportunity to have a great Kingdom impact in our community. Our deacons have given support at every step. This has maintained a level of excitement and purpose during the transition, and has given new service opportunities for people in the congregation."

Every church planting sponsorship is unique in its partnership with and provisions for the new church plant. In the case of Petsworth's sponsorship with BridgePoint, the sponsor church has given Eric opportunities to preach so the Petsworth family could get to know him and build a level of trust. Furthermore, they have provided financial support, several months of housing in the church parsonage for the planting team, office and meeting space, office resources, and the use of their facilities.

The church planting legacy of William Wiatt certainly lives on through Petsworth Baptist Church and in the new churches it has sponsored. What legacy will you and your church leave?

Example elements of a church planting sponsorship:

Financial support

Temporary housing for planting team

Use of office space and equipment

Meeting space

Commission members to go out with launch team

Short-term mission teams

Preaching and praise reports from church planter

RESOURCE

Websites:

<http://bridgepoint.cc>

More info on church planting or church sponsorship:

www.sbcv.org/multiplying

More info on William Wiatt:

www.rootsweb.ancestry.com/~vaggsv/spiritual_revival_26th_inf.htm

Social Networks:

Facebook:

www.facebook.com/BridgePointGloucester

Twitter:

www.twitter.com/EMAAshley

Books:

Confederate Chaplain William Edward Wiatt, An Annotated Diary by Alexander Lloyd Wiatt

26th Virginia Infantry by Alexander Lloyd Wiatt

