

## **Multi-site Versus Church Planting?**

There's a new person on the block. A new kid has moved into the ministry neighborhood. It's the church multi-site movement. However, I must use the term *new* carefully as there likely was a multi-site movement in the first century church. An example would be the church at Corinth. In 1 Corinthians 1:2 Paul writes to the church at Corinth. Then he mentions a house church that likely was located in or near Corinth (1 Cor. 16:19-20). It would seem that in the first century there was a city church (1 Cor. 1:2) that was made up of a number of house churches as in chapter 16.

### **What is a Multi-site Church?**

The simple definition is that a multi-site church is the same church that meets in more than one location. It could meet in several places on the same campus, another location in the same town or state, or even in another country. For example, Ed Young who pastors Fellowship Church in Grapevine, Texas, also has established two other downtown campuses in Dallas and a third in Miami, Florida. While Ed usually preaches at the Grapevine campus, the service is sent by video to the other locations as well. And what takes place at Grapevine-the programming in particular-also takes place at the other campuses. In a real sense this is church franchising, and I don't mean this in a negative way. Initially these were begun to relieve some of the mega-churches of land and facilities problems. They needed more room to expand their ministries. And what began as a solution to a land problem has become a major movement.

### **What is a Church Plant?**

A church plant is similar to and different from a multi-site church. Like a multi-site church, they may be started by a sponsoring church. However, a difference is that unlike the multi-site church they may not be at all like the sponsoring church. Thus you are not franchising a particular style of church ministry. Another observation with exceptions is that multi-site churches consist of more of the same kinds of people. For example, a predominantly boomer church will attract boomers at its other locations. What appeals to them at one site appeals at the other. Whereas, a church plant will often attract those who are different from the people that attend the sponsoring church. They are usually a younger crowd. Perhaps the difference might be summed up this way. Starbucks would represent a multi-site approach. Whereas, Aubrey's coffee shop would be indicative of a church planting approach. If you like Starbucks coffee, then go to Starbucks. But if you want something different-that's unique-then visit Aubrey's Exotic Coffee Shop.

### **My Concern**

While I'm all for multi-site churches as I attend one (Lake Pointe Church in Rockwall, Texas), I'm concerned that they not replace church planting. While I have no research to

support my view, it would appear that a number of pastors are opting for a multi-site approach over church planting. The problem with this is that most churches best reach a younger population not through a multi-site location but by planting churches. Many of today's youth react negatively to the predominantly boomer, multi-site churches. They want to meet in smaller more intimate groups as seen in a growing number of house church plants. They want to belong before they believe. They want to check things out to see if church people are authentic—"if what you think you see (Jesus) is really what you get."

### **My Appeal**

Instead of supporting one approach to ministry, lets do both. Let's embrace both the multi-site approach and church planting. That way we can continue to reach those who've been blessed by what many of today's churches are doing and reach out to tomorrow's generations as well. It shouldn't be as in the title to this article—"Multi-site Versus Church Planting." One must not exclude the other. Both are necessary to reach our lost and dying world.

### **Announcement**

The Malphurs Group will offer training in Christ's church building process (Mt. 16:18) this fall, beginning in early August. It covers numerous leadership issues that address both church revitalization, church planting, and multi-site issues. This is a must for pastors in general, church planters, denominational executives, consultants, and those who lead at an associate, state or international level. Attendees may receive seminary credit toward a masters or doctor of ministries degree. If you would like to know more, contact Aubrey at the Malphurs Group ([Aubrey@malphursgroup.com](mailto:Aubrey@malphursgroup.com)). Also, you can learn more from the Web site ([www.malphursgroup.com](http://www.malphursgroup.com)).

© Copyright 2008, Aubrey Malphurs, Ph.D.

[www.MalphursGroup.com](http://www.MalphursGroup.com)  
[Aubrey@MalphursGroup.com](mailto:Aubrey@MalphursGroup.com)