

ABSTRACT

MULTI-SITE CHURCH: BEST PRACTICES TO LAUNCH AND SUSTAIN

MULTI-SITE

by

Brandon Beals

Over the last ten years, a significant number of churches have expanded into a multi-site church model of ministry. Since this strategy of ministry is relatively new, there are few helpful resources or models available for those that desire to transition to this style of ministry.

Multi-site church ministry has the ability to enhance the church planting revolution around America as well as expand the ministry of an established, local church. By studying churches around America that have effectively made the transition to a multi-site model of ministry and by learning from their successes and challenges, a church can avoid the pitfalls that could potentially come during a move to multi-site.

This research identified the benefits of the multi-site model of ministry and its effectiveness in moving the mission of the church forward. This research also identified the potential challenges that come with the multi-site model. Churches need to consider what are the best practices to launch and sustain these multi-site campuses.

MULTI-SITE CHURCH:
BEST PRACTICES TO LAUNCH AND SUSTAIN MULTI-SITE

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by

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CHAPTER 1

NATURE OF THE PROJECT

Overview of the Chapter

Chapter One provides the basic structure for researching how effective multi-site churches launch and sustain a successful campus. It describes the types of churches studied and types of pastors interviewed. It also describes the rationale behind the project, including the researcher's personal journey, and how it will be beneficial in the future.

Included in the overview of the project are the research design, purpose statement, research questions, and participants as well as how the data is analyzed and contextualized into a best practices outcome.

Personal Introduction

I brought my family to the Seattle region fifteen years ago to start a new church. Despite my inexperience and countless mistakes, God blessed Venture Church, and it developed quickly. It grew so much so that we relocated four times in our first five years. Finally, in the city of Everett, the church moved into a thirty-thousand square foot building that seats eight hundred people. God's blessings persisted, and the church grew. We ultimately came to the point of conducting four services at our new location every weekend. It became necessary to decide what to do next. We calculated the expense of extending our facility, purchasing another building, or going multi-site, as most other churches had begun to do. We opted to build two multi-site campuses after deciding that facility expansion and purchase entailed prohibitive expenses.

We read the few books on the subject of multi-site churches and sought guidance from the few pastors we knew who had seen some success with it. In 2012, we

established Venture Church: Mill Creek and Venture Church: Mount Vernon. Both began with considerable success but also faced significant hurdles. Within a year, we had closed our Mount Vernon Campus and operated on life support at our Mill Creek Campus. In the interest of saving our Mill Creek Campus, I made a final decision to replace the campus pastor. Fortunately, the campus began to prosper under new leadership. Managing two campuses presented more difficulty than managing one, but we made it work and both campuses grew.

We hit maximum attendance at both of our sites once more, and we felt the time had come to open more sites. We have expanded from two to seven campuses in the previous five years. We have four campuses that gather in facilities we own, as well as one at a community center, one at the Men's Gospel Mission, and one at a local high school. Every campus is led by a full-time campus pastor and follows a hybrid teaching format. Twice a month, I preach on video, and the campus pastors speak twice a month. Our campuses have all experienced varying levels of success. Their sizes range from fifty to one thousand. While our corporate missional impact in the region has expanded (before the COVID-19 epidemic) and our church had reached its highest average weekly attendance, we are battling to manage this multi-site church. I regularly receive invitations to speak at conferences on multi-site churches and to advise churches who are migrating to the model. As our church has expanded, so has my frustration with our lack of a defined plan and my anxiety that we do not have a sustainable model.

I have understood for a while that I needed to investigate effective multi-site churches to assist Venture Church and other churches that need it. We need an effective

yet adaptable model to sustain the campuses we have, as well as a reproduceable approach for multiplying new campuses in the coming years.

