

# MULTI-SITE HANDBOOK

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## MISSION

### MAKING DISCIPLES WHO LIVE BY GOD'S GRACE AND FOR HIS GLORY AT HOME AND ACROSS THE WORLD

Two of the most important words that Jesus ever spoke were: "Follow Me." A statement filled with clarity and mystery that invite a person to leave behind his personal agenda and become a disciple of Jesus Christ. Disciples who long to become like Jesus in both attitude and action. Jesus did not spend His time on the earth glorifying Himself by flaunting His perfection to the world. But He laid down His rights to give humanity the grace we did not deserve to glorify His Heavenly Father. And He did this while equipping and empowering 12 disciples to follow His footsteps making disciples in Judea, Samaria, and even to the ends of the earth. This is our prayer. This is our desire. Fellowship's mission is directly linked to Jesus' Great Commission. We desire to be a people who are making disciples who live by God's grace and for His glory at home and across the world.

## WHAT IS A DISCIPLE?

Jesus' first disciples were apprentice-students (not classroom students) who learned and applied His teachings in their everyday lives as they literally followed Him throughout His public ministry. Within the context of the modern church, a disciple is someone who becomes an apprentice-student of Jesus by following Him through believing in the gospel and seeking to become like Him in all areas of that disciple's life. All Christ-followers should be disciples of Jesus.

Here at Fellowship, we define a disciple as a person who by God's grace:

- Connects with God and others
- Becomes transformed in attitude and action, and
- Multiplies disciples at home and across the world.



## VALUES

### CONNECTION, TRANSFORMATION & MULTIPLICATION



#### CONNECTION

Disconnected. This is how we start life, dead in our sins, and until we respond in faith to the grace of God in Jesus Christ, this is how we will live. Our first and greatest priority in life is to be connected to God through His Son, Jesus Christ. All of life flows from this continuous, abiding relationship with Jesus and is initiated by His love and sustained by His grace. We must first BE with Jesus before we ever DO for Jesus.

Through this connection we also see that we were created for connection with others. God did not design us to do life on our own. He made us to know and be known. We believe this happens best in the context of spiritual community, which we call Discipleship Groups, otherwise known as D-Groups. This is where we can engage in the “one another” commands of Scripture, connect with each other and grow in the knowledge and grace of Jesus Christ.



#### TRANSFORMATION

A disciple of Jesus is not someone who just knows a lot about Jesus or someone who just attends church. Instead, a disciple is someone who follows Jesus in every part of his or her life, seeking to become more and more like Jesus in attitude and action.

And since transformation is about our similarity to Christ, discipleship must be something more than religious activities like attending Sunday worship or being a part of a Bible study (which are good things to do). True transformation occurs as a gift of God’s grace and is empowered by the Holy Spirit. Our role is to be continually aware of our ongoing need for transformation and have faith that God will finish the work He has begun in us.



## MULTIPLICATION

Multiplication is what results when people live connected to Christ, connected to each other and are being transformed into His likeness by grace. God's desire is to advance the gospel and the chief way He does so is through multiplication. God has been intentional in directing our lives so we should live with intentionality in looking for opportunities to enter into His work of multiplication, making disciples. The two primary places to make disciples are at home and across the world. By home we mean that place where each of us lives and does life with others. All of us have a home and within our home is a sphere of key relationships like a spouse, children, friends, co-workers, etc. and it's in the context of these significant relationships where perhaps we have the greatest opportunity to multiply disciples who follow Jesus and live by His grace. But, the ministry of multiplication doesn't stop in the home, it carries around the world. God has a heart for people of all nations and desires to see His gospel advance across the world through His people being disciples who make disciples with intentionality all across the world for the glory and fame of God.



## MULTI-SITE PHILOSOPHY

One of the questions we continue to ask ourselves is, "How can we make more disciples of Jesus in the greater Little Rock area?" In other words, how do we reach more people with the gospel of Jesus, so that they can take that first step in becoming His disciple? We believe that embracing a multi-site model of ministry can be one of the ways we do that; creating communities of Christ-followers in geographic locations with a passion to 'make disciples' where they live. We know that the vast majority of people attend a church that is within a 15 minutes' drive of their home and that those who choose to attend from locations further away usually encounter two key issues: difficulty in participating in ministries the church offers during times other than Sunday morning services and unreceptiveness from neighbors when they try reaching out to invite them to be a part the church.

We also recognize that, typically, as a church grows larger, its ability to make people feel connected to the church and others diminishes. So, how do we help our people feel connected to the church and make church resources available to them to then help them make an impact for Jesus in the community they live in?

