

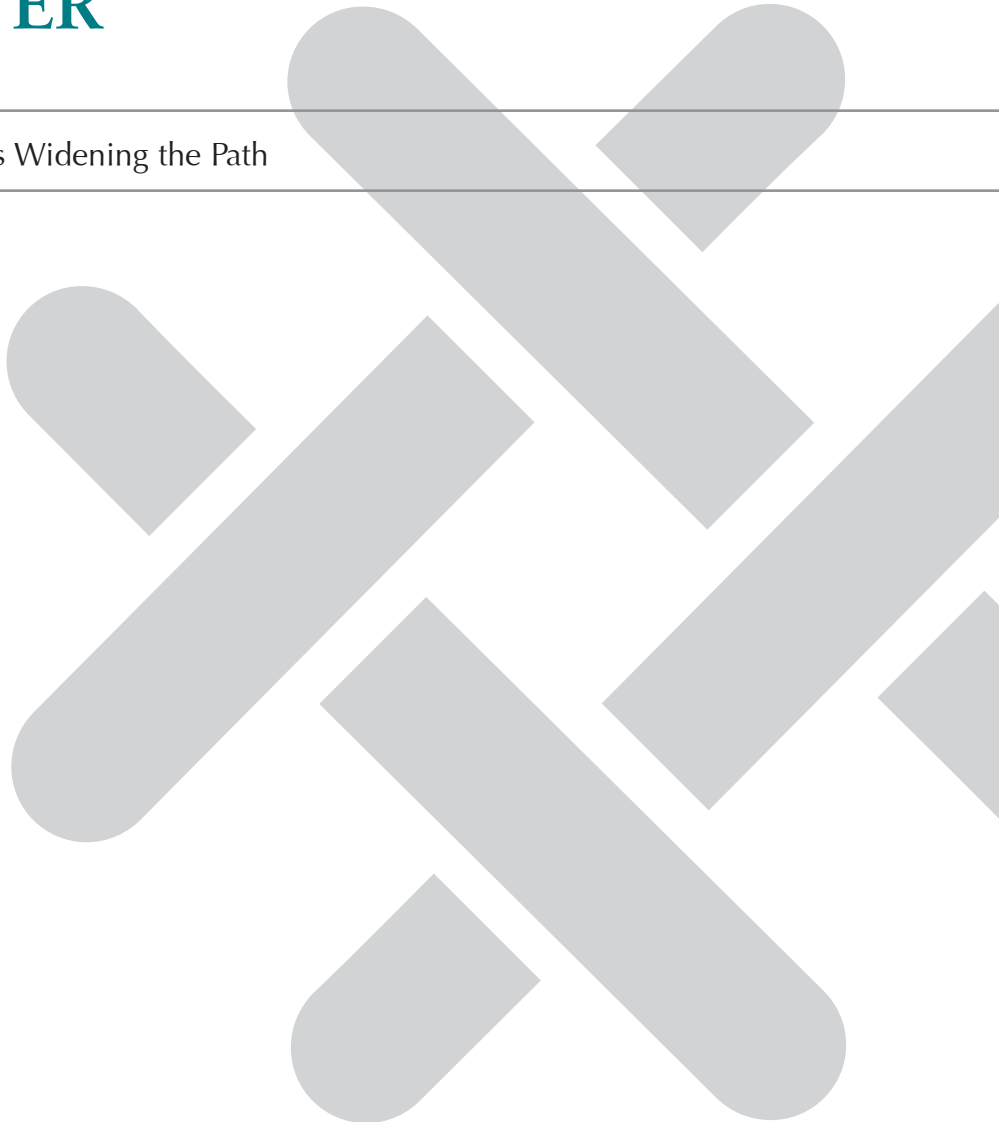
# AVOIDING DETOURS— 2 YEARS LATER

---

Insights from Multi-Site Veterans Widening the Path

---

*by Stephen Shields*



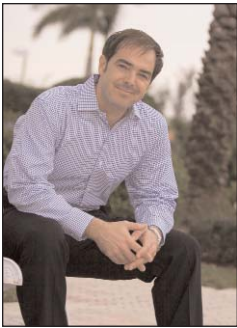
LEADERSHIP  NETWORK®

Connecting Innovators to Multiply  
[www.leadnet.org](http://www.leadnet.org)

## Introduction

"I have no doubt that we were called to multi-site, no doubt that God has called our church to reach more people this way. There are hundreds and hundreds of families that are new to Christ and new to our church because of our multi-site mission." So says Todd Mullins, executive pastor of **Christ Fellowship** (<http://www.goChristFellowship.com>), a church in

Palm Beach Gardens, FL which grew by over 1,500 folks after they began a multi-site approach.



Todd Mullins

In 2004, Leadership Network asked several trendsetting multi-site churches what insights they wished to offer to those embarking on their own multi-site adventure. The results were published as *Avoiding Detours: Insights from Multi-Site Pioneers Who are Leading the Way*.

### **Avoiding Detours: Insights from Multi-Site Pioneers Who are Leading the Way**

is available online at

[http://www.leadnet.org/Resources\\_Downloads.asp](http://www.leadnet.org/Resources_Downloads.asp)

Since that time, these pioneers and others have learned even more as they've continued to advance the multi-site revolution.

During 2006, Leadership Network re-interviewed a number of churches featured in *Avoiding Detours*, plus a handful of the 1,000-plus multi-site churches that we are tracking at some level. The interviews both confirmed the validity of the 12 original insights from the first *Avoiding Detours* article and garnered some new lessons as well. And so we begin below with #13.

