

THE CHURCH PLANTING PODCAST

with Greg Nettle



Greg: All right. So everyone, I absolutely delighted to have my friend, Dr. Winfield Bevins on the church planting podcast with us Winfield.

Winfield: Welcome. Hey, it's great to be here with you. Thanks for having me.

Greg: Yeah. Winfield. You're the director of church planting at Asbury seminary. Great seminary, but tell us all, what exactly does that mean? What, what do you do there?

Winfield: Yeah, I mean, in some ways I've. Really an exciting, I, I love what I do. So I work with academic programs. I work with leaders from around the world, so we have degrees, you know, we got traditional degrees, we got a doctor of ministry, church planning. We got master's church planning degrees, and that's all really cool stuff. What I love that I get to do is we do networking and we work with global leaders from around the world. We've had some generous funding for our church planning initiative. Every few years, we host global summits where we gather leaders from around the world. So what's neat about what I get to do is I, I do a lot of work in North America, but a lot of it's global in scope we've worked with helped trained over a thousand leaders in close, probably 30 different nations over the last six, seven years. So that's kind of quick snapshot of kind of the scope of the work that I do. Okay. So

Greg: let's unpack this a little bit because when most of us think seminary we don't think church planting. So, Asbury is kind of unique in that. How, how did that get started? I mean?

Winfield: Yeah, so really it you know, Asbury has a long history of mission and renewal church renewal really started, I would say with our president, Timothy 10 came from Gordon Conwell and you know, Dr. 10 is a, is, is really a world renowned global methodologist. And when he came here as president, he said, two things were kind of were gonna be at the forefront of his presidency. And one of them was a focus on the global church. And then the second was a very strong focus on church planting. The future of the church will be church planting and it will be global. And so those things converge with the work that we're doing here at, as. Theory. And so we launched a center or in the initiative around, you know, I came here around 2015 and it's really been amazing. We've had donors and groups have really come alongside it and have caught the vision. So as a seminary, yeah, I think it, it is very unusual. I don't know of. I, I honestly don't know of any other seminary. That's actually working with the scope of what we're doing, not to brag, but again, we we've moved beyond just traditional you know, training and equipping. We actually have funding. We have fellows positions. We take on 20 plus fellows a year. We coach them. We offer micro grant, you know, funding where we come alongside and actually fund and coach leaders as well. So it's yeah.

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Greg: okay. Okay. Okay. So, so first of all, it's I agree. I think Asbury needs to be lifted up and applauded and celebrated in God's kingdom for and, and I'm grateful that, that you all have a president Dr.10, that actually his vision is global missiology and reaching people around the world, as well as search planting. I, I think we're all blown away by. Now, but I, I still think most church planners that we're working with today at Stadia and, and I think around the world, they're not thinking seminary when they're thinking church planting. So why for all those listening right now, why should they, why should they even look at Asbury?

Winfield: Yeah. I mean, again, you have leaders at different levels of their leadership. So for instance, you know, an ma you know, for, for a lot of actual planners who are getting ready to plant you know, are approached to ma programs it's hybrid, so they can actually learn while they're still kind of have boots on the ground. So in some ways it's an add value to the work that they're doing. So if they're working with a network. They're getting that type training. What a, what graduate education will do will just stretch your thinking. It'll stretch your mind. Our many of our programs are cohort base, so you'll interact with Le other leaders and planters from other traditions. So it'll kind of stretch you in that way. One of my favorite degrees is the doctor of ministry, which really is leaders like you. I mean, these are oftentimes I've, I've recruited. Some of the world's leading church planning, thinkers into the doctor ministry program. So imagine being, you know, talk church planner language, imagine you're doing a learning community right. For three years. Well, why not get a doctorate degree? Yeah, I agree. It's part of that. And so what I love about the doctor ministry program is essentially it's a learning community where you're coming together with other leaders for three years, you're gathering once a year. You know, who you're studying with. So even if there's online components, you're, you know, you're interacting with the same people, it's kind of it's cohort based. Your professors are not just kind of ivory tower academics, but they're actually engaged practitioners, you know, expert practitioners as well. For instance, I teach. I've planted churches. I've helped start networks. You know, I've worked cross denomination and globally, so you're getting those type of learning kind of experiences that you just wouldn't get on your own. And it stretches you beyond your own tradition. And I think that's one of the one of the things that we do offer Asbury has 140 plus denominations students representing, you know, probably 50 plus nationalities. So you're getting kind of a global and interdenominational kind of education that comes with it.