Being a multi-site church truly allows us to be 'one church in multiple locations'. Multi-site ministry allows us to take all of the benefits and resources that a large church can provide and make it available to smaller, more local campuses that have the benefit of community, connection, and direct local impact. In this way, we centralize our leadership structure and administrative services and are able to reproduce Fellowship's ministry and distinctives on every local campus.

Multi-site ministry also encourages our value of team ministry. Ministry teams plan, organize, set strategy, and curriculum in every major area of ministry. In this way, all of our ministry staff are using their gifts to make our church and ministry better and all of our campuses are building into and lifting up each other.

While every campus will have ways that it is unique or different, it is not the differences we are seeking to highlight, but the unity and harmony of being 'one'. In order for us to highlight and have a clear understanding of our 'oneness' we have established Campus Constants and 3 Ds.

For a more thorough discussion of the biblical support and benefits of a multi-site model of church ministry, see the article in the appendix by J.D. Greear, Why the Summit Church is Multi-Site.



Campuses are established with our DNA and seek to closely imitate the mission, vision, strategies, and ministries of Fellowship Bible Church. These campuses will embrace our ministry distinctives and live them out in locations in the Central Arkansas area. These campuses will only be established when there is a 'critical mass' of church active attenders committed to begin the new campus with around 100-200 people.

The Campus Pastor will implement the mission and strategy of Fellowship Bible Church by leading and shepherding the congregation. Resources to accomplish this ministry will be provided by the sending campuses. A campus will be centrally led, centrally governed, and centrally supported by Fellowship. It will be our goal that these campuses become self-sustaining and eventually birth new campuses. We also will have Elders on each of our campuses who will serve on our Fellowship Elder Team. In this way, we will have unified Elder leadership which will help us truly be "one church in multiple locations". Elders will serve on the Elder team that gives oversight to our whole church. However, the Elders on specific campuses will also engage with, help shepherd, and assist in leading those specific congregations as they come alongside and support our Campus Pastor.



## STAGES OF CAMPUSES

As we apply a multi-site strategy and begin new campuses the campuses will go through various levels of growth and development. While it will be our desire to see all of our campuses develop and mature into fully sustaining, reproducing bodies we acknowledge some campuses, given their location and the target demographics, may have more difficulty and challenges in achieving this. The following are the tiers or stages of development.

**Stage 1** - This is the beginning stage of a campus. During this stage, the campus is developing into a community of worshipers and establishing key ministries to replicate the vision and mission of Fellowship. It is also looking for ways to invest in the community in which it exists. This campus is not yet self-sustaining and still relies upon the other campuses to fully meet their obligations.

**Stage 2** - During this period, the campus ministries are well-established and there is a close connection and synergy with the vision, mission, and values of Fellowship and the strategies used to accomplish them. Elders have been appointed from this campus and serve as part of the Elder team of Fellowship Bible Church. This campus also has some key areas of community outreach and support that it is invested in. Ministry ideas as being shared among the campuses and team work with other ministries is ongoing. At this point, the campus is fully meeting their budget.

**Stage 3** - At this point, the campus is a clear representation of Fellowship. This campus is heavily involved in serving the greater Fellowship church community and is helping to lead new initiatives to accomplish our collective vision, mission, and strategy. This campus has a heart for the community and is known as a leading supporter and contributor to its needs. This campus is also investing funds back into the church's mission. It is this campus's goal to help birth and establish another Fellowship campus in conjunction with Fellowship's Central Leadership Team.



## STAFF A CAMPUS MINISTRY

Staffing on our campuses will focus on the areas of ministry that are the most crucial for us to duplicate. These will primarily be in five key areas... Campus Leadership, Worship, Discipleship, Kids and Student ministry. Support staff will also need to be hired to help carry the load of those ministries. In the beginning, campus ministry funds will likely be very tight. Therefore, the following positions will be the minimum a campus will need to launch with:

### **Campus Staff - (Establish)**

- 1) Campus Pastor
- 2) Worship Pastor
- 3) Kids Pastor
- 4) Student Pastor
- 5) Administrative Assistant (full-time)

While Pro-tech is needed for a campus launch, there will not be enough funds to support one. Therefore, one of the Pro-tech staff from the Central Team will serve 3-6 months as tech support on Sunday mornings at the new campus. They will also use this time to train volunteer staff who can look after the technical needs for Sunday morning programming.