The insights fall into these areas:

- *Church Identity*
- *Orienting the Congregation and Staff to Multi-Site*
- *Communication*
- *Leadership*
- *Volunteerism*
- *Location*
- *Organizational Humility*

## CHURCH IDENTITY

### **#13: Before launching a new site, take time to decide specifically what you will do to maintain the same identity among all your sites.**

The moment a church decides to extend its kingdom work to a second site, it enters into a new tension: the degree to which the new site's identity will be *dependent* on the original site, and the degree to which the second site will have its own independent identity. The very fact that the alternative site is not a wholly separate church implies a degree of unity with the original location, but its geographical separateness requires independence as well. The maturity and vision of the various site pastors, the varying needs of each site's local community, and the mission and purpose of the entire church might be justification for more independence of identity at each specific site. In other words, a site might develop a unique sub-identity within the over arching identity of the whole church.

Because of these and other variable factors, there's no prescribed mix of the dependence/independence balance. Church leadership teams that do the best job negotiating the transition from one site to many take time to address each site's identity within the context of their overall church vision. They also realize that sometimes they will not be able to determine the right balance of dependence and independence until they actually have begun meeting at the new site.

What's unquestioned is that as long as a site is considered part of the launching church, the church's leadership will have to focus on maintaining some uniformity of identity. Each site should express the church's unique mission and purpose for God's kingdom. And the challenge increases with each launched site. Mark Jobe, senior pastor of **New Life Community**, an eight-site church in metropolitan



Mark Jobe

Chicago (<http://www.newlifechicago.com>), comments that the more sites you launch, the more critical it is to “be really intentional about purposeful unity.”

Multi-site churches attack this challenge by various means.

#### #14: Let each site see, celebrate, and benefit from the accomplishments of every other site.

One way that **National Community Church** in Washington, DC (<http://www.theaterchurch.com>)



Worship service at New Life Community Church in Chicago.

maintains a unity of identity is by showing a brief video at the beginning of every service at every location that shows activities at every site. Chicago’s New Life Community Church’s Leadership Team makes a point of spreading throughout their sites any best practices that have been discovered. In these

ways and many others, multi-site churches maintain a unity of identity.

#### #15: Maintain your unique DNA across all your sites by giving leaders responsibilities that are both church-wide and site-specific.

Multi-site churches maintain their identity and culture by assigning staffers a mixture of local and global responsibilities. At National Community Church, Joel Schmidgall, comments, “I’m out at Balston; I’m the point person there, but I have other responsibilities—outreach and missions, which are global.” Community Pastor Jon Ferguson, who with his brother Dave founded **Community Christian Church** in Naperville, IL (<http://www.communitychristian.org>),

also comments that in their context “almost everybody wears at least two hats.” By having site-specific staff also execute global functions, Community Christian more easily maintains not only a unity of purpose but also the more critical relational connection between their various sites. This aspect of



JON FERGUSON

Community Christian Church is so important that Jon would like to see responsibilities adjusted so that staffers with global responsibilities can spend even more time working on church-wide concerns.

#### #16: When possible, mix and match your small groups between sites.

National Community Church takes advantage of the relative proximity of their sites (all three current sites are within ten miles of each other and two sites are in the same two-block area) by allowing the mixing of participants from various sites into each small group. Doing so helps group members to associate more with the whole church rather than just with their particular site.



National Community Church in D.C.

### ORIENTING THE CONGREGATION AND STAFF TO MULTI-SITE

Going from one to multiple sites can be disruptive to a church’s self-image and culture. But such a disruption can be helpful when it facilitates a congregation’s shifting to a more external focus. In the best case, the move to multi-site is a reflection of that external focus. Long before the first service in the second location, the churches that have negotiated the change most successfully have taken specific steps to enfold their body into the change process.

#### #17: As you move toward launching the next site, be sure to orient your congregation on how the new site will extend their mission as a church.

National Community Church orients their folks in several ways. They put a heavy emphasis on reaching all their folks by working through their leaders. Yearly they put on a leadership retreat in addition to three ministry summits. Joel Schmidgall comments, “We are with all our leaders four times a year to cast vision and talk about what’s coming up.” He continues, “We are really strategic at those times about communicating what we’re

dreaming with our leaders and getting what's coming up on their radar before we actually take steps forward."

Community Christian Church of metro Chicago also uses their monthly leadership community meetings to cast the vision for multi-site. They connected the launching of their first alternative site with what they had done historically to launch small groups and new Celebration Services. Similarly, **McLean Bible Church** in metropolitan Washington D.C. (<http://www.mcleanbible.org>) positioned their new multi-site initiative as just another engine for growth similar to past initiatives they've executed as they've pursued their goal of reaching secular Washington for Christ.

National Community Church, in downtown Washington, D.C., prepared for the launch to their second site by telling stories. They talked about where they had come from in the past, what God and His faithfulness had allowed them to do, and where they were now being called.

Mark Batterson, lead pastor of National Community Church, began casting the vision for multi-site years before they launched their second site. Even though the church does not plan to launch their fourth site until 2007, they've been talking to their people about it since late 2005. Joel Schmidgall says that they are preparing the body to go to four and five sites by, "planting seeds of communication and preparing our leaders to cast greater nets."

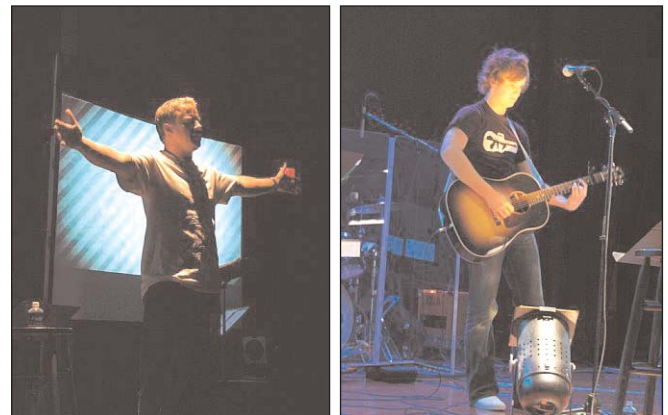
**#18: Use special events to help your folks understand the shift to multi-site.**

Another way in which National Community Church helped their people act on their vision for a second site was by ceremonializing their folks' intention to participate. The church sponsored an event where participants shifting to the second site actually signed their names on parchment that expressed their intention. National also did a prayer walk in which they visited every site where the church had ever met and ended their trek by walking to Balston in Arlington, VA, the location of their second site.

