

KNYSNA HOPE

Changing Lives



Knysna Hope is a registered Non-Profit Organization (NPO), created by church planting missionaries along the Garden Route of South Africa. It seeks to nurture redemptive relationships through co-operative upliftment initiatives--such as skills development, crisis pregnancy intervention, feeding schemes, and safe houses for abused women and children in this culturally and economically diverse community. In addition the *church planting collective** supports a community radio station, music academy, youth outreach, a biblical counseling centre, and the desire to facilitate a convention centre in our town. Such a facility may house a radio station and other media facilities, as well as providing space for large events, concerts, worship services, and outreach conventions.

Since 2010 two churches have been started, with a third in the planning phase. The 15 year vision of Knysna Hope (2015-2030) outlines the creation of no less than 10 additional churches in this growing, multicultural town of 70,000—Lord willing. We refer to these church planting initiatives as *church start-ups*** Recognizing that relational evangelism and discipleship is an essential strategy in our modern and complex Knysna culture, we desire to create *church start-ups* in each of the socio-economic enclaves throughout our town.

The recruitment of at least 6 additional *missional**** couples and 4 singles is a priority in the period 2015-2018. The range of ministry qualifications and experience will include: church planters, theological

***Church planting collective:** *this describes a team of like-minded church planting missionaries who voluntarily share a mutual vision (Knysna Hope) to reach our community with the gospel.*

****Church start-ups:** *this describes the individual ministry locations (often meeting in homes) started and led by called, resourced, and theologically trained ministry couples.*

*****missional living is** *the adoption of the posture, thinking, behaviors, and practices of a missionary in order to engage others with the Gospel message.*

educators, biblical counsellors, music performers and educators, broadcast specialists, children and youth workers, medical personnel, and administrative/logistical professionals.

We recognize that the skills necessary to develop and manage the Knysna Hope ministry team will in some instances come within families where the husband might be skilled in business, while his wife is an educator. Such combined skills and experiences will provide an economy of resources and energies. Such a couple will also contribute as *church planting assistants***** within the community where they live.

******Church planting assistants:** singles or couples working with Knysna Hope, who also serve in a ministry role in one of the local *church start-up* locations.

“And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind.”

ROMANS 12:2

Especially during the first 5 years (2015-2020) "pioneering" phase for the Knysna Hope vision, all personnel are required to come fully resourced with their own personal income. This is particularly important in the application for Charitable Workers Permits required by the South African government for all foreign workers. However, our Knysna Hope organization promotes a philosophy of upliftment and empowerment for local South Africans, and

is structured to provide training for nationals at all levels.



Notions of the Vision

Qualifying Our Knysna Prospects

After more than a decade of surveys and ministry involvement in Knysna, our church planting team has a better informed image of our town. We appreciate the uniqueness of Knysna as a melting pot of ideas, experiences and cultures. Not all of that is negative, of course. Although unsurpassed in its unusual natural beauty, Knysna has a checkered history of ebbs and flows in practically every other aspect of its economy and culture. Today it is difficult to identify what really keeps Knysna afloat, but most will agree that tourism is now the clear leader economically. The economy can be described as seasonal at best.

The religious history of the town is seen in much the same way. Knysna has been tarnished by the regrettable moral failure of several of its influential spiritual leaders in the past, not to mention the odd financial mis-appropriation or two! Sadly, such tragic failures have left discouragement and mistrust of “the church” in their wake. The entrenched liturgical styles, legalism, traditionalism, and even emotionalism within the churches have further hampered the impact of the Gospel in our area. In addition, owing to the ever-present influence of post-modern thinking, many in our town—even those professing to be Christians—have rejected the value or relevance of the local church for them today. We therefore accept that a fresh, innovative, and relevant biblical approach is needed for the revival of Knysna. We are committed to challenging the man-made conventions of the church and correcting the misconceptions of modern Christians biblically.

Being Part of Something Bigger

It is human nature to want to be part of something bigger. Something successful. Something alive. This desire is so compelling that even the appearance of “blessing” is mistaken for authenticity, and is often enough to draw the most sincere believer into something that later may be found to be counterfeit. For generations the evangelical church has been guilty of fabricating artificial growth through pragmatic means. We recall the Power of Positive Thinking movement in the 1960’s and 70’s, which was followed closely by the Seeker Sensitive and Purpose Driven movements which remained successful into the new millennium. Church growth was programmed and was pursued relentlessly. Multi-campus churches became popular, and even influential, usually with one charismatic leader rising to fame in the center of it all.

Much of that era has passed, thankfully, but what will replace it? We’re not completely certain, but we recognize that we have been given an opportunity to influence Knysna for Christ in a new and appropriate way. Therefore we are suggesting a fresh model of multiple “church start-ups” throughout our town initiated and led by missional, qualified, church-planting pastors. Although each of these community based outreaches will maintain their own local church autonomy, the spiritual leaders will be voluntarily connected to each other through a common “city-wide vision.” We believe that this approach will answer the biblical imperative for the organism of the church to experience

genuine body life. Young church planting works often feel remote and isolated in their formative years, and would benefit from some connectivity to others of like faith.

That's where the voluntary relationship comes in with the other church planters, and their growing congregations, to feel that they are a part of something bigger than themselves. Enjoying ministry fellowship and even partnership with other church start-ups in the town who share a common vision will not only allow for encouragement, but it will also better facilitate the spread of the gospel through the mutual investment in community projects. Such a model will, in addition, provide opportunities for combined fellowship, worship services, and outreach events for the town. Depending on practical considerations, such events might be periodic, or even regular.