For a Campus Ministry start up, our plan will be to staff the leadership of Fellowship Kids with a Kids Pastor and Fellowship Student Ministry with Student Pastor. The Campus Pastor will oversee discipleship ministries. It would be our recommendation that the next staff member hired would be a pastor who could help the Campus Pastor develop and grow discipleship ministries to the next level.



## CAMPUS CONSTANTS

It is our desire as a church to truly be 'One Church in Many Locations' for the purpose of making as many disciples of Jesus Christ as possible in the Greater Little Rock area. Therefore, we will hold to these constants on each of our campuses, in ways that are both culturally and contextually meaningful.

1. **Vision, Values, Mission and Strategy** – We will hold to the same Vision, Values, Mission, and Strategy on all of our campuses.
2. **Leadership** – Every ministry of the church, at each location, will operate under one central leadership structure that ultimately comes under the authority of the Elders and the Teaching Pastors. Leadership authority flows through the Campus Pastors and influence flows through the Central Leadership Team. It is our desire to have Elders on every campus. These Elders will serve as part of our Fellowship Elder Team.
3. **Teaching** – Our Teaching Team and Campus Pastors will be the primary source for teaching on each campus either in person or through video delivery.
4. **Worship** – The worship experience and expression on each campus will be culturally relevant and similar in style and creativity.
5. **Shared Curriculum** – Every ministry environment including kids, students, and adults will share centrally approved discipleship materials, values, and goals.
6. **Discipleship Groups** – All campuses will operate under Fellowship's small group strategy to "make disciples."
7. **Assimilation** – There will be a united process across all campuses for incorporating people into the membership of the church. A "Connection Center" will be located on every campus for new people to connect and find out how to take the "next steps".
8. **Central Support** – There will be one centralized process or system for administrative services including banking, staffing, payroll, benefits, capital expenditures, lease agreements, and facility support.
9. **Financial Model** – Campus funds will be centrally managed and allocated on an 75%, 15%, 10% basis. 75% will cover the Operating Fund. 15% will be given to the Multi-Site Fund, and 10% to Missions.
10. **Media and Communications** – Every campus will operate under one communications strategy including logo, branding, graphics, written and centralized web site. This will include one database to manage and minister to the congregation.
11. **Missions** – Every campus will be involved in living out their faith through centrally approved missions, first in a relevant and local context and then through our joint global ministries.

Please see our staff portal for our 3D document that will show the "Decided, Different, and Don't" categories for each ministry.



## FINANCE

### CONSTANTS

1. Financial Model – Campus funds will operate on 75%, 15%, 10% basis. 75% will cover the Operating Fund. 15% will be given to the Multi-Site Fund and 10% to Missions.

### FINANCIAL MODEL

We are one church with one budget, but we use an 75/15/10 model that enables each campus to fund itself, contribute to the Multi-Site Fund, and support local and global missions.

- **75%** of its offerings will fund the operations and staff at that local campus.
- **15%** of its offerings will support central services and fund new multi-sites through the Multi-site fund.
- **10%** of its offerings will be used to support local and global missions. 5% will be used back in the community of the campus and 5% to support our ministry partners around the world.

It will be our intention to move new campuses to this model by the third year of their ministry. That move would be staged as follows:

- **Year 1** - 100% of Offering will fund the operations of the Campus
- **Year 2** - 90% of Offering will fund campus operations 10% Missions
- **Year 3** - 75/15/10 would be followed

Following normal approval processes, the Campus Pastor can manage their operating expenses from the 75% that is available at the campus. Certain minimum funding levels will be expected in key areas of ministry. These areas include but are not limited to Worship, Fellowship Kids, Fellowship Student Ministries and Discipleship.

Each Campus will recommend to the central mission team where to use the 5% of its mission budget to impact the local community.



Fellowship Bible Church will support a new campus if needed for up to 50% of their operational cost for the first 2 years of ministry.

However, by the 3rd year the campus will be expected to be self-sustaining. If it is not, the Central Leadership Team in conjunction with the Elders, will determine whether the campus start-up needs to be ended due to a lack of support.

These percentages are guidelines, not rules. There will be times when the percentages will change in order to help the campus in an under-resourced area or to fund an all-church initiative.

Campuses will function at one of three stages financially...

- **Stage One** - Financial reliance upon the sending campuses
- **Stage Two** - Financial sustainability
- **Stage Three** - Financially contributing to the expansion of mission, values, and vision of Fellowship Bible Church

It is our goal that all of our campuses function in stage three once they are established. In the case when a campus's giving is greater than its budgeting needs at the financial year end, those monies should be distributed in the same 75%, 15%, 10% manner. The remaining 75% will be given back to the campus for renovations, upgrades, or initiatives as approved by the Central Leadership Team.