Statement of the Problem

According to pastors of rising churches throughout America multi-site churches have proven highly efficient in reaching out to people for Christ. They have also succeeded in developing a missional strategy for church members. Evidence supports the necessity and efficacy of the model, but the problem remains of determining how to establish a multi-site church that persists for an extended period. In a moment of brutal honesty, many multi-site preachers will say they have no clue how to achieve this goal. They experiment with various instructional methods, personnel arrangements, and launch techniques in the hope that something will work. Since they find no clear model or approach to adopt, a significant lack of commitment results. During the 1980s, churches throughout the country struggled to purposefully engage their congregations with their mission. Not until Rick Warren wrote *The Purpose Driven Church* did these pastors have a straightforward, reproduceable strategy for how to achieve such engagement. As the country continues to move toward a post-Christian society, the best ways to build and sustain multi-site churches must be identified. Multi-site churches have come to stay due to their efficacy, and a strategy must be devised for leading them correctly.

Purpose of the Project

After interviewing pastors and visiting successful multi-site churches, as well as interviewing pastors of failing multi-sites, around the country for two months, the objective of this research is to establish the best strategies for founding and sustaining an effective multi-site church. This research will serve as the impetus for Venture Church's

next season of strategic expansion. It will also offer a valuable resource for other churches contemplating a similar expansion plan. The purpose of this project was to determine the most suitable approaches for launching and sustaining a multi-site ministry by meeting with and interviewing various multi-site church pastors across America

The research aims to find the best techniques for sustaining and growing an effective multi-site church by interviewing pastors of successful multi-site churches and conducting site visits to these congregations over two months. The goal is to gain a clear understanding from these churches and pastors of the best techniques for launching and maintaining a multi-site ministry that can be adopted at Venture Church.

Research Questions

Based on the problem detailed in the previous section, the research interviews focused on the following questions:

Research Question #1

What were the circumstances surrounding the launch of your church's successful multi-site campuses?

Research Question #2

What strategies did you execute to develop a multi-site church?

Research Question #3

What critical practices have sustained multi-site churches that have persisted for a minimum of three years?

Rationale for the Project

Planting new churches has been statistically proven to be the best way to reach the unchurched in America. An established church can launch a multi-site and see similar

results. In more recent days, the multi-site approach has grown increasingly popular. In the United States, multisite churches number around eight thousand, with over five million people worshipping in them on Sundays. While this phenomenon has gained popularity, most of the literature focuses on the nuts and bolts of establishing a new campus. Little information exists on how to affect a shift to a sustainable mode of operation. As a result, pastors need a transition process that incorporates change theory into this quickly rising trend of new ministries. How to attain sustainability is the most common question pastors have when considering the implementation of a multi-site church. Many multi-site pastors have struggled to establish a viable model. Beery indicates that starting new churches is the most effective approach to reach the unchurched in America (63). As the late missiologist Peter Wagner famously wrote, “My studies of church planting here in the United States and around the world led me to the conclusion that the most effective evangelistic method under heaven was planting new churches” (112). A well-established church may launch multiple sites and get comparable results. People matter to God; therefore, they should matter to the church as well. If establishing multiple campuses offers the most effective ways to reach out to the lost, it ought to rise to the level of a top priority for churches.

Second, every established church pastor that has concluded they need to transition their church to multi-site asks these questions. They want to know what is the most effective, reproducible model that they can contextualize to their situation. Unfortunately, there is not a lot of good information available.

Third, many churches that have transitioned to multi-site have struggled to sustain it. Because they do not have a clear strategy or model, they experiment with different

methods and models. They try video teaching. If that does not work, they try live teaching. If that does not work, they try shuttling the pastor between campuses. They experiment with different staff structures. Some try full-time campus pastors, others try bi-vocational. The entire time these pastors are trying to find the best resources possible to help them manage this structure well. Again, unfortunately, there is not a lot of good information available.

Finally, this researcher lead a multi-site church. Within the Assemblies of God, his church is seen as one of the most successful models nationally. Unfortunately, they are struggling to maintain the campuses they have, much less continue to move the mission forward and multiply more. Experience suggests that Venture Church will not determine the optimal practices by stumbling into them. Disciplined research offers the only way forward.

Definition of Key Terms

- **Multi-Site Church:** A church that meets in more than one location but has one primary speaking voice.
- **Venue:** The location where the multi-site campus meets.
- **Main Campus:** The primary campus, usually where the lead pastor preaches, in a multi-site model.
- **Multi-Site Campus:** A multi-site venue other than the main campus.
- **Lead Pastor:** The pastor who serves as the primary visionary and communicator over the entire multi-site church.
- **Campus Pastor:** The pastor that serves under the lead pastor at a multi-site location.

