



Replication

Launching Multiple Congregational Campuses *One of the Ten "R"s for Plotting a New Congregational Course*

Replication is one of at least ten choices available to congregations who need to engage in transitions and changes that could lead to transformation as they plot a new course for their congregation. This is when a congregation launches multiple congregational campuses. It replicates itself in another location or another venue.

Estimates are that there are at least 8,000 congregations in North America who worship in multiple locations or venues. In South Carolina the two most well-known multi-site churches are New Spring and Seacoast. Because of their popularity the image many people may have about congregations who have multiple campuses is that they are very large churches, and not the average church.

This is partially true. If a congregation has multiple campuses it tends to become larger. Did they all start out that way? The key word is "all" and the answer is "no." Often their multiple campuses empowered their ability to grow large.

We have an example of a church in our association that has less than 50 in attendance that has launched another congregational campus that holds great promise for them. Their new campus is having almost as many in attendance as their core campus. So, the early results are that they have doubled their attendance. More important, they faced a loss in income due to a school temporarily meeting in their facilities moving to a permanent location. The new campus is helping to replace that income.

For congregations needing to plot a new course, multiple campuses are not all that different than pastors who serve two or more churches. This is at times called a field of churches or a multiple church call. This is popular in some rural and small-town areas, but also has implications for urban areas. It is just not something churches typically consider. This is especially true if they want their pastor to be full-time only for them.

Why Launch Multiple Congregational Campuses?

Here are seven reasons for launching one or more new campuses. Perhaps you can think of more.

1. Because you want to have a congregational expression geographically closer to the households your congregation feels God is calling it to reach.
2. Because the membership of your congregation has scattered geographically and still wants to be part your congregation, so you start a location nearer to them.
3. Because the population surrounding your church facilities has significantly decreased and the opportunity to sustain the congregation in its current location is doubtful.
4. Because the demographics of the population surrounding your church facilities have radically shifted and your congregation does not have the gifts, skills, and resources to reach them.
5. Because the population of your area is growing some distance away from your church's location and you have a desire to offer a congregational expression for people in the new location.
6. Because your congregation has outgrown its current facilities and building additional facilities in this location is not a good choice.
7. Because you want to plant a new congregation in a different location and doing so by starting a new campus is the first step you have chosen to take.

How Does a Church Launch Multiple Campuses?

It is not difficult to start a new campus, unless you are seeking to make it a full program congregational expression from the first day it begins. Here are seven things to consider.

1. Your congregation must feel spiritually called to start a new campus. It is not a business move or a survival move, but a Christ-centered, faith-based move.
2. Your congregation must be able to identify the households or the affinity groups of people God is calling your congregation to reach. What are their characteristics? What are their religious preferences?
3. Your congregation must be able to provide leadership for the new congregational expression that does not significantly hurt your ability to provide leadership at the main campus. This especially includes allowing time for your pastor and/or a staff person to focus on the new campus or campuses.
4. Your congregation must understand what type of congregational expression God is leading you to start. Is it a micro-church of some type like a dinner church or a home church? Is it intended to be permanent or temporary? Is it intended to become a full-fledged congregation with its own facilities at some future point? You must discover a place for the new congregational expression to gather. It can even be an already existing church building. It can be in a commercial, retail, or school space.
5. Your congregation must know how it will fund the new congregational expression until the new campus can support itself. You must also have an idea of how long it should take for the new campus to be self-supporting.
6. Your congregation must cultivate the households and affinity groups in preparation for a launch week. You typically cannot just put out a sign and invite people to come—although this does happen in a few places. Your congregational leaders must be committed to developing a genuine Christ-like relationship with the people you are seeking to reach.
7. Your congregation must pray without ceasing for the new congregational expression. And, it must pray for itself to be sure you as the sponsors stay spiritually focused, and not become jealous of the emphasis placed on the new congregation.

What is the Impact on the Church That Launches Multiple Campuses?

Much of the impact is unknown, but here are seven possibilities.

1. It is likely that your congregation will be proud of the new thing God has led you to launch. Your congregation may even brag about it to others. Others seeing what is happening may even brag about it to you.
2. It is highly possible you might learn again or for the first time what it is like to be part of a new congregational expression that is emerging. Many people in your congregation may never have been part of a new congregational expression. Or, if they have, it was so many years ago they have forgotten the exhilaration of the experience.
3. It may cause your congregation to be more inviting and hospitable at its primary location toward new people who visit, or people in the community who need a congregational connection for their own spiritual growth.
4. The satisfaction of your congregation about their church may increase as numbers and finances increase. Any lack of hope that had existed in your congregation may begin to diminish.
5. It is possible there may be some jealousy about the success of the new campus. Congregations need a healthy amount of self-awareness about possible jealousy, and a process for working through their emotions about it.
6. Your congregation may discover it has resources of money, leaders, and talents you did not realize you had as there may be opportunities for people to step up and help with the new congregation or the sponsoring congregation.
7. The spiritual depth of your congregation may increase as you pray more fervently for the new things happening in your midst and rejoice in the Lord concerning them.