In addition, National Community Church made an event of every step in the process of acquiring their second site, such as the formation of their launch team, their first meeting with the small groups around Balston, and the signing of the contract for the location. McLean Bible Church also plans to stage events to support their first alternative site. Mike Hurt, McLean's director of campus community development, explains, "We are going to have three preview events in which we are hoping to build the core. We want them to find the place where we're meeting and begin to relate to each other in a different room. It's really about them beginning to associate themselves with that new Arlington campus."



MIKE HURT



Prayer and worship music were key components at the first preview event at Frontline Arlington.

**#19: Even after the second site is launched, it is *still* necessary to keep casting the vision before launching each subsequent new site.**

The dance of initiative and response that occurs between leadership and church community when they are jointly shifting their paradigm to a multi-site approach for kingdom impact doesn't stop with the launching of the first site. National's Joel Schmidgall anticipates, for example, that site pastors will need to act even more independently as National Community Church extends to its fourth and fifth sites. As they execute these launches, Joel also believes it may be necessary for the church to add another layer of pastoral management to

support all their site pastors to ensure effective inter-site communication, along the lines of what Christ the King does today with their area pastors (see below). This shift will represent yet another change at National Community Church, so constant communication and vision casting is key.

**#20: Whether it's your second site or your fiftieth, when it comes to orienting the church to the launching of a new site, don't forget the staff.**

"It's probably the pastors who will have more problems than the people because the people's lives don't center around that building like ours do," comments McLean Bible Church's Mike Hurt about the launching of their first alternative campus. When asked what has been harder than anticipated about becoming multi-site, Joby Morgan, the office manager for Bethlehem Baptist Church in Minneapolis, responded, "Getting the full staff on board—having them think multi-site. We try to help the staff by prayer and education, education, education."

One move that McLean Bible Church made that will help ensure their staff embraces their new multi-site initiative was to make their new Director of Campus Community Development Mike Hurt a member of the senior management team of the church. Just as the nation's president might strategically choose to show priority to a particular department of his administration by making its head a part of the president's Cabinet, so McLean's move helped to convey to all

staff the level of commitment that the church's most senior leaders have to their multi-site effort.

By these and many other means, churches have worked to unify their communities around their leadership's vision of multi-site.

## COMMUNICATION

**#21: Implement regular forums of communication between the leaders of your sites to ensure that the core DNA of your church is consistent.**

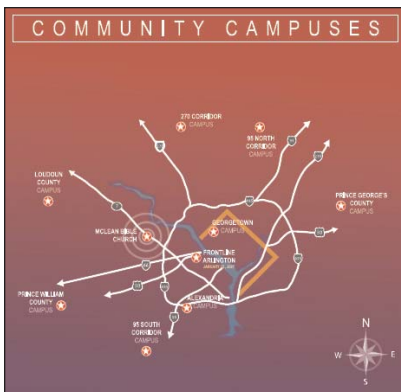
Churches not only need to vision cast before the launch of their next site, but their vision casting must be continuous. The most successful multi-site churches implement what *Built to Last* authors Jim Collins and Jerry Porras call "tangible mechanisms." Such churches execute these mechanisms on a regular basis to maintain communication between their sites.<sup>1</sup>

**Christ the King Community Church** in Washington State (<http://www.ckonline.com>) provides a variety of these forums for their pastors.

- *Annually, Christ the King puts on an Arrows Out Ministry Conference where all their pastors participate and lead workshops.*
- *Twice a year they have leadership retreats where they have fun, vision cast, and celebrate.*
- *Monthly they have a "Pastors Pow-Wow" where they gather on a Sunday afternoon for three hours to share, pray, and eat together.*
- *Because some pastors can't always make these monthly meetings, they also have a monthly conference call. (Christ the King has sites in Colorado, Oregon, Washington State, and Panama.)*

Community Christian Church in Metro Chicago also has monthly leadership community gatherings where leaders of all levels and their apprentices from all their sites gather.

To ensure that all site pastors are connected and adequately resourced, Christ the King also has area pastors to support them. Lead Pastor Dave Browning details how their structure works: "I meet every month one-on-one with each of the area pastors. Each of the area pastors meet monthly one-on-one with the pastors in their area. And



McLean Bible Church created a map of their target areas for people to pray over.

quarterly they meet with all the guys in their area combined.”

One leader infrastructure mechanism that **Fellowship Bible Church** in Little Rock, AR (<http://www.fbclr.org>) instituted that keeps their sites in synch is that their elders (some are paid staff; some are volunteers) are spread through all of their sites. Fellowship’s Worship Venue Pastor Craig Cheney explains how they stay in contact: “Our elders currently meet one time a week on Friday mornings. One Friday of the month they meet in their respective elder teams (the shepherding team or the operating team). One Friday of the month they meet as a full board combining shepherding and operating elders. The other two Friday morning meetings are convened at the direction of the congregational site pastor with those elders who serve with him at his site. These pastor-led elder meetings focus specific attention on the needs of that site’s congregation.”

**Christ Fellowship** in Palm Beach County, Florida also has found it helpful to pull all their staff together every week on Tuesdays. Todd Mullins notes, “It gets everybody on the same page. When someone in accounting hears stories of life change at one of the sites, they’re less likely to be frustrated if that site doesn’t always follow proper accounting procedure.” Through these meetings each staffer can, as Todd notes, “capture the vision and the heart of why we’re doing what we’re doing.”