Geographically Divided and Culturally Diverse

Knysna has been identified as having more *multimillionaires** with second homes than any other town in the country. These wealthy homeowners live elsewhere and only visit Knysna a few weeks each year. Yet in contrast we might guess that more than 50% of our permanent Knysna residents still remain below the poverty line. Thankfully there is a strong middle group of average residents who keep the town viable! The fascinating reality is that these contrasts appear rather stark in the confines of a small town.

Probably the two greatest obstacles to ministry in Knysna are the geographic and cultural divisions in town. Naturally, those with means live in the leafy green suburbs, and those without live in poorer communities known locally as "The Township." These two geographic divisions also represent multiple cultural and even language divisions. The suburbs in town are fragmented due to the extreme nature of the Knysna Estuary and its surrounding hills. Each suburb is clearly disconnected from the other, offering church planters a natural opportunity of starting an outreach from their home, attempting to reach their own neighborhood first. The Township community also has a similar challenge geographically as there are scores of housing settlements scattered over a wide area, divided by the harsh topography. Again this invites a strategy for multiple church planting start-ups in each smaller community.

The advantage of a strategy of dispersed church planters is that it allows small start-ups the luxury of using homes, and other borrowed or shared facilities at minimal cost in the short to medium term. This in turn provides more available ministry resources to be invested in people, rather than in under-utilized facilities.

**multimillionaires: those who have a net worth in excess of R120 million.*

Earning the Right to Intervene Spiritually

Knysna is characterized by extreme social, economic, and cultural divisions. However, there is an underlying attitude of friendliness and cooperation among all groups. In fact, there are commendable initiatives by many who are financially secure to provide assistance to those who are in need. Charitable organizations abound in our town. Any church planting strategy in Knysna must take into consideration the dire needs of the majority of our population, and ought to be instructed by the already present social conscience of our community. Although we would not want to promote a "social gospel,"

as has been the error of many before us, we are committed to maintaining a sensitivity towards the social challenges facing our town. We believe that by identifying the issues troubling those who are at the greatest risk, or who are in crisis in Knysna, we can offer them “next step” solutions as a way of intervening in their circumstances. Such initiatives might include soup kitchens to feed at risk children, safe houses for abused women and children, a crisis pregnancy center, and a skills center to help locals become more employable. The relationships we build through these efforts will certainly open doors for evangelism.

Knysna Hope endeavors to go a little further by not only ministering to those in economic crisis, but also to foster new relationships with others in our community through cultural initiatives such as a community radio station, a music academy, and even facilitating a convention centre for our town. Added to these will be a Biblical Counseling Center and an outreach center for children and youth.

Building Fresh Spiritual Momentum

Our goal is to encourage the building of redemptive relationships in all sectors of our diverse community. Making ourselves accessible and visible to the souls of Knysna opens the doors to be able to intervene spiritually in their lives. In time, such enterprises will provide real ministry opportunities for the Christians in our growing churches to maximize their impact on the community. We envisage a new generation of missional South African believers committed to reaching their community with the Gospel.

The reality is that there is presently an unusual open door for the Gospel in towns like Knysna. We are eager to maximize our impact for Christ while the freedoms are there. Until the momentum builds among our local South African believers, we believe there is ample need to recruit missional church planters and church planting assistants from other places in South Africa, and also from North America. We understand that modern church planting missionaries want community in ministry, and desire to be part of a team.

Knysna Hope offers such a benefit. There is much to be said about the effectiveness of missionaries committed to a common vision. We are trusting the Lord to bring together a diverse team of uniquely gifted and resourced men and women, married or single, to establish an influential spiritual foundation in our wonderful town. Our hope is that a new generation of missional Christians will be built to carry the Gospel baton on to the next generation.

Heading in the Direction of Responsible Stewardship

Buildings are expensive! We understand that the real church is not a building, but is comprised of born-again believers who meet in a building. It is difficult to function in our modern world without suitable meeting places. Over the last 300 years, the church has made a building the focal point of their ministry. Regrettably most church buildings in our day are clearly under-utilized, which raises a serious stewardship question.

Our church planting team does not pretend to have all the answers on this issue, but we are committed to heading in the direction of responsible stewardship regarding buildings.

We believe the best way we can do this is through our desire to use multi-purpose facilities for our church planting ministries. Shared-use facilities will be sought where possible, and if a building needs to be constructed, every effort will be made to bring together multiple partners to share the project. Shared use results in shared costs—makes sense to us.

When it comes to the Knysna Hope community projects, where facilities are used, we anticipate that each entity will contribute to the expenses of the facilities proportionate to usage.

Reaching Effectively into the Township Communities

Almost every town in South Africa has a “Township Community.” Historically the population of these communities was mainly transient as one family member would live there while supporting the rest of the family in another place. With the advent of government housing, that dynamic has changed somewhat. Now there are more permanent residents in the average township and these communities have become more stable and predictable.

Owing to the cultural distinctives, our approach to church planting in the Knysna township is based upon the training of national Xhosa pastors to initiate the work. In cooperation with our Garden Route Ministry Leadership Training (MLT) in Sedgefield, we customize a mentoring-training program for our pastoral candidates. We not only offer them ministry training, but also assist the student and his family to find a suitable house in the community from which they can do a church planting start-up. Funds are subsequently raised to build a simple extension onto the house for ministry purposes.

As a church develops in that home, there is the potential for a multiple-use Community Center to be motivated and constructed in that same community for the purposes of ongoing relationship-building and evangelism.

Knysna Hope will also endeavor to apply township upliftment projects and resources to assist the student-pastor in his ministry outreach. Each of the leaders and congregations will contribute to the mutual vision of the Knysna Hope church planting team.

*If you are in sympathy with our vision and convictions, you are welcome to contact:
Dave Rudolph in Knysna at dave@lagoonside.org*