Greg: Okay. So, you know, as you know I'm looking very seriously at your deep men program. I, you know, I value it very highly. I love the cohort idea. But, you know, as church planters and leaders, we're all very busy. How much is online? How much, how many times? I mean, do I have to come to Asbury? Did church planters actually have to come spend time? And, and by the way, where

Winfield: is Asbury? Yeah. So as this is the great thing, Asbury is like in the heart of Kentucky. So we, we have extension sites you know, in different parts of the us, we've got an Orlando site

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there's you know, we have several others at Memphis and some other places, but the, the, the main historic campus is here in Kentucky, 20 minutes from an airport. So it's quick to, you know, you can get here from pretty much anywhere. You. Our, the doctor ministry and master's programs are set up to where they're hybrids. So, you know, the doctor ministry, you actually come once a year for say a week and the rest that's bad is online. It's cohort based. Our master programs are set up to where there's hybrids, where you do some purely online courses, purely online. Some of 'em are in person for a few days. So typically you can come in for a week hybrid where you can kind of put in several classes in one week. And so what, what I like about our hybrid approach, some seminaries have just. Caved in and just are all online. What I love about our program is we believe that there's formation, that happens by being face to face with someone. And so this is kind of the best of all worlds, where you have time together, you know, who your faculty are, you know, who you're studying with, and then there's kind. Online learning that goes alongside it. So you know who you're studying with when you are doing the online pieces. So think in terms of probably committing one, probably one week of face to face whereas you have other kind of online elements that you're able to do. Whatever you're doing. And these are, you know, these are busy, you know, church planners are busy, church planning leaders, like you are busy and again, so it, yeah, there is a sacrificial component to it. You know, there is it's it's real robust education and training. But I would also add one of the things that I love about ASRA is it's a school that has a historic commitment to spiritual formation and to prayer and to seeking the renewal of the church. So there's a real spirit filled discipleship oriented commitment to the education that we offer. Okay.

Greg: So, okay. This is amazing. So, but let me talk about. I mean, church planters notoriously have no money. So we have, so, you know, let's talk about that as well. Let's just be real candid, you know, is this a really expensive program? How, you know, what, how am I gonna pay for this?

Winfield: Yeah. I mean, honestly, we, we have, we've got several incredibly donors. Who have all the cool stuff that I've mentioned that we get to do is because of the generosity of kingdom minded donors that have said, we want to commit to equipping church planners. And we, you know, church planning's hard and church planners are always looking for funding. So all of our degrees, some of the most generous scholarship degrees that we offer are, are our church planning degrees. And so again, what, you know, you can share my contact information. People want, you know, specific information around numbers and scholarships and stuff like that. But we, we have amazing scholarships that we offer the other ad benefit that I would say for those that are planting that. Would say, you know, maybe I do need a degree as we have, again, we have a fellows program where people can apply for the fellows. There's, you know, there's funding that comes with that.

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Greg: Hold on. So for a lot of us, we don't even know what fellows means. Can you explain what, what a fellows?

Winfield: So the fellows program is we, you know, if you apply to be a fellow, you'll be, you'll be a part of a learning community with five other church planners. You'll receive monthly coaching with that group of five, and these are leaders from across the us across traditions. And so you're going on a journey with them for a year. So you get free coaching. You are in community, this group of five, they're praying for you. You know, there's, again, you have a mentor, you know, I do some of the coaching. I've got a handful of other, you know, certified coaches that kind of do this with us as well. And each fellow gets \$5,000. So again, it's just, you apply for it. It's free. You get money. We actually give you , you know, you get free coaching and you, and you get funding as a part of it. So it's really excellent for those that are within the first one to three years of a church plant. And it's again, think add value. This is not replacing, say what Stadia is doing or what a denomination's already doing this. On top of, you know, the, you know, some additional

Greg: yeah. Yeah. So you know, you and I have talked and I, I guess what I would say to everyone right now is you know, Winfield and I have talked real numbers, real dollars, and I would say pretty much anyone can make this happen financially. They, they, the generosity of their scholarships. Is, is incredible. So don't, don't let that be a stopper for you. Just, you know, get ahold of us at Stadia. We can put you in contact with, with Dr. Bevins and Asbury, and we'll have his contact info available on this podcast as well at the end. So we've, I gotta go back to the very beginning of the podcast, because I know every church planner out there heard this word. When you said it, when we asked what do you do and Asbury and, and the word funding. Okay. Outta your mouth. And I know every church planner has been waiting to go, okay. Are they gonna mention that again? And, and you all have had some, I, I mean, I was just kind of blown away by the amount of generosity that people have invested to invest in church planners. Would you mind talking just a little bit about maybe some of the things that are going on with that?

