

Multiple-Site/Multiple-Campus Churches

*Report from a Leadership Network Forum
September 11 – 12, 2001*

by Dave Travis

Like most Americans, I know exactly where I was on September 11, 2001. I was with a team from Leadership Network in Chicago about to hold a special forum on the issue of multiple-site, multiple-campus and multiple-venue congregations.

The following special report contains some observations from the approaches shared at the forum as well as some of our staff research leading up to the forum.

We had worked for several years to gather information of the leaders who were using these ideas to extend the influence of their congregations.

One of Leadership Network's key strengths through the years has been to connect congregations who desired to learn with each other about specific new innovations. With the multiple-site idea, we had usually just referred congregations to each other. We finally decided to gather a group of these congregations in a special, 24-hour forum to discuss their unique challenges.

We decided to hold this forum because many of our friends were engaged in this multi-site approach, or considering a key shift in their ministry to the idea. We hope this document will help some leaders wrestle with key questions relating to implementing this idea.

We attempted to limit attendance to those churches that include one of the following:

- Were already using the idea in their church.
- Had already attempted the idea but abandoned the idea.
- Churches planning to implement within the next year.

For the most part, we succeeded in that almost all the churches represented fell in category A or C. We had no churches from category B.

In spite of the events of September 11, around 65 leaders attended the forum.

These descriptions are based on my reflections from the conversations, surveys and other descriptions the participants provided. The titles for these ideas are mine, not the church leaders. They are my shorthand for classifying the type in my own head.

In February 2002, we are holding a follow-up briefing to the forum that features several of the approaches mentioned below.

Dave Travis
Leadership Network

COMMUNITY CHRISTIAN CHURCH
ONE BIG IDEA

This church began in 1989 in Naperville, Illinois, and as of September 2001, have about 2,400 persons in attendance between two campuses. They have now started a third campus and next Easter will have a fourth. There are several interesting concepts applied by the Community Christian team.

First, all of the congregations have worship and small groups built around the same “big idea” each week. Two of the campuses have identical worship experiences, with different leadership at each. The worship teams, teaching teams, as well as support teams engage in a common planning and training time. The North and South campuses are very similar in that regard. The newest additional campus will be in a primarily adult community. While sharing the same big idea for the week, the worship team and teaching team will slightly customize their styles to meet the needs of its target community. The fourth location is presently being strategized.

Second are the various places where the campuses are housed. The North Campus now has a permanent facility owned by the church. It has a large activity room as well as office space for the staff. The South Campus, 12 miles away in Romeoville, was developed in partnership with a local development company. The church holds a long term lease agreement to provide various types of programs within that facility including those directly tied to the church.

This partnership includes the “for profit” development company, a “not for profit” foundation set up with the church and its leaders and development company. There is some cross board relationships between the not-for-profit foundation and the church leaders.

The third campus leases space in the community center of the primarily adult community. The upcoming fourth location was an older church building that has now been given to the church by the former congregation.

The third interesting item in their approach is the solid approach to a staff team this church currently uses. Their approach is deep in leadership at many levels. As a small example, the lead pastor, Dave Ferguson, is not the primary teaching pastor or communicator, or even the campus pastor at any one location.



To find out more about Community Christian, check out their web site at www.communitychristian.org. Their long-term vision is 10 campuses, 200 congregations and 100,000 Christ followers.

Dave Ferguson, Lead Pastor of Community Christian, will be one of the presenters at our briefing in February 2002.

Contact Information:
Community Christian Church
1635 Emerson Lane
Naperville, IL 60540
630.983.5000
www.communitychristian.org

NEW LIFE CHRISTIAN FELLOWSHIP A PLANTING STRATEGY

There were several congregations that fit this idea, but the most evolved was the New Life Christian Fellowship Movement based in Chesapeake, Virginia. We actually had several other congregations named "New Life" as well including another one from Virginia. The New Life – Chesapeake area approach currently has 6 congregations with a total attendance of over 2,200. The initial site has 500 in attendance, the largest site has 700 in attendance.

This congregation moved from a one-site model in 1994, and chose their approach as an alternative to a building program. Their model is "one church, one vision, one mission and the same core values." There is one Senior Pastor and Board with one treasury and one central administration. New congregations are reproduced by a planter and a core of members from the other congregations. The new congregations all have a unique "lead pastor" that serves as the primary shepherd for the individual congregations. There is a Senior Leadership Team comprised of the Senior Pastor, Executive Pastor and the Lead Pastors.