**#22: Don’t assume that what works to keep you in communication for sites one, two, and three will identically work for sites four, five, six, and beyond.**

Jon Ferguson of Community Christian Church, which has grown to eight sites with plans for launching a ninth in the Spring 2007, says that a shift in strategy is required at site four: “We were able through three sites to maintain a similar organizational structure as we had even with one or two; but then there’s something about jumping to more than three, like four through seven and eight that has been a whole different world.” One example of a change they experienced was in how to

evaluate and execute improvements in weekend experiences. “When we moved beyond three sites we developed an online “Zoomerang” survey that we send to our staff that asks for input regarding the weekend experience. This ensures that we receive feedback from every location. We also found that with more locations we needed to give the campus pastors more direct supervision for the staff at his/her location. Previously, the campus staff were supervised by someone with a church-wide, ministry-specific responsibility (i.e. children’s, students, etc.)” And, as noted above, National Community Church’s Joel Schmidgall believes that when they launch their fourth site in 2007 that they are probably going to need to add another layer of pastoral management to maintain the same level of quality.

**#23: Create space in regularly scheduled inter-site meetings to strengthen the church’s relational network between leaders.**

The quality of the ongoing and consistent community of the church will be no better than the quality of community that exists within all church staff.

Mark Jobe of New Life Community emphasizes how critical it is that their leaders stay in *close relationship* with one another for the church to function most effectively. “I think that one of the things that gets overlooked a lot is the relational end of things.” Mark continues, “Our way of developing leaders would be totally non-functional aside from a healthy dose of relationship. Our pastoral team gets together every week for a couple of hours. The pastors’ wives also get together in a small group twice a month. We go on retreats together, play volleyball, hang out; some of my best friends are the guys on staff. And so we are committed to this vision of changing entire cities as a group of people that have a long term commitment. We want



New Life Community Church emphasizes the importance of relationships—Mark Jobe and his wife at a pastors’ function.

to do something big for God with people we like and enjoy. This is a part of our DNA as well.”



TOBY SLOUGH

**Cross Timbers Community Church** in the Dallas-Fort Worth metroplex (<http://www.crosstimberschurch.org>) puts on a monthly event called Refuel where all staff members from all locations gather with each other and worship and pray. Moreover, site pastors are asked to have fellowship gatherings with all of their staff at least once a quarter. When asked for his best advice for pastors who are about to take their church multi-site, Toby Slough, Cross Timbers' senior pastor, replied, "What you need to focus on is a cohesive launch team that has community in it."

Christ the King has four area pastors that work with their twenty-five pastors throughout their various sites. Dave Browning explains that their area pastors are not only local pastors but it's their responsibility to maintain and build relationships in their area." Another strategic decision that Christ the King made to help them maintain a relational connection between their site leaders was to make an investment in travel. Dave visits all the sites at least once a year, and they bring off-site pastors in for some of their regular events.

Contact between sites needs not only to be comprised of what Max Depree calls "lavish communication," but these contacts must also contain a high level of relationality.<sup>2</sup> The quality of the contacts must transcend the mere functional and operational.

## LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT

### #24: Develop, train, and select the site pastor long before launching the next site.

A note that we heard emphasized as we spoke to the multi-site revolutionaries was the importance of having *the right people* selected and trained before the site is launched. Mike Hurt of McLean Bible Church reflected this priority when he commented on the approach of their Senior Pastor Lon Solomon: "Lon looks for a leader and then

looks for a strategy. We never choose strategy before we choose a leader."

Christ Fellowship Church in Palm Beach Gardens, Florida even made the decision to delay a campus launch until 2007 so that they could get more confidence about that campus' leadership. Todd explains, "We actually purposely delayed the launch of our next site to allow for more seasoning." This seasoning cannot be forced. Christ the King's Dave Browning notes, "We don't determine in advance what a person's leadership level is. What determines their leadership level is one thing: followers."

### #25: Do not launch a new site until extreme care has been taken to select a campus pastor who is humble, relational, and a skilled leader.

Site failure is sometimes attributable to the selection of the wrong person as a campus pastor. Underestimating the importance of the campus pastor role can be a critical error. Mac Lake, director of leadership development for **Seacoast Church** in SC (<http://www.seacoast.org>), articulates it this way, "It's very important that they have enough charisma and people skills to get people to follow them, having the disadvantage of not having that much platform time." He says that the two most important categories of skills for the campus pastor are their people talents and their management abilities. Sites have gone south when multi-site leaders have only thought about the latter when selecting their site pastors. The importance of the site pastor must not be under-emphasized.

Toby Slough of Cross Timbers Community Church in the Dallas-Fort Worth area says that site pastors have to be humble enough to be satisfied with not being the top dog. They must be pastoral enough to care for the flock at their site. Todd Mullins of Christ Fellowship concurs, saying that they initially underestimated the importance of "the leadership presence on the weekend." He elaborates:

Churches that are contemplating going to multi-site are more than likely driven by a vision to reach their community.

That vision is usually championed by the senior pastor. The senior pastor sets the tone and the direction for that church, where it's going, and what it's going to prioritize. What we found out is that during the regular weekly service times when our senior pastor shares about what's happening that particular week—...just things that capture the heart or the pulse of what's going on—that never gets transferred. The sites don't ever get to hear that, and there's a lot that a strong visionary leader just does by being there with the words he says and the things he shares.

Christ Fellowship has learned that it's not enough for a site pastor to be an effective manager and administrator. Todd shares that the church also must have "a person at the site that is indoctrinated in the vision, heartbeat and the mission of the church so that when the campus pastor speaks it's almost like hearing the senior pastor." In addition, the leadership of Christ Fellowship has purposed to supplement their campus pastors in other ways by repeating their "heartbeat issues" through many other modes of communication.