Winfield: Yeah. You mean in terms of funding that we offer or, yeah. Yeah. For, I mean, the church

Greg: planting, there's some crazy stuff that you

Winfield: guys are. Yeah. So again, we have scholarship funding. We have the fellows program where, you know, if you're accepted as a fellow, you get free coaching. There's a \$5,000 kind of grant that you're given to use, whatever, you know, Health insurance website, evangelism, outreach, whatever, you know, whatever's gonna be a blessing. We also have a matching grant fund that we've just launched. And so what this is is for now, this is for alumni. So if you are. At Asbury and you have graduated or are actually in one of our programs, we do have a matching

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grant fund that we are able to offer to come alongside planters that are already getting funding from their denominational network.

Greg: So don't, don't miss that because what that means is if you get in one of the cohorts or networks with, with, with Asbury, with Stadia, cuz Stadia is looking at forming cohorts as well. I know we've talked about doing some Latino cohorts and just, I, I think we have some Stadia staff that are looking at putting cohorts together.

I'm looking at a din cohort, but, but if you're in a, if you're involved in that program and you're a church planter, there's an opportunity for you to gain pretty significant matching grant funding. And I, there, there are things you have to check out, but I'm, I'm telling you. As Barry's doing this. Right. Okay. I'm gonna shift gears just a little bit now. Winfield I mean, you're involved with church planners throughout the us, around the world. What are some things maybe that, that you're excited about? Some things that you're watching some trends right now.

Winfield: Yeah. I think you know, coming out of, you know, the past couple years, I think the, I think there's a stronger emphasis on. Spiritual formation and leadership resilience that may be previous to pandemic and all the pandemonium of the cultural stuff that we're dealing with. I think we're seeing turnover, leadership, burnout, and I think there's an, you know, typically, you know, you know, there's this you know, typically we think of church planners as like the type a. Highly caffeinated, super entrepreneurial, you know, there's that stereotype. And I think there's kind of this fresh openness to say, Hey, you know what? Like, I, yes, I need to, I need to care for my soul. I need to, you know, focus on my family. I need to do the stuff. It's gonna keep me from getting burnout. And I think that's a really healthy thing. That's definitely something that I've been championing and doing research in that area for years and very excited about the openness for church planners. I think one of the things that's emerging, you know, emerging leaders I. One of the things we're seeing is, you know, the, by rise by vocational kind of alternative financial streams the micro church, you know, people are really open to new, fresh expressions of church, which is really exciting. I think. Opening the door for multiethnic leaders that are leading and leading the way in, in terms of what God's doing in the church today. That's very exciting for me to kind of see how kind of,

Greg: let me, let me dive in on that one, because you, as you know Stadia is we're working really hard on kingdom, diversity, racial diversity. So in these cohorts, I, I, I believe Asbury's a big champion of that, right?

Winfield: Yeah. I mean, from the beginning, because we've been global multiethnic a lot of the leaders I'm working with are Afro Latino leaders across the us. Of course, we're working different countries, but in the us, a lot of the stuff I've been doing is with bilingual cohorts. We have a full you know, Spanish speaking program, you know, so we also offer degrees. So maybe there's some

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leaders that are listening to this that are, you know, bilingual or predominantly planting in kind of Spanish congregations. There's a movement we're working with Greg that if you don't know about them, they're the ESE Nepalese church in north America. They were they were refugees from the Bhutan. And we're we're in Nepal for a number of years and came to the us. There's thousands of them. It's one of the fastest growing Christian movements in the planet. Like it's amazing what they're doing. Their president has been through our programs. We've had a number of their key leaders have been through our masters and, and, and are now in our Dr. Ministry programs. So we've partnered with them. And so that's just one example of a movement here in the, well, I, you know, that's

Greg: one of the things I love about, you know, cohorts and networking together is no, I'd never heard of the Bhutan Nepalese, fastest growing movement. And, but when we get to spend time together, that's one of the beautiful things is we get to hear those stories. In one of the hardest to reach peoples in the world, the Nepalese right now, you know, I just spent three weeks in Nepal. We got lots of church planning going on over there, but it, it's not an easy field. Right. And, and here you're saying it's spreading like wildfire.