This a brief description from their presentation:

"New Life Christian Fellowship is a unique church because it is one church with many congregations. Unlike most churches that plant other churches, New Life combines the strength and resources of a large church with the more intimate relationships of a smaller church by multiplying itself - forming new congregations throughout the Hampton Roads area. By 2005, we hope to have at least 10 congregations in the area. New Life congregations are united by a single board of elders, one senior overseer, shared administration, and one budget. The unity of vision, mission, leadership, and money enables the congregations to combine resources to make more of an impact in areas such as missions, community outreach, and leadership training, than any of the congregations could make on its own. Conversely, the diversity and smaller size of each congregation enables New Life to reach the unique neighborhoods in the metroplex. Moreover, the smaller size of multiple congregations maintains a feeling of family and togetherness and offers opportunities for activation in lay ministry that a single mega-church could not offer. Several times a year the congregations unite in special services." (from the NLCF Discover Manual)



Bobby Hill is transitioning from his former role of Senior Pastor into the role of general overseer of the movement. The ministry has moved in several phases of development. They are beginning a transition from high centralization to a more decentralized approach. In their current stage of development the central church is now empowering the lead pastors and encouraging them to develop new teams for planting new congregations. The leadership of missions, equipping and administration is still handled through the central church. The new design has a cluster of stronger congregations helping to establish new congregations.

On the technical side, most of the properties used are schools. The closest proximity is two miles between locations.

Contact Information:

New Life Christian Fellowship

Central Offices: 1101 Volvo Parkway

Chesapeake, VA 23320

757.547.7777

www.newlife.cc

NORTH COAST CHURCH MULTI PLEX MODEL - THE VIDEO VENUE

In previous Leadership Network e-publications, we have mentioned the approach taken by North Coast Church in Vista, California. Their congregation currently has 12 worship options for their adult attendees. Eight of these options are on-site video venues, and one is an off-site video venue. The other three are currently worship experiences with live teaching in the main auditorium.

To North Coast, a video venue is a site with a targeted worship experience with a unique feel in each venue space. It is not an overflow video-fed room. It is an experience with live worship, in some cases food and coffee, and a live host. During the teaching time, a full screen video of the message is shown. Each of the venues has a medium sized to small church feel while at the same time sharing the resources of a large church.

In the beginning of their experience, 10% of the adults chose to attend a video venue. This allowed for more seats to be opened in the main auditorium. Currently 65% now choose a video venue. The growth of options in this short time has led to strong growth of total attendance at all services.

After personally visiting this church and talking at length with Larry, I would describe the music as fairly simple. The church had at the time of my visit, 18 different worship teams that rotated in various venues. There was only one paid staff member coordinating these teams. There were several technical people that helped with audio/visual issues, but these technologies were kept plain and simple. They were not overproduced.

The video venue rooms were plain, accented with banners and simple backdrops, plastic or metal chairs, and simple sound systems. All of them had friendly people, clear “directions” from the paper handouts and the worship leaders, as well as food and drink where appropriate. One video venue is called “Traditions” and caters to those who enjoy more traditional worship and traditional styles, while other venues, such as “The Edge” cater to other tastes.



Larry Osborne, the lead pastor, admits they stumbled onto this video venue in the early days but are now making it a part of their strategy. This will include the design plans for their new facilities in the future. There is an excellent slide presentation on the church's web site at www.northcoastchurch.com

North Coast plans to have several conferences that highlight this idea in conjunction with other congregations. You can find more on their web site.

Contact Information:

Video Café Pastor: Chris Mavity

Chris@northcoastchurch.com

The Edge Pastor: Steve Redden

Steve@northcoastchurch.com

Sr. Pastor: Larry Osborne

www.northcoastchurch.com

**1132 North Melrose Drive
Vista, California 92083-3474
(760) 724-6700**

**EASTERN STAR BAPTIST
CIRCLE THE CITY**



Eastern Star Church is located in Indianapolis. Pastor Jeffrey Johnson Sr., has been the Senior Pastor since 1988. Their approach, as outlined by Deacon and Chief Operating Officer Robert Wright, is to be one church in three locations. These locations encircle the city of Indianapolis. There is the main campus that the church built in October 1994. It has two services and seats 2,200. The second campus, called the Northeast campus, is located 12 miles from the main location which seats 700 and has one service at the present time. It uses a school gymnasium as a meeting place.

The Northwest Campus is 18 miles from the main campus and uses a renovated warehouse facility to seat 1,400. There are presently two services in that location. That location was started in November of 1998. Both locations were chosen on the membership demographics derived from a zip code survey.

At the present time, the Senior Pastor preaches four of the five services held on Sundays. There are four very strong choirs to help lead worship and the order of worship is the same at all locations. They are tied together by a very tight administration and organizational structure and effective written communications to members.

