

1. Steve, you are ramping up with church planting in a tougher place - Colorado Springs. Tell us about your call to that area and why planting there is so important to you and Rebecca - and even the kingdom?

Despite having the reputation of being a Christian “Mecca” (there are 84 Christian ministries headquartered in Colorado Springs!), the population is actually only 16% evangelical Protestant. That makes fundraising, gaining momentum and being accepted in the community all a bit harder. But it also forces us to focus on what we think church planting is really all about, reaching the unreached with the good news of Christ! When you’re tilling rough ground you need to spend much more time cultivating before you plant. For us, that translates to building bridges into the community and connecting with the unchurched through personal relationships.

For Becca and I, we don’t feel like foreign missionaries here - this is home. Becca grew up in the Springs and graduated from the Air Force Academy here in town. We met while serving on Active Duty in the Air Force. Now we’ve been married for over 7 years and have two kids, Lilly (3.5) and Joel (2). We both have a heart for the military because we know what it’s like! Long times of separation (we spent a combined total of 2.5 years of the first 5 years of our marriage apart), deployments (I’ve had struggles of my own with Post-Traumatic Stress so I’ve had to learn how God speaks to that pain through the gospel), having to “uproot” and move every 2-3 years...it’s a real challenge. Divorce rates and suicide rates are much higher in the military as well.

There are over 60,000 military members, veterans, and their families living within a 3-mile radius of our home. In many ways this transient group is unreached and needs a church that understands their particular needs and struggles. Even though it will be hard to welcome people in knowing many of them will move-on only a few years later, we see it as an opportunity to be a “sending church” - one that has a unique opportunity to send out missionaries to places all over the world after they’ve spent a short time with us here.

2. What has been your path toward church planting and what role has RTS Charlotte played in that process?

From having grown up in a non-Christian home and becoming a Christian later in life, God put in me a heart for the lost. Moving around in the Air Force made Becca and me more comfortable starting up new avenues for Christian fellowship. So looking back I can see how God began to prepare us long beforehand through those experiences, and for that we are so grateful.

After leaving the Air Force and coming to RTS we decided to “rule out” church planting as an option by attending an MNA’s Readiness Seminar weekend. We figured we’d check it out, confirm that it wasn’t for us, and let them tell us “no thanks.” Oddly enough, it was during the seminar that we really felt God begin to call us toward church planting! The Lord opened our eyes to how he might meld together entrepreneurial desires and a love for the local church together under one area of ministry.

RTS had just launched the M.Div. emphasis in Church Planting and so I signed up. (I think I might be the first official graduate from that program). In our class “Introduction to Church Planting” we were tasked with developing a plan to plant a hypothetical church. After presenting the idea for an Air Force couple to go to a very unchristian, very Air Force town to plant a church for the military population it became gradually less hypothetical and more real. When I asked Dr. Hawkes what to do next, he recommended we go out to Colorado Springs and start sharing that idea.

3. Where are you in the church planting process now and how can the pastors, students and supporters of RTS pray for you?

We have been blessed with a long runway for launching out here, so there is lots of time for that relationship cultivation I talked about. I’m currently serving as the Assistant Pastor of Discipleship and Outreach at a local PCA church, while Becca and I begin connecting in the part of town to which we feel called. If everything goes to plan, we’ll officially begin a 2-year church-planting residency with the Western Church Planting Network (WPCN) in that fall. The WPCN provides invaluable mentorship and support that will prepare us as we take concrete steps toward launching a new church body in an unreached and rapidly growing part of town.

We’d love prayers that the Lord would introduce us to “people of peace” (those Jesus tells his disciples to look for in Luke 10) who will help to support and encourage us as we follow the Lord’s leading. You can also be praying that we would find those pockets of good soil that Jesus talks about in Luke 8, where the Spirit has been at work preparing hearts for his gospel. We’d also covet prayers for grace and wisdom as we strive to reach a very post-Christian demographic that often harbors very real hurts from the church in their past.

If you want to find out more you can check out <https://churchplantcos.squarespace.com/>

-Steve