## CAMPUS PASTOR JOB DESCRIPTION

POSITION TITLE	DEPARTMENT	OVERSEER
Campus Pastor	Multi-site	Teaching Pastor Team Leader

### KEY RESPONSIBILITIES

#### Lead and Oversee Campus Ministry

- Lead and shepherd the congregation and the pastoral staff
- Be the primary communicator at the campus, preaching twice a month
- Coordinate Sunday worship services with Worship Pastor
- Provide pastoral care for the campus congregation which includes weddings, funerals, baptisms, baby dedications, counseling
- Oversee the assimilation process, discipleship, and D-Groups
- Lead capital campaign and help oversee new building project
- Lead yearly Planning Processes, budget, and key campus initiatives
- Inspire the congregation to seek new ways to impact their community with the transforming power of the gospel
- Work with the Elders to shepherd the congregation, come up with key initiatives/goals for the campus and making those initiatives a reality
- Faithfully steward campus resources

### OTHER RESPONSIBILITIES

- Attend Fellowship All-Staff meetings and events
- Attend monthly meetings Campus Pastor Meeting
- Serve as an Elder for Fellowship Bible Church

### ABILITIES

- Builds Effective Teams – Values collaboration with others; creates strong moral and spirit; shares wins and successes; fosters open dialogue; defines success in terms of the whole team; creates a feeling of belonging in the team
- Loyal- Committed to Fellowship's DNA and able to follow church leadership
- Excellent Communicator- Can teach God's truth in a way that leads to life application/ transformation
- Dynamic Leader – Communicates a compelling and inspired vision or sense of core purpose; talks beyond today; talks about possibilities; is optimistic; can inspire and motivate
- Problem-Solver – Uses logic and methods to solve problem with effective solutions; probes all fruitful sources for answers; is excellent at honest analysis; looks beyond the obvious and doesn't stop at the first answer
- Self-Starter & Self-motivated – Initiates well without a lot of direction
- Interpersonal Savvy – Relates well to all kinds of people – up, down, and sideways, inside and outside the church; builds appropriate rapport; builds constructive and effective relations; uses diplomacy/tact
- Self-Knowledge – Knows personal strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and limits; seeks feedback; gains insights from mistakes; is open to criticism; isn't defensive; is receptive to talking about shortcomings
- Agrees to and follows Fellowship's Statement of Faith and Position Papers

**REPORTING STRUCTURE** Reports directly to Teaching Pastor Team Leader



## MULTI-SITE EXPANSION PLAN

### PURPOSE

To lay out a clear plan identifying the process for existing campuses, outside of Fellowship Bible Church, to enter into an expansion, addition, or major renovation of their current facilities.

### APPROVAL PROCESS

Any expansion, addition, or major renovation to an existing campus must first be agreed upon between the Campus Pastor (in consultation with Elders), Teaching Pastor Team Leader, and the Pastor of Operations. Once a specific need has been identified and agreed upon, this proposed improvement to the campus will be brought to the Central Leadership Team. At that time, a general plan of action, expense of the improvement, and financial plan to cover the expense will be presented. If the Central Leadership Team approves the proposed improvement, then more detail plans for the project will be created and all of this presented to the Mission and Outcome Elder Team for recommendation to the whole Elder Board.

### FINANCIAL MODEL

Here is the model we would like to see followed for an approved campus facility expansion, addition, or major renovation. Our goal is for the expanding campus to own the majority of the cost of the construction, with support from other Fellowship campuses.

#### Guidelines

**For projects \$1.5 million or less** – Fellowship Bible Church WLR and other campuses contribute 25% and Campus pays for 75%.

**For projects greater than \$1.5 up to 3 million** – Fellowship Bible Church WLR and other campuses contribute 15% and Campus pays for 85%.

**For projects more than 3 million** – Fellowship Bible Church WLR and other campuses contribute 10% and Campus pays for 90%.

(The idea of 'stepping down' in the amount for Fellowship Bible Church contribution is that the larger the expansion the more people and resources of that campus should support the endeavor.)



Once the cost of the project has been determined and the contribution of Fellowship Bible Church is established, this is how the remaining expense should be structured.

### **Guidelines**

- At least 50% of the remaining amount should be received in cash donations.
- At least 25% more of the amount should be held in pledges.
- The final 25% or less can be mortgaged.