The approach allows more members to serve and more opportunities for leaders to be developed at each location. The outreach of the church is extended to new neighborhoods and growing areas of the community. At each location, the worship ministries and other leadership can grow in areas such as ushers, tape ministry, nurses ministry, pastor's aid, Sunday School and Children's Church.

In addition to their current multi site strategy, they have now added a church planting strategy. Their future locations will be plants that are strongly tied to the "mother church." Part of this strategy is to overcome the stress on the core staff.

**Contact Information:
Deacon Robert Wright
Business Administrator**

**Eastern Star Church
5750 East 30th Street
Indianapolis, Indiana 46218
317.591.5050
rwright@easternstarchurch.org
www.easternstarchurch.org.**

**SAINT LUKE'S UNITED METHODIST CHURCH AND
BETHLEHEM LUTHERAN CHURCH
THE GARDEN AND THE GARAGE - DIFFERENT SITES FOR DIFFERENT FOLKS**



Indianapolis is also the site of another approach to the idea of the multi-site/multi-campus church used by the St. Luke's United Methodist Church. St. Luke's is located in north Indianapolis and has about 3,000 in worship each weekend in its 10 different worship services. The lead pastor is Kent Millard. Linda McCoy is the pastor of "The Garden" called "a blossom of St. Luke's United Methodist."

The Garden meets at the Beef and Boards dinner theater 4 miles from the primary location. The Garden started in 1995 and now reaches over 800 persons in three services each Sunday. The mission statement of the Garden: The Garden seeks to engage all in the quest to know and share the unconditional love of God. While the worship services at St. Luke's are described as "spirited traditional," they are also adding other approaches to worship at St. Luke's main campus. The Garden worship is casual, upbeat and is held around food and tables there in the dinner theater.

The total attendance among all the congregations at St. Luke's is around 3,000 with both locations growing and vibrant. At the present time the income and expenses, while administrated together, are accounted for separately. In addition, "the Gardener's" nominate an area charity to receive 10% of the income of the Garden for the month.

You can visit their web site at www.the-garden.org. Dr. McCoy and others from their team have presented workshops to several different denominations about the concept and they have been featured in several publications.

A twist on the same idea comes from another mainline congregation, Bethlehem Lutheran Church of Minneapolis, Minnesota. Bethlehem Lutheran's Senior Pastor is Chris Nelson. Bethlehem Lutheran was doing a good job in growing and reaching young families. They have grown from 700 to 1,200 in weekly worship attendance in the past few years. But they also saw that they were not reaching a number of people who were a bit younger.

After careful study and reflection, the church called a pastor and musician and commissioned them to start a new expression, known as "Spirit Garage." The Garage is a separate congregation that uses a theater for its meeting space but utilizes Bethlehem for some office and small groups. Pam Fickenscher is the pastor of Spirit Garage. The Spirit Garage leadership has operational and creative freedom to develop what is necessary for the ministry to thrive. You can see their web site at www.spiritgarage.org.

Whereas the Garden tends to reach a broad age base, the Spirit Garage is laser targeted on a certain demographic profile. They would say that the demographic is that of the uptown neighborhood where they are located. This neighborhood is full of urban singles, coffeehouses and theaters.

Contact Information:

St. Luke's United Methodist Church
100 West 86th Street
Indianapolis, Indiana 46260
317.846.3404
www.stlukesumc.com

Bethlehem Lutheran Church
4100 Lyndale Avenue South
Minneapolis, Minnesota 55409
612.312.3403
www.bethlehem-church.org

UPPER ARLINGTON LUTHERAN CHURCH TWO CAMPUSES IN TWO MILES

Upper Arlington Lutheran Church is in a northwestern suburb of Columbus, Ohio. An interview with its Senior Pastor, Jim Wessel, appeared in an issue of our Leadership Network Explorer #29 back in January of 2001. That interview can be found at www.leadnet.org in the publications archive.

A few years ago, Upper Arlington was prevented by the city from expanding its original site. Instead of just re-locating, the church purchased a 34 acre site two miles away and built a second campus. They now see themselves as one church in multiple locations. I would describe the original location as a “first ring suburb” that is aging but still vibrant. The new location is found next to the major city perimeter road in the middle of a shopping/commercial area.

The entire congregation is now known as UALC with two locations. The original is known as The Church at Mill Run while the second location is known as The Church on Lytham.

In their approach, they use multiple teaching and preaching pastors across their various services. All four of their pastors preach regularly at both campuses. All the pastors use the same text and themes. However, there are multiple worship styles at both campuses. There is a traditional Lutheran liturgy, a contemporary, informal worship service, and a “Life to the Extreme” service.