## #26: *Practically train potential site pastors.*

Many successful multi-site churches continue to prefer to grow their own campus pastors rather than look outside of their church community for future leadership, as was mentioned in the first *Avoiding Detours* article. And even in some instances where someone is brought in from the outside, they spend a significant amount of time as part of the community before they're assigned as a site pastor. Mark Jobe of New Life Community Church in metro Chicago reports that they focus on practical skills when training new leaders: "We didn't want to duplicate seminary or Bible School. There are a lot of places where people can learn good solid theology and bible study methods." New Life seeks to answer the question, "What do these leaders need to learn from us that they can't learn somewhere else?" Leadership trainees meet once a month on Saturdays for four hours of instruction in addition to receiving reading assignments to augment their practical assignments.

New Life calls their method of raising up leaders "Launch Leader Training," which is overseen by four of New Life's pastors. Mark says that it is "life-on-life" training. For one year they focus on such skills as how to lead small groups, how to counsel someone, and how to lead worship services. He comments, "Typically that's not something you can learn in a classroom. It's stuff that you have to watch." New Life has found the process of having leaders-in-training follow and watch experienced leaders as they execute leadership tasks, or shadowing, is an effective tool for leadership development. A potential leader, who is selected by the site pastor, will hang out with a pastor and watch them do weddings, funerals, talks, counseling, etc.

At the completion of Launch Leader Training, not all of the trainees will be site pastors. Mark says, "We are looking to raise and train leaders that will be core or key leaders in new launches. So it doesn't mean they'll be a site pastor, because not everybody is wired that way. But our goal is to raise the inner core. In other words, they may not be the teaching pastor, but they would be a key person in the leadership team of a launch."



Community Christian Church utilizes the Internet to gather input from all its locations, and maintain consistent training.

Community Christian Church, also in the metro Chicago area, has a similar approach in terms of leadership development. Jon Ferguson reports that their primary focus on leadership development is on shadowing.

## #27: *Leverage online technology in a way that simplifies information transfer while maximizing relationally-based training.*

Mac Lake is a very excited guy. He's pumped because he and his team at Seacoast Church in Charleston, S.C., figured out a way to increase the number of leadership development trainers from 6 to 640! They did this by a creative utilization of online



MAC LAKE

technology in a way that maintains and even increases the relational/one-on-one/mentor-protégé aspect of effective leadership development.

Seacoast Church, like many others, uses their existing leaders to find new leaders at all levels of their organization, including site pastors. To give prospective leaders the biblical and practical information they needed to succeed, they've historically brought them to a centralized location for classroom training. This approach, however, had a number of limitations:

- Just getting to the classroom took a big chunk of time for their leaders-in-training. Seacoast's Savannah's site is two and a half hours from their Charleston location; their Greenville site is about two hours and forty-five minutes north.
- With all good intentions, new leaders would sign up for an eight-week session...and then circumstances would interrupt—a death, a sickness, or pressures at work. Through no fault of their own, these trainees would miss critical sessions that wouldn't be repeated for a long time.
- A small group coach would find a very promising potential small group leader in October and then be told, "Fantastic! Uh, we're about half-way done with the Winter Semester of Small Group Leader Training. Can you wait until January?"

So Mac Lake and his associates decided to put all of the content for their various levels of training online. Now participants can access the content at home, start their courses at any time, and follow the material through at their own pace (<http://www.mynextsteps.org/>). But Seacoast didn't want to de-relationalize the process. Mac explains it this way: "We're going to have the same content, but we're going to put it online and we're going to make it mentor based. So instead of a handful of us teaching classes, we're going to look at our small group leaders and say, 'You are our leadership development strategy to raise up new small group leaders. We want you to find somebody and raise them up by mentoring them through this online course.'"

Mac finds a basis for using all of Seacoast's existing leaders to raise up new leaders in Paul's letter to the church at Ephesus:

*And he gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the pastors and teachers, to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ  
Ephesians 4:11,12 (ESV).*

He explains, "Our leaders are those who God has given us to equip the saints to do the work of ministry. "

The process flows like this: A prospective leader enters the program through the recommendation of a recognized leader. They are assigned a mentor and then begin working their way through the eight-week course designed to train them for the target leadership role—small group, coach, etc. Each online session contains a variety of media and exercises. It might contain a couple of videos, a case study where the student is asked a practical question, such as, how would you handle a situation in a small group where.... The student then responds to the question online within a forum where other students taking the same course at the same time—called a cluster—can view each other's answers. Then after the session, the protégé is instructed to schedule a time with their mentor to discuss what they've learned and the practical assignment that was given at the end of the session. Then both the mentor and the protégé agree when the prospective leader should take the next session.

Another helpful feature for Mac is that at any point he can log onto the system and determine the progress of any of his developing leaders.

Some folks have been hesitant to adopt this new online approach. Mac explains, "We've gotten resistance because it's on the Internet, but we're telling people that it's high tech and high touch. It's high tech because it's online, but it's high touch because the only way that you can sign up is to have a mentor who agrees to take you through it personally." For those individuals who still aren't comfortable with an online approach, Mac and his team plan to transfer all of the online

material they can to hard copy so that one can still participate in development without being tied to the internet.

### #28: Make it a part of your leadership culture that every leader must find leaders.

As we've seen, Seacoast Church in SC accomplishes this when they ask their current leaders to identify potential leaders to go through their online training. Other churches approach leadership duplication similarly. Jon Ferguson of Community Christian Church says that for "almost any function, any role, we are casting vision for them to find somebody who they can develop and encourage and disciple so that the person they've found can eventually become a leader too."

In business circles, it is regarded as a best practice to develop bench strength at every level of leadership so that succession can be seamless. In their wonderful book *Built to Last*, Jim Collins and Jerry Porras spotlight Procter and Gamble's habit of having talent "stacked like cordwood."<sup>3</sup> Churches that expect to succeed at multi-site work must develop as many leaders as they can to lead their kingdom charge.

## VOLUNTEERISM

### #29: Take advantage of the fact that opening a new site instantly provides new opportunities for your current congregants to get more involved with the mission of the church.