Winfield: Yeah. I mean, so there's this whole movement in the us of. Of, of, of communities of faith that are just rising up among, you know, refugee communities and they're all across the us, they're in all these places. So a lot of these trends, a lot of this exciting stuff that we're seeing. It's, these are not main stage platform speakers at the big conference, right? I'm not gonna name any conferences or whatever, but they, they, many of them don't have websites. So the average Anglo congregation don't even, they don't even know this is happening. It's under, it's kind of, it's the ment that's kind of happening underneath the surface. And we hear all the numbers and statistics about the decline of the church in the west. I would say, actually, there's the rise of, of, of these beautiful immigrant multi-ethnic congregations that are rapidly spreading you know, all across the us. And again, it's just, it's hard to document because it's typically micro it's typically by vocational, by vocational.

Greg: Yeah. Yep. And it's fascinating as I talk to by vocational pastors coming from other countries into the us for them bivocational is normal. They, they, they don't even consider nor do they desire to work full time at mega, you know, megachurch, which is kind of the American dream in many, you know, has been not, not so much now, but. But they're just normative in, in bivocational and I think that's a beautiful thing. Okay. We have just a few more minutes and I, I want to clarify this because we're talking about fellows, which sounds very male, just outta curiosity with, just to make sure we're all good with women coming into these cohorts, right?

Winfield: Absolutely. So fellows is a historic kind of academic language, so I just called it. To fit within the, the academy model. So you go to Oxford, you go to Cambridge, there are fellows. So absolutely Asbury from the very beginning has been a champion for women in ministry and

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women, church planters, and a dream I've had. And man, this is, this is another thing we, we need to dream around is like we could start a doctor ministry. Church planting degree, just for women leaders. Like literally we can, you know, we could build cohorts and you know, again, so a lot of what we're doing is, so for instance I just produced our second global summit book. It's called hope and hard places. I can send you a PDF of this and your leaders listeners can purchase this on Amazon. But what we do when we host these summits, we, we bring together leaders from around the world to, to just share case studies. Tell us what God's doing in your context. So three of these eight leaders were women leaders. Who are leading in different global contexts? One is Christina Andina who's in Zambia. The other is a, a leader who her name's my Brit in Denmark I've worshiped in her home. She's a church planter Methodist planter in, in Denmark. I was there for a covenant renewal service on new year's a couple years ago. It was beautiful. We had this just a beautiful kind. Home gathering worship experience. And then the, the other is so anyway, so we've got leaders in all of these different places, and then the, the, the third female planners, Valerie Grimes, who, you know who's planning at Savannah. Georgia. Who's a dear friend. And so these are three of the case studies. So one is an African one is a European one is a north American case study. So yes, women, church planners. We, we wanna say come we,

Greg: yeah. So you know, you know, I love that. Okay. I wanna come up as, as we wrap up, I wanna come back to I have a dream. So Winfield, when, when, when finish that set, I have a dream. You know when you think about Asbury, when you think about your life and what you're giving it to what, what, what would that look like? Let's just say over the next 10 years,

Winfield: Hmm. Yeah. That's yeah, no, that's great. We are in the process of, I will say this cuz by the time this comes out, the church planning initiative is becoming, it's gonna be a center. So it's the center for church multiplication moving forward. And the dream that the Lord really gave me is we wanna, we wanna really equip 10,000 church planners in the next 10 years. That's the number that Lords given me, global church planners, women, and men, we want equip, you know, all, all sorts of one size doesn't fit all. And we just wanna fan the flame of church multiplication around the world and across north America. So that's really my dream. That's the number that the Lord's given me. And we're gonna do it through coaching. We're gonna do it through training equipping, you know, funding in some cases. But we, we just wanna put fruit on other people's trees, you know, and, and, and expand the kingdom that way,

Greg: man. You, I think everyone, you all can see why I was excited to have Dr. Winfield, Devins on the church planning podcast. Winfield. Thank you so much. I, I think may all your dreams come true? We're with

Winfield: you partner. Amen. Hey, thanks so much for having me. It's been a great pleasure. Thanks.

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