They believe that a seamless technological link helps to bridge the feeling of one church between the campuses. Although the staff offices are spread between the two campuses, the computer network, phone network and other devices make it seem like one campus to the staff and key workers.

When they built the second campus, they also invested in refurbishing the new campus with technology, paint, carpet and other items to show their commitment not only to the new ministry, but also to the existing site.



The church will continue to look for new opportunities to grow its influence and ministry, including possibly a third site. To see more of Upper Arlington, check out their web site at www.ualc.org.

One of the striking features to me about Upper Arlington is that Jim Wessel, its current Senior Pastor, is no spring chicken. In fact he is retiring in 2002. But his leadership has been shared and he has helped build a strong team with diverse responsibilities. The church in September 2001 had 20 paid ministry staff and 13 unpaid ministry staff. The church has been able to offer multiple styles to appeal to traditional Lutherans as well as new believers.

Contact Information:

UALC

The Church on Lytham and

The Church at Mill Run

2300 Lytham Road

Columbus, Ohio 43220

614.451.3736

www.ualc.org

OTHER MODELS

There were several other approaches to the multi-site, multi-campus strategy that were represented at the forum that space does not permit full explanation but do warrant mention. Additionally, in each of the models mentioned above, we can cite multiple practitioners conducting those approaches. These are not isolated cases.



Brent Knox

I also want to note that this approach was not limited to large churches. Although all the churches mentioned above are larger congregations, there were some other congregations just over 400 in attendance who were applying the models.

Some of the other practitioners that warrant further study:

Evergreen Community Church in the Twin Cities area. This approach has four congregations led by a team of three senior pastors and a common staff and budget. None of the congregations owns property, relying instead of rented facilities. The total attendance of all locations is around 3000. Their model is to continue to plant new locations in rented facilities. You can learn more about them at www.evergreenc.com.

Lord of Life Lutheran Church in Tyson's Corner, Virginia as well as other congregations that would be labeled as "traditional and mainline" would have adopted weaker congregations of the same denomination in order to revitalize these congregations. In many of these cases, the leadership suggested that the best methodology was to approach the smaller congregation as a "takeover" rather than a partnership merger. When approached as a dominant congregation giving leadership in the new location, the future success is much better than a weaker congregation still attempting to give leadership to its program. This approach has been used most frequently in United Methodist Churches represented at the forum, with varying results. See Lord of Life's web site at www.lordoflifelutheran.com.



Ronald Qualley



Tillie Burgin

Finally, though not represented at the event, the experience of Mission Arlington, an approach used by the First Baptist Church of Arlington, Texas is appropriate. This approach sends lay teams to apartment complexes and other institutions to start special purpose congregations targeting those limited geographies. This allows these specialized congregations to meet the needs of these micro-niches based on language and social need. This approach has been documented by Lyle Schaller in *Innovations in Ministry : Models for the Twenty-First Century* I have seen this approach and think it is worth a look for other churches. You can also find information at www.missionarlington.org.

DRIVING FORCES

Some of the Driving Forces seen in various multi-site/multi-campus approaches mentioned by the group gathered in September:

- A Church Planting Strategy – as a way to plant churches that will eventually be separate units.
- Targeting a new age group (usually younger) or different psycho graphic group. This is a way to reach a new constituency that is not reached by the current congregation. Sometimes this is a target population in the same economic and cultural group. Other times it is a design that reaches into the same racial group, but a different economic or cultural group.
- Targeting a new geographical area with the same constituency the church has traditionally reached. Sometimes this is a newly developing suburban area and sometimes this is an in town neighborhood being populated by persons who have traditionally been reached by the church.
- Churches choose to start new campuses in friendlier confines because of opposition to building a new facility on the present campus due to space, area growth, governmental restrictions, and changing demographics. In many cases a church has simply built out its existing land space. In other cases, to add to the difficulties, town and city planning boards have obstructed new facility growth for tax or even aesthetic reasons.
- To establish a new worshipping congregation based on the worship style/format. In many cases, there is a longstanding, center-city church with a traditional style that starts a new site with a contemporary style of worship at a new site.
- As a special purpose “branch” such as an institutional setting, prison, nursing home, etc. These expressions serve these target populations with ministry, service and worship, but view themselves as a congregation not just an extra service.
- To reach a new language or ethnicity different from the original congregation. Again, this is the same church, with the same leadership structure, but a new congregation on a new site that helps reach that language or ethnicity.
- To “help” a fellow church of the same denomination. In this case, the healthy church is sometimes asked by their judicatory to take another church under their wing. In most cases the healthy church takes a very strong leadership position over the hurting congregation. The healthy church provides the staff and program for the hurting congregation and eventually absorbs the old church.