### **EXPANSION PARTNERSHIP**

The architectural design of the building, along with the construction, will be handled by the Pastor of Operations. The Pastor of Operations will insure that the expansion design is in keeping with the type and style of Fellowship's other campuses. He/She will also lead the project so that this project does not weigh down the Campus Pastor and his staff so they can continue to give their attention to the ministry of the campus. However, this will also be a collaborative venture between the Pastor of Operations and the Campus Pastor and Elders so that input and ideas can be shared and the best structure created to meet the ministry needs of the campus.



## WHY THE SUMMIT CHURCH IS MULTI-SITE

Posted by Pastor J.D. Greear on June 3, 2013 (Used with permission)

I continue to get questions about the “multi-site” strategy on a regular basis. It’s not nearly as bizarre as it was when we began, but is still controversial for a lot of people. In light of that, I’ve revisited and expanded a post from a few years ago about our decision to go multi-site.

In 2005 we at the Summit Church moved to a multi-site strategy for spatial necessity. God was graciously bringing to our doors more people than we could handle. We were doing as many morning services as we could in our rented school facility, and were having to turn people away. So, we opened another campus three miles down the road, where I preached between our other services at the main campus.

Since that time, we have concluded that the multi-site model for the church is both biblically sound and practically helpful, and we have embraced multi-site as a strategy for growing our church and reaching our city, not merely as a temporary way to deal with a space problem. We currently are a church of about 7500 attenders, meeting on seven campuses and ten venues throughout Raleigh-Durham, NC. We added our most recent site in Chapel Hill earlier this year.

We believe that at the core of our mission as a church is the commission to seek and save the lost in our city, and we believe that the presence of a local body of believers is the greatest evangelistic tool for any community. We are also a church who believes that faithful ecclesiology must trump pragmatism. We have concluded that the multi-site strategy is the best way for us to both reach our community and practice faithful ecclesiology. We also believe that planting churches in strategic cities around the world is the New Testament’s most effective evangelistic strategy, so our vision is to plant 1000 churches in RDU and around the world by the year 2050.

Let me first acknowledge that I readily agree with many criticisms of many multi-site churches. Many multi-site environments encourage consumerism, foster anonymity, are built on a cult of personality, and depend more on man’s wisdom than God’s wisdom. That said, here is why we enthusiastically embrace the multi-site strategy as biblically sound, practically wise, and pastorally helpful.



## I. WHY THE SUMMIT CHURCH BELIEVES THE MULTI-SITE MODEL IS BIBLICALLY SOUND

### A. The essence of a local church is a covenant, not a manner of assembly.

Some argue that since a local church is by definition an assembly, a multi-site strategy fundamentally skews the nature of a local church. The essence of a New Testament local church, however, is not “assembly” but “covenant body.” If the local church is essentially an assembly, then it only exists when it assembles and only when all the members are present. “Assembly” is a much-needed function, but “covenant” is the essence.

The New Testament nowhere demands that a local church meet all together each week. Nor is a single-service assembly the only model given in Acts. While it is certainly true that we see evidences of local churches assembling all together (1 Corinthians 11), we also see evidence of single local churches which met in multiple locations. The new congregation in Jerusalem is frequently referred to in the singular, one “church” (Acts 8:1; 11:22; 15:4). However, they obviously had to meet in different times and locations. Historians tell us there was no space in Jerusalem available to the disciples in which three thousand or more people could have met on a weekly basis. It also appears that many first-century house churches came together to celebrate the Lord’s Supper as one citywide church (see 1 Cor 11:17–20; Romans 16:5).

Quite simply, the New Testament neither demands nor uniformly models that all members of one local church are to assemble weekly in the same place.

### B. The New Testament gives guidelines, but not specific details, on how to best organize a congregation for pastoral care and effective ministry.

John Piper has written, “Neither here [in Acts 2] nor elsewhere in the New Testament do we get detailed instructions on how to organize the church for pastoral care and worship and teaching and mobilization for ministry. There were elders in the churches (they show up very soon in the Jerusalem church) and there were deacons, and there were goals of teaching and caring and maturing and praying and evangelizing and missions. But as far as details of how to structure the church in a city or in an area or even one local church with several thousand saints – there are very few particulars.”



### C. The Apostles used the technology available to them to preach in absentia.

It is clear in Acts 2 to 8 that all eight thousand (some historians estimate that the actual size at the end of Acts 3 would have been about ten thousand) were not gathering weekly in one place to hear one teaching pastor give a message. Perhaps the Apostles were a teaching team who rotated between the houses. Perhaps groups of the church gathered with particular apostles in small assembly places (campuses). Yet they were one church.