- Video Venue: When the primary speaking pastor is on video at multi-site locations.
- Live Teaching: Where the lead pastor speaks primarily live at the main campus but there is still live teaching at all multi-site campuses.
- Hybrid Model: This is a mixture of live teaching from the campus pastors and video teaching from the lead pastor.

Delimitations

The participants included in this research are lead pastors who currently lead a multi-site church with three or more total campuses with at least one multi-site being in existence for a minimum of three years. These pastors will be serving at churches in the US. Pastors who have launched a multi-site campus that closed down are also included.

This research also included staff members who currently serve or have served at multi-site churches with three or more total campuses with at least one multi-site being in existence for a minimum of three years. Finally, this research included experts in the field who have studied multi-site methodology and trends.

Review of Relevant Literature

This research project used a variety of written resources, including books, articles, and blogs written by multi-site pastors and researchers who have studied this field. This chapter also discusses some of the available arguments on multi-site churches. For example, one church in numerous locations offers unique chances for expansion while also maximizing resources, personnel, and volunteers (Stewart 15). The many sites have so many similarities that they enable collaboration among a larger group of people. Building more campuses also involves more individuals and expands a church's

leadership pipeline. According to some multi-site experts, several fundamental features of the movement lead to a sense of unity and collaboration, such as a range of common infrastructures like skilled personnel, a single goal, a network for problem resolution, and a group of like-minded individuals from which to grow (Edwards 81).

When it comes to pooling economic resources, multi-site churches offer the opportunity for new churches in new areas for a portion of the expense of a normal church plant. Vitullo (155) points out that a multi-site venue could be developed in a location where a church plant is not financially feasible. Beery (101) adds that multi-site locations are often more cost-effective than church plantings and that they may be launched and become self-reliant in regions where a new church would not ordinarily be considered. According to Stewart (18), the average cost of launching a site (new campus) is roughly \$145,000. This is dependent on the initial aim and aspirations; nevertheless, with reduced expenditures and a more collaborative workforce, multi-site campuses are frequently a more cost-efficient option to regular church founding.

The capacity to pool staffing resources is one of the reasons that multi-site is a more cost-effective solution. To handle the many varied issues that might conflict between campuses, the bulk of multi-site churches establish what Warren Bird refers to as a “central support” approach (9). Human resources, finance, communications, missionary initiatives, evangelizing, liturgical arts, and youth or children’s programs might fall under this category (Beery 117). The rise in lay engagement and volunteerism has been noticed as one of the most noteworthy results of multi-site churches by numerous operators. According to one poll, 88% of churches experienced a surge in laity engagement after adopting the multi-site approach (Bird 11). Jim Tomberlin observed

that when people commute more than 30 minutes one direction to worship, their participation reduces considerably. “Over than one-third of Willowcreek visitors were going that far and just not connecting into small numbers or any ministries,” Tomberlin observed (Vitulo 87). A regional multi-site alternative provides these same people with a closer, more accessible choice for engagement.

Theological Foundations

The multi-site paradigm is religiously compatible with a United Methodist concept of theology. The United Methodist Church, together with Christians around the world, claims the Nicene marks of the Church: it is one, holy, catholic, and apostolic. This claim is made up of four pieces that all refer to the very same fact (Cameron 118). First, the Church will be centered on the same single fact as other churches: that Christ Jesus is the leader of the Church, either Baptist, Episcopal, Catholic, Methodist, or any other religious community that claims Christ’s truth as disclosed in the Bible. This notion of the churches and a component of the catholic (global) Church is fundamental to Jesus. “I have granted them the honor which you have granted me, so they could be one like the way we are united,” Jesus makes prayer for his followers before his capture and crucifixion (John 17:22).