Fellowship Bible Church of Little Rock, AR has worked for years to nurture a culture of empowerment and service. Craig Cheney comments, "On Sunday mornings, our mantra is worship one service and serve another." Never having a Sunday School in its 28-year history, Fellowship views the Sunday morning volunteer opportunity as their folks' first entry into service.



Volunteers can easily be involved as greeters.

Moving to a multi-site context where all sites have multiple services, their people have even more ministry opportunities than ever before.

Moreover, by multiplying leaders and lowering the leader-volunteer ratio at their various sites, Fellowship has increased the opportunities that it has to convey its mission to all of their volunteers. In brief, their leaders are closer to more people.

Todd Mullins of Christ Fellowship also sees new sites as a means to provide more service opportunities. "In a church this large, sometimes people have a hard time finding ways to connect and to feel ownership. By going to multi-site, we've spread out the responsibility and allowed more people to get involved in ministry and to feel the ownership of furthering the mission of the church. It took people from being observers and made them owners."



Volunteers are especially important to children's ministry.

Nancy Lindroth, director of team development of **Blackhawk Church** in Madison, WI (<http://www.blackhawkchurch.org/>), shares a number of the various strategies they use to solicit kingdom laborers. She writes:

- We make the need known through publications and the web.
- We have a space in our monthly newsletter to place an "ad."
- We have a top 10 service opportunities flier we put in the Sunday bulletin each quarter.
- We have the top 10 on our website with an easy way to click and contact the leader for more info.
- We have a volunteer interest form on the web that people can fill out.
- We have a book called *Serving Together* that has all the ways to serve with short job descriptions, the necessary time commitment, the gifts or skills desired, and a contact person.

- We have a class called “Finding your Niche” that we offer several times a year that ends with an interview with our volunteer connections consultants that help people find a place they might enjoy.
- We do targeted ‘opportunity’ ministry moments for ministries that are volunteer intensive, such as children’s, youth, and welcome, often with a video of stories from that particular ministry.
- Sometimes we begin service opportunities with a test drive: ‘Try this x number of times, or for x number of weeks and if you don’t think it works for you, you’re off the hook!’
- We find short term volunteer opportunities—special events, substitutes, summer only, etc.—to get people to try out volunteering. Then we work to segue them into a more lasting role.
- We praise our volunteers from the platform regularly.
- We teach regularly about the joy of serving God, his church, each other, and about spiritual gifts.
- Sometimes we have a big Servant Sunday where we try to get many people to try something out (lobby tables on ministries, etc.)
- We talk about volunteer appreciation often, and find ways to appreciate them in each ministry.

However, because the work that needs to be done at the new site might be very different from what was done at the original site, site leaders definitely have to communicate to their folks how participating in volunteer opportunities at the new site ties in with the overall mission of the church. The explanation, “this helps us by creating more space” just isn’t very compelling.

Nancy gives the example of the new volunteer opportunities they had at their first geographically separate venue: “There were some unique serving roles at our first alternative location that we really didn’t have at our first site. For example, being at church at 6:45 in the morning was one of them! It sounds easy to just take a worship team over to a theatre and do church. But to get all the

technical equipment there and to build a portable stage took a lot of set up and take down. Those were the teams that were the hardest to recruit for.”

Nancy believes that they can do a better job stressing to their volunteers just how critical their role is. She adds, “So this fall we need to ramp up the vision and purpose.” Craig Cheney at Fellowship also sees room for improvement: “We could do better at communicating a clear vision for the relationship between recruitment to serve and the overall impact that service has on the fulfillment of our mission.”

### #30: Have your volunteers find your volunteers!

At Blackhawk, Nancy Lindroth encourages their volunteers to reproduce themselves. She calls this “each one reaches one,” and explains, “Everyone’s looking for someone to serve and knows how to train them to do what they do. This is actually the best way to get volunteers, although people are always hesitant to ask others. When someone says, ‘Come see what I do, it is really fun!’—that gets the best volunteers.” Blackhawk even provides their volunteers with postcards to hand to their friends as they are encouraging them to step up to the church’s mission and purpose. This effort is part of the volunteer culture that Blackhawk cultivates where it’s expected that everyone should serve somewhere. Nancy says a common conversation should be, “You’ve been here a year? Where you serving?”

## LOCATION

### #31: Don’t expect the size of a location necessarily to be the best indication of its significance.

Dave Browning, of Christ the King Community Church, has had to work against the sentiment of, “Yeah, this is all well and good, but when are we going to be a megachurch?” at some of their sites. He counters, “A group of 35 people meeting in Jesus’ name in a Grange Hall can be every bit as profound for the kingdom as a group of

3,500 meeting at a megachurch facility in an urban context.” Dave works to shift the paradigm of his folks by, “starting to develop our own language around what success looks like.”

McLean Bible Chapel in Northern Virginia also experienced a breakthrough in their multi-site strategy at a Leadership Network Multi-Site Churches Leadership Community gathering after Byron Davis, a leader of Seacoast Church in Charleston, SC, told them, “You’re never too big to think small.” Mike Hurt, of McLean Bible Church, puts it this way, “Our action step from the last gathering was to redefine the win when it came to facilities. We’ve done lots of work to clarify what we need for a full blown campus. But we’re also looking at some creative and flexible ways to start campuses where people already are.”



BYRON DAVIS

**#32: As a rule of thumb, choose a location based on what God is already doing in that area.**

Community Christian Church in metropolitan Chicago has discerned seven phases that usually occur when they launch a new site. They’ve observed and named the first step “a God Thing.” Their “God Thing” for their Montgomery/Oswego campus, for example, was when a local church there decided to donate their building and land to Community Christian! Similarly, Christ the King Community Church’s seven-step process for site development begins with two questions: “Is God up to something?” and “What’s the evidence for that?”

Mark Jobe of New Life Community Church, also in Chicago, says that their approach is to determine “where God is working and how we can cooperate.” He comments that a number of their locations have started not based on demographic studies or analysis but from their sense of a positive answer to the question: “Is there God activity in that area?” They look into whether folks are becoming Christians in that area and if their leaders have a burden for that area.