We know that many of Paul's letters were intended to be circulated for reading throughout the churches. If Paul could have cut a DVD from the Philippian jail and passed that around, I can't see why he wouldn't have done so. I know that some might respond, "Well, yeah, but Paul's letters were the inspired Bible. He was an Apostle."

That's why his letters could be passed around." We know, however, that there were several of Paul's letters passed around that were not "inspired," such as the middle Corinthian letter.

If the technology was available, don't you think Peter might have burned a DVD of himself and sent that around? If they could have simulcast John's recounting of his last meeting with Christ, don't you think they would have done it? Is there anything that says that we must be able to see the actual flesh and blood of the preacher? Those who say that video removes the "flesh and blood, incarnational" nature of gospel preaching would also have to question the use of voice amplification. If it is argued that video removes the incarnational nature of preaching, a similar argument could be made that God did not intend churches to ever be bigger than what would allow an unamplified voice to be heard by all, because in so doing it would remove the touchability of the pastor. Obviously, such questions go beyond a responsible interpretation of Scripture.

This is not to say that all technology is allowable or helpful, because sometimes the medium affects the way people perceive the message. No doubt, deciding what to do with technology that was unavailable in biblical times is a difficult subject, and we must be both open-minded and cautious in appropriating it for our purposes.



## II. WHY THE SUMMIT CHURCH BELIEVES THE MULTI- SITE STRATEGY CAN BE PRACTICALLY WISE

### A. A multi-site model is an acceptable, if not better, alternative to addressing a church's growth by building bigger buildings or multiplying services.

Assuming that a growing local church decides not to turn people away when its facility is "full," it faces three options to accommodate growth: build bigger buildings, multiply services, or plant new churches. Simply turning people away, obviously, is a terrible and unbiblical option. The Apostles did not turn away the 5000 new believers in Acts 2, even when they surely were overwhelmed with the problems these new believers posed. As John Piper said of his own church, "The question is no longer whether we'll be a megachurch, but what kind of megachurch we will be."

The multi-site strategy is a more financially responsible response to growth than building a huge building.

Buildings are expensive. Large buildings are enormously expensive. They are also inefficient uses of space. Large auditoriums (that seat several thousand people) are difficult to use for any other purpose than one weekly assembly of the entire church body.

The multi-site model allows churches to save much of the money usually spent on a building. Venues in which smaller congregations can meet are much more plentiful and can be rented on a Sunday or, if owned, can be used throughout the week for other purposes.

Jim Tomberlein, who has written a great deal on the multi-site movement, notes that a multi-site strategy is usually a zero-sum game, financially speaking. Most campuses will make up the money spent on startup costs within the first year.

In many cases, it will be more effective to add new venues in new locations than it will to multiply services at any one location.

The church might decide to multiply services, but you quickly reach a limit of how many any one location or teaching pastor can handle. Also, as will be discussed below, having people drive more than 20 minutes to get to their assembly place can hinder evangelism and local community ministry.



## B. The multi-campus church does not preclude or even compete with church planting.

"Okay," you may say. "Multi-site is better than more services or bigger buildings. But why do you plant campuses? Why not just plant churches instead?" This is a significant question, so let me spend a little more time on it.

Many people who make that statement have never actually had to deal with a rapidly growing church. Most studies show that church planting will not itself alleviate space needs of a local church. For example, if you convince 200 of your people to go and start a new church (an extraordinarily difficult feat, I might add!), you end up making up that growth in the original congregation within a few months. In other words, even if you plant 10 churches out of your church in 10 years, chances are that you will still be dealing with space problems each year.

Furthermore, finding the people willing to leave their church to plant a new one as well as the leader who can do it are both difficult! Yes, they should be willing to leave. But there is a gap between what people should do and what they will do, especially in churches that are growing rapidly and filled with young and immature believers.

Church planting is a wonderful and effective evangelism strategy and should thus be pursued aggressively by every local church, but church planting will not provide a solution for a church's space issues. So, by all means, plant churches, but in order to steward the people God is bringing to the original campus, you'll need a different solution! As Scott Hildreth, a member of our church and director of a lot of the church planting at SEBTS, says, "Multi-site was the best solution we could come up with in a fallen world for a crisis we created for ourselves by things working too well."

So, to state it plainly: Multiplying campuses is not an alternative to church planting; it is an alternative to multiplying services, building a larger building, or turning people away. We pursue both, and in addition to planting 7 campuses in the last few years, we have also sent out over 200 of our own people to start new churches here in the United States ([click here](#) to see that list).