The reality here that the Church is both holy as well as apostolic significantly strengthens the case for contextualization. When anything is designated as “holy,” it is designated for a particular purpose. According to Reist et al., because it is assembled and set apart for God’s worship, the Church is regarded as a holy people. Furthermore, they have an apostolic nature, meaning “sent people” (12). As a result, the Church is gathered for worship and sent forth in mission. Thomas Oden argues, “The church has been

summoned from the earth to rejoice in God's arrival and summoned to enter the world to preach the Kingdom of God." The multi-site concept taps into this aspect of the Church by allowing people to gather in worship places where they believe the Church is sent (Stewart 57). Individual churches can be gathered and dispersed simultaneously using this strategy.

Advantages and Growth Potential

The Church as a whole, particularly the United Methodist Church, stands at a fork in the path. As the society surrounding it becomes less spiritual, many churches face decline (Herrington 112). Perhaps today's circumstances require duplication of healthy churches via multi-site service models for renovation. According to statistics, 85% of multi-site churches report growth at an average pace of 14% per year, demonstrating the benefits that this manner of doing Church provides (Stewart 48). The multi-site model has several benefits, many of which bear emphasis; nonetheless, the most significant benefits seem to cluster around three primary themes: contextualization, development potential, and the cooperative aspect of the approach.

As for contextualization, the willingness to take the word to new individuals in new places and make it pertinent to the context may be the most crucial factor in making multi-site ministry so effective. "This is one approach of making a new start in finding a new constituency as well as building a package of ministers to reach as well as serve that new community who will not come to the current site" (Edwards 211).

The multi-site approach recognizes the single-site Church's restricted reach, which operates on a "get to us" approach. Distance, dialect, worship style, physical or actual boundaries, and designated community organizations, to mention a few, could all

present hurdles to people attending a single-site congregation (Edwards 11).

Implementing a multi-site approach that emphasizes mission thinking can avoid all of these roadblocks. Understanding the existing culture inside a specific geographic area or demographic group and then contextualizing the message and media to reach the people inside that group or location means adopting a mission mindset. As Alan Hirsh reported, “What brought us to this conclusion was asking mission queries, namely, ‘What is a positive thing for this group of people?’ and ‘What will the church feel and look like among this group of people?’” (37).

One of the most common reasons for switching to a multi-site system is that a church’s existing infrastructure cannot keep up with its development. The multi-site concept can harness the real potential growth and attain new individuals for Christ (Campbell et al. 111). According to the most current study from Leadership Network, the number of multi-site churches has increased rapidly. According to the survey, 85% of multi-site churches reported growth, with some individual sites growing at a rapid rate of 28% in the first year and 25% in the second year (Beery 72). These development tendencies relate to the capacity to adopt something that effectively engages individuals for Christ and carries its already good behaviors to new regions in a contextually-tailored manner.

When development comes, leaders must keep pushing that progress ahead. Jim Collins refers to this as “The Flywheel,” and once it starts moving, it is critical to keep it moving. Multi-site enables fast-growing congregations to address space and building concerns swiftly and decisively (Campbell et al. 111). Aside from space, numerous

churches encountered or anticipated confronting a financial hurdle in the cost of expanding their facilities to accommodate development.

The ability to create a local church atmosphere while offering the programs and ministry opportunities of a bigger church also contributes to the growth and effectiveness of this church model. Some people seemed to prefer the obscurity of a big church, while others choose the closeness of a small congregation (Beery 73). A multi-site church can also provide ministry chances that a smaller, autonomous church would not fulfill (Beery 72).

Having one Church with multiple sites gives unique growth prospects while also maximizing resources, personnel, and volunteers. In addition, the many sites have so much in common that they enable collaboration among a bigger group of people (Edwards 111). A range of shared infrastructure, such as qualified personnel, a similar vision, a connection for conflict resolution, and a team of like-minded people in which to learn, according to some multi-site experts, are crucial parts of the movement that add to the sense of greater cooperation (Beery 72). Multi-site churches provide an opportunity for new individuals to pool financial resources in starting new churches in new areas at a fraction of the expense of a conventional church plant. Multi-site churches can establish venues in an area where a church plant does not make financial sense.

Research Methodology

Research technique represents an essential component of the research effort. It displays the researcher's approach to acquiring data, analyzing it, and inferring importance from the results. The technique which shapes this research uses both primary and secondary data. This section highlights the methods used to collect data for the study.