Even if the desire for a new site is being driven by a simple lack of space, the most effective church communities position that move *as an expression*

*of God’s mission for that church.* In this way, multi-site church leaders help their folks understand that the weekend service is an *expression of being the Church* not Church itself. Moreover, duplicating sites needs to be about more than just drive time convenience. Todd Mullins of Christ Fellowship acknowledges less driving time for some of his folks, but sees that saved time as more time they now have to invest in volunteering. In speaking of the new Frontline Community Campus that McLean Bible Church is planting in January 2007 in Arlington, VA, Todd Phillips put it this way, “This Arlington campus does not exist for the purpose of making it more convenient for current Frontliners to attend. ...It’s about impacting secular Washington with the message of Jesus Christ. We’re doing this to impact your unchurched friends.”<sup>4</sup>

## ORGANIZATIONAL HUMILITY

**#33: Make sure that your house is in good order before you make the move to the next site. Becoming multi-site may spotlight your church’s strengths, but it will spotlight your weaknesses.**

A church certainly doesn’t have to be a perfect church to make the move to multi-site. Otherwise no church would have ever attempted it! But just as it’s a bad idea for a couple in a troubled marriage to think that their troubles will be solved if they begin having children, it’s equally ill-advisable for a church struggling in any of the following areas to make the move to multi-site:

- **Identity and Mission**

Why does the church exist? What makes the church unique in its community or what would the community lose if the church were to suddenly shut down? What are some specific examples of some ways that the church has expressed its identity and mission in the community.<sup>5</sup> If leaders at all levels of the single-site church can answer these questions, then the church is set to go multi-site. Even if adding sites is “just for space reasons,” it must be approached and executed as an expression of the church’s kingdom mission.



Celebrations at Community Christian Church's various campuses share similar worship elements.

- **Orienting Your Folks to Multi-Site**

Shifting to a multi-site approach will require a tremendous amount of cooperative effort for vision casting and education at all levels of the church through multiple events, publications, and all manner of communication channels. The church that has, for example, successfully negotiated a major fundraising campaign or any other historical change of direction will do the best job in precipitating this significant paradigm shift.

- **Leadership Development**

Churches that thrive at multi-site do so primarily because they have trusted, competent and effective leaders, most of whom have been grown in-house. The church that is adept at growing her own leaders at all levels of the organization has developed the engine she will need to ramp up to the multi-site effort.

- **Communication**

Successful multi-site environments are those of lavish communication between sites. The single-site church that executes constant and effective communication between departments has established the pattern they will need to improve and expand for the transition to multi-site. Current multi-site churches should not add sites unless they currently have this abundant communication.

- **Lay Empowerment**

The move to multi-site is necessarily volunteer-intensive. Churches that have been historically successful in soliciting

adequate levels of volunteer support, particularly if they have positioned volunteer involvement as a way to advance the church's unique kingdom purpose, will be in the best position to expand their recruitment efforts for multi-site.

Multi-site is a somewhat new movement within a very old movement called "doing church." As a result, it is intrinsically risky and not for the faint of heart. Counterintuitively, it is the church leader who is most tolerant of mistakes and failure who will be the most likely to succeed. A "rebound and keep moving" philosophy will well serve the leadership team of any church that wishes to embark on the multi-site adventure. Mistakes and failures not only are wonderful teachers but drive us to the One who told Paul, "My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness" (2 Corinthians 12:9a, ESV).

**#34: Expect the path to be simultaneously more difficult and more fulfilling than you may have anticipated.**

Todd Mullins and Christ Fellowship participated in a Leadership Network leadership community where a group of churches looking to go multi-site stayed in communication over the course of two years as they prepared for their respective launches. Todd comments, "At the end of our two year journey, almost all of us said that it was harder than we thought." When detailing the areas that were more difficult than anticipated, Todd mentions the cost of hiring extra staff, renting facilities, and duplicating systems. Christ Fellowship places a high premium on unity and so Todd also mentioned *the relational cost* measured by the effort that they've expended on maintaining inter-site communication between key leaders. Todd has no doubt that the effort to multi-site has been worth it, but advises those new to multi-site, "Go into it knowing what the cost is going to be."

### #35: Embrace the inevitable mistakes and misfires as opportunities for learning.

Todd Mullins of Christ Fellowship says, “We’re learning through this process. We’re learning by mistake too.” Toby Slough of Cross Timbers Community Church says that mistakes will happen and that they’re ok. “You can’t read enough, study enough, or learn enough to avoid making some mistakes,” he emphasizes. Craig Cheney of Fellowship Bible Church in Little Rock, Arkansas compares the new multi-site church to a growing family.

Craig advises, “I would say in contrast to feeling like you have it down perfectly, recognize that launching that new site gives you an opportunity to enter into self-examination at a level you can’t until you do that.” He explains, “I would liken it, for instance, to the young married couple who’s five years, six years into it and feels like they’ve kind of got it figured out and then they have their first child, and then they have their second, and by their third child, they’re going, ‘We didn’t have anything together, did we?’”

A high tolerance of failure is the necessary adjunct for the willingness to take risks, which is a non-negotiable character trait for the multi-site starter. Otherwise, as Craig notes, “We feel very fearful that there is something at risk here that God can’t manage and therefore we’ve got to have it really tight and figured out and it paralyzes us.”

### #36: Regard failure not as something to be avoided at all costs, but rather as an invaluable learning opportunity.

Some of the most successful multi-site churches have also successfully weathered site failures. Christ the King Community Church has twenty-two sites with 6,000 attending but has witnessed the death of six sites along the way. Dave Browning notes, “Part of the organic process that we’ve experienced several times is death. On the life side, everybody’s pretty excited about organic stuff: things getting planted and

things germinating and growing. But the other part of it is that things wither. Things die. Things need to be buried.”