Because multiplying campuses is primarily a solution to our space needs, we only plant campuses in our local city, not cities around the nation. Driving to our primary location is not an option for people in cities around the country, so there is no reason why we should put a campus there instead of planting an altogether new church under a new leader! Furthermore, we believe there is something



about a local church that should be local. The people of God in a community should take on the character of that community, and if you are in cities across America, it's hard to do that. And Hebrews talks about "knowing" your leaders. Not every person in the Summit Church knows me personally, but I am a "known" entity who lives locally. So while not everyone in our church knows me personally, many people do, and most people know someone who does.

"Why not just make all our campuses independent churches and have the campus pastor preacher every week?" Two reasons: First, "campus pastor" and "lead pastor" usually require different gift sets. Most lead pastors preach from their pulpit more than 40 times a year. If you don't know what that's like, think of writing a 15-page term paper every week. Not everyone enjoys that. Some do. I do. Many of our campus pastors enjoy preaching occasionally, but they are so exceptionally gifted at leading, evangelizing, and discipling that having someone else take the majority of the preaching load is a blessing to them (About 20 hours a week is spent in preparing for one sermon!). Those leaders who would enjoy that, and want to plant churches, should do that. Some of our campus pastors plan to do that one day, and their role as campus pastor is temporary. The majority of them, though, find their gifts best utilized in a role where they can devote most of their week to shepherding and leading.

We frequently send out qualified planters to plant churches, even right here in our own city! But the gift sets are different. For those who should be planting and preaching, we are committed to sending them out to do so.

**C. The closer a congregation meets to where the people it is trying to reach live, the more effective can be its evangelism and community outreach.**

Being closer to where the people live helps you engage them, invite them to your services, and perceive the needs of the local community. (You might drive 45 minutes to a church you love, but that person you just met at Starbucks who doesn't know Jesus won't be as committed.) Our desire is for everyone in our community (the Triangle) to be no more than 15 minutes from a thriving evangelical church or a Summit congregation. We tell people, "Stay where you are; serve where you live; be the church in your local community."

**D. The multi-site church is better suited for the post-pastor succession.**

It is rare, in every generation, for one pastor to be able to hold the attention of several thousand people each Sunday. Many churches with one of those pastors built an auditorium to hold the audience, but for whatever reason the successor did not have the same ability. While grateful that the church attempted to be a



steward of those God was bringing to them, how depressing it is to walk into one of those huge, nearly empty sanctuaries on a Sunday now!

If our church has ten thousand attenders, we believe that it would be better to have ten campuses of one thousand, who identify with ten campus pastors, rather than one campus of ten thousand who identify only with the one. If the lead pastor passes on, it is easier to find ten pastors to lead one thousand than one who can continue to lead the ten thousand. The many empty, depressing monuments now polluting the American landscape are evidence of that.

### **III. HOW THE SUMMIT CHURCH BELIEVES A MULTI-SITE STRATEGY CAN BE PASTORALLY HELPFUL**

#### **A. The multi-site model allows us to enjoy the pastoral benefits afforded by both a large and small congregation.**

It is undeniable that large churches face pastoral issues. (It should be noted, however, that a landmark study done by Rodney Stark in 2007 showed that megachurches had more intimacy and better pastoral care than smaller churches.) [1] That said, it is easier for people to slip in and out of a large congregation unnoticed. That is why we believe that the multi-site model is the best way for us to address the pastoral needs of our congregation.

One of the primary criticisms of a multi-site church is that you create disparate groups of people who will never know each other—perhaps never see each other! Realistically speaking, however, this happens also at any multi-service church. For that matter, it happens at any church above two hundred! The hardest ecclesiological shift for me was not in going to multiple campuses, but in growing larger than four hundred members!

At that point, I realized that I couldn't know every member in a meaningful way and they wouldn't all know each other, either. Large churches of all types have members who do not know each other, and not every pastor knows every member.

However, of large churches, perhaps the multi-site church most effectively addresses that problem. Since the venues are smaller, it is easier for campus pastors and elder representatives to keep up with those that come. In other words, smaller venues reduce anonymity. It is easier for our members to be known by a pastor, be under the care and governance of our church elders, and served by campus deacons at a smaller campus rather than a large one.