To obtain all of the material supplied, the study team used a variety of research approaches. The study included face-to-face interviews with lead pastors of multi-site churches having at least three campuses, of which at least one has been in operation for more than three years. Before the interview, these pastors received a private survey to complete. Data collection also involved visiting lead pastors who had tried to establish a multi-site campus but had been unsuccessful in either the launch or the sustainability of the campus for three years. Before the interview, these pastors received a private survey to complete. Respondents who could not meet in person completed an email questionnaire. The study also included telephone interviews.

Finally, doing onsite visits to numerous multi-site churches proved quite beneficial to the research. The evaluation of each church used a five-question survey. After collection during a two-month period, all of the data fell into four groups based on whether they met with success or failure in the categories of launch and sustainability. Other subcategories addressed variables such as live vs video instruction, full-time vs bi-vocational personnel, and the sort of personnel required. The study also considered whether churches provided obvious visibility of their broader vision and mission at their sites.

Type of Research

The research adopted both quantitative and qualitative research strategies. The research used emailed questionnaires and face-to-face interviews with pastors of multi-site churches. Several onsite visits of multi-site churches also yielded valuable data. Once each interview was completed, an anonymous online survey (Congregant Survey) was

sent to various attenders of the interviewee's church. These survey results greatly assisted in the evaluation of best practices.

Participants

The first phase of research determined the research's target demographic. Respondents whose data may be retrieved for the study constituted the population of the study (Ivey 200). According to the existing literature, a researcher must identify approachable members of the target population because circumstances may not allow for contact with all members of the group (Ivey 200). The population available to the research depends on the amount of time and resources allotted for the investigation. This research interviewed and surveyed lead pastors of multi-site churches with at least three campuses with having at least one campus in existence for at least three years. These leaders have proven their ability to launch and sustain a multi-site church. This information provided benefits in recognizing similarities in the strategy for launching and sustaining multi-sites. Lead pastors who had unsuccessfully attempted to launch multi-site churches also participated in interviews for this research. This information proved helpful in seeing similar circumstances that made success more difficult. Present and former staff members of multi-site churches with at least three campuses having at least one campus in existence for at least three years also participated in interviews. Having the perspective of campus pastors provided the opportunity for very honest reflection with less bias.

Instrumentation

A researcher should understand and choose the best strategy to address the study problems (Mkandawire 143). When researchers employ an untrustworthy data collection

technology, inaccurate findings result, thus invalidating the entire study effort. This project used a specific questionnaire for each live interview with a lead pastor. The email survey sent prior was slightly modified to elicit the most honest detailed perspective. The researcher also sent an anonymous survey of ten questions to random attendees of the churches included in the study. Those surveyed were given 30 minutes to complete the survey and were encouraged to remain anonymous to allow for greater transparency and honesty.

Data Collection

According to Ivey (200), secrecy figures as the most essential ethical concern in research. Studies should highlight this feature since it allows respondents to speak freely about the issue without fear of victimization due to the information they have supplied. Several ethical concerns also come into play, particularly in research that employs interviews as a data-gathering method. Mkandawire emphasizes the need of the researcher to assure the respondents that the information they provide will not hurt them in any manner (144). Researchers should utilize the data provided by respondents solely for academic research purposes. A third party should not have access to the data. According to Artal and Rubinfeld, the scholar should guarantee that the interview procedure is not utilized to advertise any item to the participants (107). Participants should also show a willingness to engage in the initiative. The research in this project conformed to ethical considerations by first informing respondents about the goal of the research and their part in it. Artal and Rubinfeld advise that such orientation helps participants provide their agreement to the research willingly (107). Furthermore,

researchers must inform respondents that they can withdraw from the research at any time during the research process.

Data Analysis

Data analysis forms the next stage of research. Ott and Longnecker observed that the most critical and most developed phases of a research project involves data analysis (1). They described data analysis as the approach used by the researcher to provide a summary of the data collected. The written summary of the data analysis provides a relevant conclusion to the research. Thematic analysis of the material acquired via the interview achieves the primary purpose of the study objectives. In this research, transcribing the interviews constituted the first step toward data analysis. Programming the data to create a simple theme made the results comprehensible and relevant. For the pre-intervention research project, qualitative approaches for textual analysis yielded the discovery of patterns and trends to examine, as did quantitative approaches. Using these strategies enabled conclusions about best practices.