CHALLENGES TO THE APPROACHES:

The above-mentioned approaches also have their unique issues. Since many of the participants were on the staff of these congregations, many of the issues related to staff. These included:

- What is the role of Preaching/Teaching Team? In some cases the same preacher/teacher served all the services themselves or through video technology. In other cases, there is a team of preachers/teachers that serve the various sites. In some cases, these basically use the same material for each service while in others they are on different tracks. Again, the model chosen determines the issues.
- Role of Campus Pastor – In this approach, the campus pastor serves as the primary visible leader for the particular congregation meeting at that site, but serves the larger leadership of the church in some other role.
- Role of music/drama/arts leadership for each congregation. Many of the congregations, unlike the role of preaching and teaching, have multiple music and arts teams that can serve the multiple venues or sites. The question becomes then – how many different types of music and arts can we support? Is it a unified arts team or decentralized? Who helps give direction to those teams? A centralized structure or leader or the campus pastor.
- Maintaining the staff’s focus. When there are multiple campuses, how does the staff stay together as a team? How does the team focus on the issues of the whole and the issues of the parts?
- Which staff and volunteers are critical to start another site? Depending on the approach a church chooses will determine which staff and volunteers are needed.

INTERIM CONCLUSIONS:

The approach to the various methods of multi-site, multi-campus and multi-venue congregations builds on each respective congregation's strengths, not weaknesses. I think this is a key factor to those that succeed in these models. While the first introduction to the approach may have been to solve a particular growth problem or issue, the solution developed was based on strength rather than weakness. The successful congregation then combined its various strengths to build its approach.

In some cases, the strength was the ability of the primary teacher to gather hearers. When the congregation ran out of logical meeting space in one location, it started others.

In other cases, the strength was the reproducibility of the seeker friendly presentations such as drama, music and teaching. This approach recognizes that it is almost just as easy to produce multiple teams to produce the same presentation, planning and rehearsing them at the same time, as it is to produce just one team to do the same.

In still yet other cases, the strength was recognized to be the small group structure and model that unifies the whole of the congregation. Those that utilize this approach use a "lecture-lab" approach where the small group focus is always the same as the weekend focus. In these cases, the congregation is unified through the small group structure instead of a common worship event.

In other cases, the strength was the ability of the leadership to raise the funds needed for new outreach to other communities. Part of this could be described as a church planting strategy that casts vision for a similar congregation in another community while yet others could execute the ability to raise resources to actually buy and build new locations to extend the influence of the congregation to new areas.

Finally, in some cases, the strength is in the vision and administrative structures whereby the various congregations can have common back offices and common staff members to service both common needs as well as specialized needs within the congregations.

As was mentioned earlier, in each of the approaches mentioned in this report, as well as others that were at the forum, there were at least two strengths at work in each.

WHY THIS IS THE RIGHT TIME FOR THIS APPROACH.

In my opinion, the multi-site model and approach will continue to grow. While it is clearly not appropriate for all congregations, it does help address some issues that contemporary churches are facing.

First, it addresses the growing concern over property issues. I call this threat the multi jurisdictional planning authority threat. In many cases, the land necessary to build new church facilities to sufficient scale is not there. In other cases, the multiple regulatory groups, neighborhood groups and other interests will not allow scalable facilities. Multiple, smaller locations, some using rented property is one solution. Note that in almost all the cases above, the approach is not to eventually build one large building or have all the worshippers in one location.

Secondly, it addresses leadership issues as a church grows larger. The approach gives a church the opportunity to create up front leaders in multiple settings rather than depending on a few leaders. The creation of worship teams, as well as other teams is critical for the future. This approach allows the teams to be fully utilized rather than kept in reserve.

Thirdly, it allows some congregations a better stewardship of their financial resources. Though conclusions are difficult to draw, many believe that even attenders of very large congregations are drawing a line and giving to ever growing building budgets. The multi-site, multi-campus approach makes a more efficient and flexible use of the resources.

Fourthly, it allows new diversity of ministry within the same congregation. These options, which include musical style, time of service and others allow attenders to choose the style that fits their spiritual life best and enables them to in turn feel more comfortable in inviting friends to worship with them.

We intend to make this a living document, so you hold in your hands version 1.0. If you have comments, please send them directly to dave.travis@leadnet.org. We will post future versions on the Leadership Network web site.

Leadership Network will hold a special briefing featuring many of these approaches on February 4-5, 2002, in Las Vegas, Nevada, hosted by the Central Christian Church. To get more information, please see the Leadership Network web site at www.leadnet.org.