



## **Reproduction**

### ***Planting New Congregational Expressions***

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

**Reproduction** 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 plants one or more new congregational expressions.

Planting new congregational expressions to serve as a new ongoing church is a strange idea for some congregations, but one that is more possible than they realize. New congregations can even be planted within the facilities of your congregation.

Planting a new congregational expression is often not the same thing as planting a new, traditional congregation that is going to have its own full-time pastors, a building, and a lot of programmatic and management activities going on. It is, in many cases, much simpler than that.

Planting a new congregational expression means gathering a group of people you recruit to be on a discipleship journey in a group setting, and then leading them to have regular worship, spiritual formation for becoming and maturing as a disciple, leadership development that affirms their spiritual gifts, fellowship that builds deep community, and authentic missional engagement that seeks to fulfill the Great Commission in the spirit of the Great Commandment.

Congregational expressions can be a micro group of 12 or so people, all the way to a mega group of 2000 or more. Since two-thirds of all congregations have less than 125-135 in average weekly attendance, the typical congregation is a smaller membership congregation of no more than this size.

One of the myths about a congregation starting a new congregational expression is that the sponsoring congregation must be a large church with plenty of resources. The reality is that many new congregational expressions are started by congregations who have less than 125-135 in attendance. Of course, medium membership, large membership, and mega membership congregations also start many new congregational expressions. And they should based on their Kingdom resources.

### **Why Launch New Congregational Expressions?**

Here are seven reasons for launching new congregational expressions. Perhaps you can think of more.

1. Because you believe the research that new congregational expressions are among the best ways to reach new people for a Christ-centered, faith-based relationship with God through Jesus Christ.
2. Because you want to invite people not currently related to your congregation to be on a discipleship journey and doing so through a new congregational expression is an effective way to do this.
3. Because you want to connect with a target or affinity group of people who are preChristians, unchurched, underchurched, or dechurched, and you have forgotten how.
4. Because you want to connect with new demographic groups in your community context who might be best reached by a new congregational expression rather than your existing congregation.
5. Because you want to relearn how to reach people to connect with, and become members of your church, and a great way to do this is starting a new congregational expression your sponsor.
6. Because your want to experience the joy felt when you help bring something new into existence and see people growing in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.
7. Because God is inspiring your congregation to reach out, take what appears to be a risk but really is not if God is in it, and start a new congregation.

## **How Does a Church Start a New Congregational Expression?**

It is not difficult to start a new congregational expression, 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 congregational expression. 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 for your congregation. 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-fledge 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 Starts a New Congregational Expression?**

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.