

## **Church Planting Practices Among Muslim and Druze Communities in the Near East: A Conversation about Mission in the Light of the Early Church**

Grant Porter (graduated 2018)

**ABSTRACT:** This study asks the question, “How do the patterns of mission and church planting among Muslim and Druze communities in the Near East compare with those patterns in the early church movement during the apostolic period?” What led me to ask this research question was a phenomenon I had recently observed. New faith communities based on the claims of Christ were and are still emerging among the Muslim and Druze populations in the Near East, communities that are rooted to varying degrees in the evangelical tradition. However, questions have been raised by other, more established evangelical communities as to the validity and orthodoxy of these new communities of faith. After some further exploration it soon became apparent that little academic research had been attempted to discover how these new communities had formed, what they practised, and why. Employing Case Study research methodology, this study examined five Christian faith communities (each community as a case) that emerged in Muslim and Druze societies and interviewed leaders and adherents associated with those respective communities. Eighteen semi-structured qualitative interviews were conducted. As it appeared that these new faith communities shared the common evangelical view of Scripture as authoritative, not only in creed but also in practice, the thinking of a number of New Testament scholars in the areas of mission and church planting in the early church movement in the apostolic period was utilised as a means to elicit meaningful reflection from the interviewees. Their thinking became a valuable conversation partner, with the new faith communities asking questions of those scholars (in a sense) and being asked questions in turn. This process was conducted in two rounds of interviews. The thesis concludes with critical reflection on the contemporary practice of each of the fellowships, both in comparison with each other, and in comparison with the scholarly thinking around the praxis of the early churches.

**Dr Grant Porter is originally from Australia and has lived for 35 years in the Middle East, involved in evangelical ministry. He is currently a programme director with a charitable trust.**