At the same time, the multi-site model allows its members the advantages of a larger church. Churches often grow large because many people find the gifts of one pastor- teacher edifying, and the multi-site model allows for the stewardship of that gift. Larger churches are able to offer many ministries that smaller churches cannot. Large churches can often put more weight behind their ministries. John Piper writes: "Worship in larger gatherings with other believers whom we don't know personally can be powerful (the way a whole battalion gathered before battle to hear the commander's challenge is powerful even though the soldiers don't all know each other)."[2]

**B. The multi-site strategy is an excellent way for a large church to develop and maximize the use of leadership.**

I've often heard this response to the multi-site model: "Why build the church so much around you? Do you really think there are no other good preachers in Raleigh-Durham? Why not develop other leaders and teachers?"

We have found that a multi-site church is better at developing leaders than a single- location large church. My wife remarked to me the other day, "Have you ever noticed that some of your favorite staff members are the ones you no longer see each Sunday?" They are serving at one of 6 campuses I don't usually get to on Sunday.

These were guys I raised up, trained, and depended on. Now, as campus pastors, they have the opportunity to lead in ways they didn't when we were all at one place. And, in their wake, new leaders have emerged at the original campus.

Campus pastors are guys who are gifted leaders and good communicators, but not necessarily called teachers. Many guys, who are great leaders and pastors, do not enjoy doing what I do each week, spending 20+ hours preparing messages and deciphering vision. As campus pastors, they exercise leadership within their gifts in a way that they could not as church planters, where they must devote an exceptional amount of time to study.

The bottom line is that we have more and better leaders as a multi-site church than we did as a single-campus church.

**C. The multi-site strategy can help protect against a cult of personality.**

I've often heard, "The multi-site movement fosters a cult of personality by tying everyone to one mega-teacher." Leader-worship is certainly a danger in large



churches, and unfortunately many large church leaders seem all too willing to foster it.

However, the cult of personality can exist as much in a small, single-campus church—in fact, sometimes more so! When I pastored a small church, my congregation seemed to think that my presence was necessary for everything of spiritual significance. I had to marry and bury everyone, and my people wanted me to resolve every problem and answer every question. I tried to teach them otherwise, but their natural tendency was to be much more dependent on me than they are now that we are a multi-site church! Summit Church members are now exposed, weekly, to many other Spirit-filled pastors in our church to whom they can look for leadership and ministry.

#### **IV. WHAT THE SUMMIT CHURCH IS STILL WRESTLING WITH REGARDING THE MULTI-SITE STRATEGY**

- Does the “one body” ever need to assemble all together in one place? If so, how often?
- What is the best way to organize budgeting and staff structures so that each campus has freedom to organize its ministries effectively while at the same time ensuring that each campus retains the DNA of the whole church?
- How do we best do membership and discipline in the multi-site model?
- How can congregations vote on issues when people live too far from one another to be able to congregate often?
- How far is too far when planting a new campus? Can one ‘local church’ have campuses all across the world?
- If people rotate which campuses they attend, will that make it difficult for elders and other leaders effectively to watch over them?
- How will we know when a campus would function better as an independent church?



## V. CONCLUSION

The multi-site model is messy. As with all large churches, it is easier for important things (like people!) to fall through the cracks in multi-site churches than it is in a single- campus, smaller church. Growth from evangelism always invites chaos and disorder into the church. But it is a wonderful and welcome problem. My wife and I sometimes rue the loss of the neatly-packaged, clean, simple life we had before kids. We lived without the worry, fear, chaos, frustration, and dirty diapers that dominate our lives now from dawn to dusk. But we wouldn't trade it for the world! It is the same with our church. Growth creates problems; however you facilitate it. The multi-site model is messy. But our church will gladly deal with the headaches of the multi-site model if it means reaching more people for Jesus.

We must live with the holy tension of taking care of our local church body and constantly bringing new, immature sinners loaded with problems into our midst. The elders of the Summit Church believe that the best way for us to do both is to adopt an aggressive multi-site strategy. The multi-site approach, in our judgment, best allows us to be effective in evangelism, pastorally responsible over our members, and to develop leaders and church planters.

It is our prayer that in by 2050 God will allow us to put campuses within 15 minutes of everyone in Raleigh-Durham (with some rare but notable exceptions in places where a Summit campus might hinder the work of another local church), as well as 1000 churches planted in cities around the world. For us, the argument comes down not on whether you do multi-site but how it is done. Our responsibility is to do it in a way that is biblical and God-honoring.

[1] Rodney Stark, *What Americans Really Believe* (2007), 49

[2] "Treasuring Christ Together," Part 2: Lessons in Love from 1 John by John Piper, September 14, 2003.