Dave advocates an attitude of “well we tried and it didn’t work. I wonder what God will do next,” and emphasizes, “just shaking that stuff off as just part of the process.” Community Christian Church’s Jon Ferguson, who witnessed one of their sites fail in recent months, says, “If you’re not failing, you’re probably not taking enough chances.”

Multi-site leaders must exhibit what psychologists Suzanne C. Kobasa and Salvatore R. Maddi call “psychological hardiness.” Kobasa and Maddi studied Illinois Bell executives during the deregulation of AT&T and the Baby Bells in order to determine the characteristics of those who remained healthy during this period of heightened stress. They found that the business leaders who thrived:

- *not only accepted change as normal and natural but viewed change as a means for personal development*
- *maintained a belief that they could positively influence their environment*
- *refused to accept matters at face value, but were constantly strategizing how to change their situation to their advantage.<sup>6</sup>*

The individual with psychological hardiness exhibits what Martin Seligman, psychologist and author calls *learned optimism*. In brief, the individual who has learned optimism has learned to speak to themselves in a particular way about the negative events of their lives. So, for example, when a campus pastor might turn out to be the incorrect choice for a new site after it has launched, the optimistic senior pastor would say to himself that:

- *This event is not permanent. A new lead pastor can be found to shepherd the site.*
- *This event is not pervasive. Though this is one critical aspect of a new site, the installation of the wrong campus minister does not automatically mean that the site is an utter failure in all respects.*

- *This event is not to be taken personally. It does not mean that the senior pastor is forever to be labeled as incompetent at targeted selection.*

What is particularly fascinating about Seligman's treatment is that it is primarily the way in which the optimist leader responds to mistakes and failure that differentiates them from the pessimist leader. *Both experience mistakes and failure.* Seligman highlights research that demonstrates how optimism is a significant predictor of academic, sports, politics and even relational success.<sup>7</sup>

For multi-site leaders, It's not difficult to find scriptural warrant for the counsel of Kobasa, Maddi and Seligman to maintain a positive mental attitude. One need only to turn to the Apostle Paul:

Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, Rejoice. Let your reasonableness be known to everyone. The Lord is at hand; do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is commendable, if there is any excellence, if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things. What you have learned and received and heard and seen in me—practice these things, and the God of peace will be with you.  
*Ephesians 4:4-9 (ESV)*

### #37: MULTI-SITE ADVENTURERS WHO SUCCEED ARE ADVENTURERS WHO LISTEN!

Every day, the increasing power and declining cost and ease of use of technology provide more churches the option of going multi-site. But multi-site veterans have learned, sometimes the hard way, that there are many other elements of the shift to multi-site to which they must diligently attend. Successful multi-site church leaders, in prayerful dependence on God and the humble realization that they will need to make many course corrections, extend God's kingdom on earth by listening to the counsel of others who are on the same journey but a bit farther down the path.



STEPHEN SHIELDS

*Stephen Shields is the founder of <http://www.faithmaps.org>, the moderator of the faithmappers' online discussion group, a freelance writer and consultant. Stephen is also a manager with USA TODAY, formerly a bi-vocational pastor, and a frequent contributor to Next-Wave. Stephen currently serves on the Leadership Development Team of Grace Community Church in Columbia, MD. and, with his wife Beth, co-leads KatrinaGrace, Grace's outreach to Katrina survivors in Louisiana. Stephen received a M.Div. from Grace Theological Seminary and lives with his wife and three daughters - Michaela Siobhan, Skye Teresa, and Alia Noelle - in the Baltimore-Washington corridor. He can*



GREG LIGON

*be contacted at [sshields@faithmaps.org](mailto:sshields@faithmaps.org) and blogs at <http://faithmaps.blogspot.com>.*

Leadership Network welcomes your response. The primary writer is **Stephen Shields**. Editorial advisors were **Greg Ligon**, Director of the Multi-site Churches Leadership Community for Leadership Network; **Warren Bird**, Director of Research and Intellectual Capital Support for Leadership Network; and **Dave Travis**, Executive Vice President for Leadership Network. Contact them via [Julia.Burk@leadnet.org](mailto:Julia.Burk@leadnet.org)

© 2006 Leadership Network ([www.leadnet.org](http://www.leadnet.org))

Want to find more resources like this one? For the most current listing of free and purchasable resources, some of which are distributed solely through Leadership Network, go to [http://www.leadnet.org/Resources\\_downloads.asp](http://www.leadnet.org/Resources_downloads.asp) (alternate: [www.leadnet.org](http://www.leadnet.org), then select "resources" then "documents") or call toll-free 800-765-5323 or 214-969-5950 outside the U.S. and Canada.

Leadership Network's mission is to identify, connect and help high-capacity Christian leaders multiply their impact.

## ENDNOTES

- <sup>1</sup> James C. Collins and Jerry I. Porras, *Built to Last* (New York: HarperBusiness, 1994), p. 89.
- <sup>2</sup> Max Depree, *Leadership is an Art*, (New York: Dell, 1989), p. 67.
- <sup>3</sup> "We Grow our Own Managers," *Dun's Review*, December 1975, p. 48 cited in Collins and Porras, p. 178.
- <sup>4</sup> Todd Phillips. *Making an Impact*, MP3 [http://www.frontline.to/pages/page.asp?page\\_id=712](http://www.frontline.to/pages/page.asp?page_id=712) (accessed August 4<sup>th</sup>, 2006)
- <sup>5</sup> These kinds of question are raised by Jim Collins and Jerry Porras in their book *Built to Last*, p. 220.
- <sup>6</sup> James M. Kouzes and Barry Z. Posner, *The Leadership Challenge*, (San Francisco, Jossey-Bass, 1997), 70-73.
- <sup>7</sup> Martin Seligman, *Learned Optimism* (New York: The Free Press, 1998).