

Mark Driscoll Plans Mars Hill Church Plant in Phoenix

Mark Driscoll, of Seattle-based Mars Hill Church, announced plans for a 16th regional church to be launched in Phoenix early next year.

Driscoll introduced Pastor Ryan Welsh, who said he and his family plan to move to Phoenix in mid-August to begin planting the church.

"We want to get a core group started as soon as possible," Welsh told Driscoll in the announcement, seen in a video. "We want 150 people and 30 people to raise their hand and say, 'I want to be a community group leader.'"

Welsh said they plan to immediately start training the community group leaders to prepare for a public launch in late January or early February 2014.

Mark Driscoll tweeted on Monday: "It's official! @MarsHill is coming to Phoenix, Lord willing. Join the core or give in support, details here: "

Driscoll started Mars Hill in Seattle in 1996. Today, around 15,000 people attend weekly Sunday services at 14 locations—with 11 in the greater Puget Sound region; one in Albuquerque, N.M.; one in Portland, Ore.; one in Orange County, Calif.; and one more coming in Tacoma, Wash.

According to Mars Hill Church, "Planting churches is a natural extension of God's mission for us to make disciples—and a priority for us. We plant churches so that more people can meet Jesus. The way the first disciples of Jesus fulfilled this calling of His to make disciples was by planting churches that preached the gospel and cared for each other and their cities. Through churches, people hear about Jesus, make Jesus

their identity, worship Jesus, find community and become part of Jesus' mission here on earth."

Mars Hill's church-planting efforts are mainly rooted in their leadership development by training and raising up leaders through their Lead Pastor Residency program, which the church says gives "the necessary knowledge and skills to be a Mars Hill or Acts 29 lead pastor.

"The program tests calling, character and competency while also providing you with growth plans and development opportunities to ensure you're prepared for long-term pastoral leadership."