



## **Fresh Expressions: An Interview with Richard Cox**

Thanks for joining the *Big Church Small Church* podcast. We are continuing our journey on discipleship, church planting, and multiplication! In this episode, we heard today from Richard Cox, who pastors Overflow Church in Altoona, Pennsylvania.

Richard originally felt called to be a missionary overseas, but realized that he could become a missionary in the United States. He discovered there were people who had never heard of Jesus locally. There are second- and third-generation people living in the U.S. who have no connection with a church. They have no relationship with Jesus. This category in the census data is called “nones.” They have no affiliation with a church.

### **Overflow Church**

Altoona census data showed 290,000 people who had no connection to a church. Right from the start, they aimed at being a church that planted other churches around the area to reach with Christ. Multiplication and sending were their expectations right from the start. They launched officially in 2013 after researching and building relationships.

### **Prayer**

Prayer was a key part of reaching people and working with other churches in their city. Richard and the church aimed to support other churches in prayer and viewed them all as on the same team to reach the city. For six years, they were discouraged by the lack of interest from other churches. They just decided to pray every Sunday morning at 6 a.m. Now he has 25 pastors and leaders in the city who pray together.

### **Multiplying Disciples**

When they launched, they were a large launch that aimed to plant another church within two years. Richard realized that the next church planter had to come from within the church rather than relying on the seminary to provide one. Richard needed to disciple the next church planter and teach that person to be a missionary.

Overflow Church is focused on raising up the laypeople within its ranks to be missionaries and church planters. Richard tells his church, “You have to stop telling God ‘no.’ You can tell me ‘no,’ but don’t tell God ‘no.’ Do whatever He says, no matter how crazy it seems. Stop volunteering in our church if it competes with what God is calling

on your life.” When there is an open-handed approach to sending your best church members, God always raises up someone new if you are making disciples. This is why having a discipleship culture is crucial.

Richard points out that it is important to model the lifestyle of Jesus in making disciples. We need to spend time discipling the few, so that they can follow Jesus in obedience. It is following Jesus’ command of the Great Commission to make disciples and to send them as missionaries (Matt. 28). A sending culture creates a legacy where the impact is far greater after one dies.

I want to hear from you! Don’t forget to e-mail your questions, comments, and testimonies at [jonhunter@churchdoctor.org](mailto:jonhunter@churchdoctor.org). Check out [thesendmovement.com](http://thesendmovement.com) to apply for discipleship training for SEND Young Adults (18-29) or SEND+ (29+) or for coaching opportunities.