The primary assumption in this research held that the sampled group would accurately represent the whole target population. Another assumption recognized that the research contained no bias because the sampling methodology utilized included no biases that would call the study's findings into doubt. The study also presumed that data collected from respondents would likewise emerge as accurate and not altered in any way. Another hypothesis assumed that the methodology and execution of the study did not program participants to address the survey questions in a manner that appealed to the researcher and thus compromise the study's findings.

Generalizability

This research will transfer to other multi-site churches of similar size in all demographics of population or geographic locales. This project identifies the best practices that are universal for all multi-site churches to be successful in launching and sustaining new sites.

Project Overview

This project outlines the best techniques for establishing, growing, and spreading a missional multi-site church. Chapter Two is a literature review that analyzes the most prominent writers and practitioners in the missional and multi-site church movements. Chapter Three describes the various approaches used in this study. Chapter Four examines the results of qualitative approaches used in this study, such as face-to-face interviews and online surveys, as well as quantitative approaches such as onsite visits to several effective multi-site churches. Chapter Five outlines best practices identified in this study for launching and sustaining a missional multi-site church that pastors can reproduce in other contexts.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW FOR THE PROJECT

Overview of the Chapter

Multi-site churches represent a growing phenomenon in Christian movements across the globe. The general perspective, according to Herrington, explains that multi-site churches encompass Christian congregations characterized by one church entity holding services at two or more geospatial locations simultaneously (12). In support of Herrington, Ward defined the multi-site church revolution as one church partaking a meeting in multiple geographic locations, such as in different houses on one campus, diverse locations in a particular region, or different states, cities, nations, or continents (8). Facilitating a multi-site church ensures the provision of cohesive teaching, leadership, vision, budget, and governing boards. Based on Ward's definition, Gordon argues that the phenomenon characterizes the development of several variations in multi-site churches (28).

Hilderbrandt demonstrated that in some churches the implementation of multiple sites entails moderating a worship service in every location, while in other churches the multi-site concept translates to having a full array of support ministries (3). The live-feed transmission modes demonstrate design differences where some churches use video-cast sermons either in recorded or live versions (Ross 114), while other churches utilize in-person teaching at one of the locations (Steffaniak 108). According to Steffaniak, some multi-site churches preserve an analogous worship environment and style at all the operating campuses just as other churches may permit or invite variation (107). While various overlapping models of multi-site churches exist, multi-site churches are relatively

new in history considering that the development of the first multi-site church appearing in the late 1980s (Schmidt 12). Further, Schmidt showed that advances accelerated in concert with the advancement of the technological revolution of the late 1990s and early 2000s.

Early multi-site churches included North Coast Church in Vista, California, led by Larry Osborne, which first used a video venue that led to expansion to multiple locations while pioneering diverse dimensions of multi-site churches (Googer 43). Rolph inferred from the opinion of Googer that the proliferation and advancement of inexpensive video conferencing, broadcasting, and streaming technologies enabled the current explosion in the size and number of multiple site churches across the globe (64). Approximately 100 multi-site churches dotted the United States in the 1990s (Schmidt 13). Currently, according to Beery, the United States contains approximately 8,000 multi-site churches, which total to over 16,000 congregations (22). Notably, Schmidt established that more than 80% of the largest 100 churches in the US ran multi-site campuses.

Reed argues that the application of modern digital technology transforms remote access in real time, making it no longer a limiting factor for church services (41).

Uhlhorn expanded Reed's view that in the past there was a limit in the number of people in church buildings accommodated by the available space, but video broadcast technology allows multiple congregational meetings to listen to the same speaker and acquire the same message at the same time, irrespective of their geospatial presence (31).

This chapter provides a biblical foundation for multi-site churches, a theoretical review of multi-site churches, and an empirical review of the literature on multi-site campus launch, structure, communication methods, location strategy, and leadership together with the

development of online campuses. Thus, the chapter defines the existing gap in the literature.

