

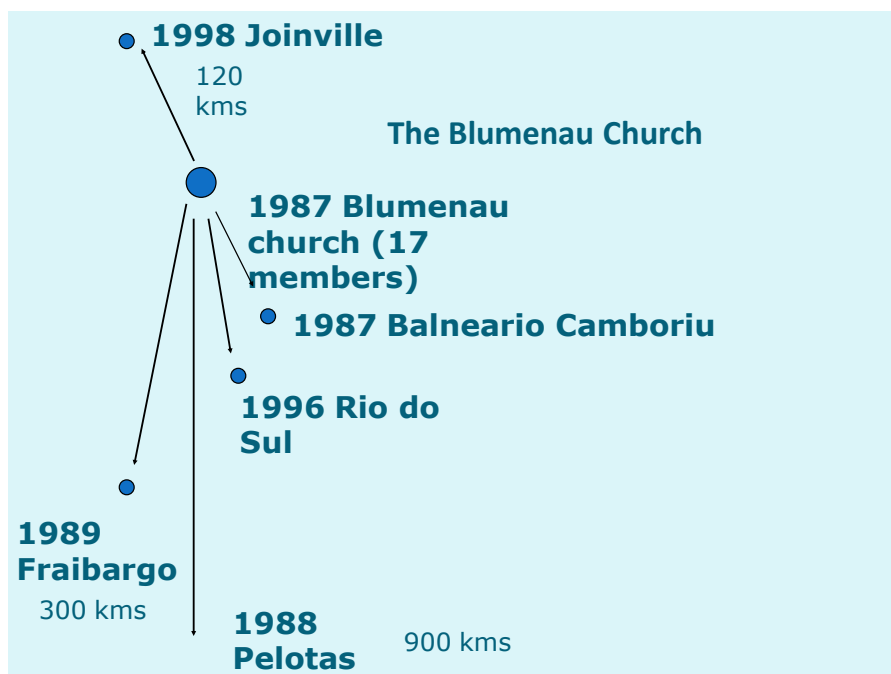
STAGE 3	LATIN AMERICA	Santa Catarina Province, Brazil	CHURCH PLANTING MOVEMENT IN SOUTH BRAZIL
---------	---------------	---------------------------------	--



This is the story of a church that God used to launch a church planting movement. The COMCISA community began in the living room of a home in Blumenau, Santa Catarina Province, in Southern Brazil. Two families initially met together to study the Bible, pray and share Christ with those around them. After careful search, a German Free Church missionary was invited to pastor this growing group. This missionary stayed for six years. When the missionary and his family returned to Germany for a yearlong furlough, the local community had to choose another pastor. At that time, Claudio E. had already been living in Blumenau for two years, working with Youth for Christ. He had plenty of

contacts in the local community. Yet, there were only 17 church members when he began.

The map below shows the first wave of churches that came out of the COMISCA work in Blumenau between 1987 and 1998. Some church planters showed amazing dedication to the task. Many held down other jobs, while planting the church. Claudio's brother, Eugenio, planted two churches simultaneously during several years. While he developed the one in Joinville, he commuted for part of the week to his home town in another province to share the gospel among family and friends, resulting in a new church there.



The Blumenau mother church grew to approximately a thousand members in dozens of home community groups, and started 5 daughter churches in 14 years. The church had many of the qualities of a large missional church: an effective and visionary senior pastor (Claudio), a complementary pastoral team, an effective training program which served as a model to the association (SETIEL), a well-coordinated “family group” movement which allowed leaders to grow and members to use their gifts, many evangelistic and caring ministries, and a desire to plant other churches.

In 2002, ReachGlobal was asked to help with church planter training. Claudio was not satisfied with 5 daughter churches. He shared with the ReachGlobal trainers: “We are training over 300 people every week. If only we had a way to deploy church planters without having to pay their salary, we could start so many more churches.”

During the training event in Blumenau, the pastors and church planters sensed the Holy Spirit calling them to covenant together to pray and work toward a church planting movement. They wrote out a declaration of commitment which others signed at their annual leadership convention that year. But, soon afterwards, Pastor Claudio, who was the main catalyst, resigned from the church because of a personal problem. This was a difficult time of change and leadership tension. Yet the vision for church planting continued. One of the results was that, although COMISCA suffered and lost members, the “family groups” continued and some decided to organize as local churches. Since then, several of those have planted daughter churches as well.

Partnerships played a role in the church multiplication. Crosspoint Church in Bloomington, MN partnered with the mother church (Blumenau), being careful not to create dependencies. Their focus was church health. God orchestrated the timing to help the Blumenau church get through this crisis. Johnston EFC (Iowa) partnered with one of the church plants: The Timbó church plant. This church plant has since planted a church (through one of its family groups), which is a sign of multiplication. A bi-vocational approach to church planting has emerged.

From 2007 to 2010 the Brazilian Free church developed their own training for church planters and coaches. A national church planters’ network called RENAPI was formed. Johnny S., a leader who came out of the COMISCA church and started a daughter church, was chosen as the church planting director of the Brazilian EFC. In 2007 alone, 17 new churches were organized and many of these were in Santa Catarina province. On December 3-5, 2010, Johnny S., led a “vision launch” and Church Planting Bootcamp in Blumenau. More than 45 lay leaders, pastors and missionaries gathered to hear this organic model explained. Many were renewed in their desire to multiply churches.