Biblical Foundations

The growth of Christianity directly aligns with the establishment of new churches. According to Tomberlin, many Protestant churches are using multi-site church multiplicity to address their plateaued attendance and further strengthen their missional impact (8). God anoints and sustains the development of new churches. Catchings shares Tomberlin's opinion, proposing that each nation establishes churches because Jesus invested his plans into expanding the church (33). Uhlhorn expands, concurring that the Holy Spirit fills the disciples and followers of Jesus with power to carry on the mission in the world (17). As seen in the Bible, God orders humanity to show their love for Him by loving others. Jesus says, "And now I give you a new commandment: love one another, As I have loved you, so you must love one another. If you have a love for one another, then everyone will know that you are my disciples" (John 13:34-35). Jones emphasizes Jesus's teachings, proposing that Christ's mission was to reform the human race to follow the ways of truth and become part of the Kingdom of God, which requires the planting of new churches as an infrastructure to reach out to people (120). Venture Church seeks to show God's love to the world by extending the mission of the gospel through newly established churches.

Christian teachings describe God as on mission from the very beginning. Since humanity's fall, which separated humankind from Him, God's plan was incarnated through Jesus and modeled by the church as the mechanism for restoration. God's

mission regards saving all people and letting them learn the truth about Him (Hildebrandt 17). The Bible supports Hildebrandt's assertion:

Then the Lord said to Moses, "Get up early in the morning, confront Pharaoh and say to him, 'This is what the Lord, the God of the Hebrews, says: Let my people go, so that they may worship me, or this time I will send the full force of my plagues against you and your officials and your people, so you may know that there is no one like me in all the earth. For by now, I could have stretched out my hand and struck you and your people with a plague that would have wiped off the earth. But I have raised you for this very purpose, that I might show you my power and that my name might be proclaimed in all the earth.'" (Exod. 9:13-16)

The biblical passage shows that God's will did not intend to punish Egypt; instead, God wanted all the nations to know of His salvation. Venture Church's mission calls churchgoers to introduce people to salvation through a life-changing relationship with Jesus.

The Great Commission is the mission of God bestowed to the people of God (Catchings 33). God's mission to retain his relationship with humanity is seen early on in the Bible, as evidenced in the story of Abram. God instructs Abram,

Leave your country, your relatives, and father's home, and go to a land am I going to show you. I will give you many descendants, and they will be a great nation. I will bless you and make your name famous so that you will be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you and, But I will curse those who curse you. And through you, I will bless all the nations. (Gen. 12:1-3)

Abram moves to a new land commanded to be a blessing to other people.

Uhlhorn argues that this marked the beginning of the essential mission for God's people (20). God's covenant with Abram, later named Abraham, depicts what the mission of the church entails. The task explains a universal and definite blessing: "I will make you a great nation," and "all people on earth will be blessed through you" (Gen. 12:2-3). Blanchard suggests that Abraham, being the father of faith, illustrates to the church the power of trusting, believing, and obedience to God. These essential factors contribute to the success of any multi-site church movement (180). God's mission for humanity portrays the purpose of the church to God's work. In Genesis 12, God instructed Abram to leave his country and go to the land God will show him. God's mission involved leaving and reaching out to others with the gospel. Hammett noted the works of Abraham motivate the church to engage in universal and specific tasks, including going to new places to spread the gospel (46).

John's Gospel explicitly describes the universal mission of God: "For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him" (John 3:16). Hammett concludes that Jesus's mission sought to save the world from the curse God pronounced after the fall into sin by Adam and Eve (44). Uhlhorn shares Hammett's position, suggesting that by sending His only Son, God reveals His true intention to redeem their relationship (17). Jesus continues his mission by reaching out to all kinds of people with the Gospel, expecting that the church will actively participate in this mission.

Hildebrandt argues that Jesus adopted "a go-to-them mentality," as illustrated in Luke 5, where he encourages his disciples to go out as "fishers of men." Jesus sent his

disciples on the mission of sharing the good news of forgiveness and redemption to every type of person, in every walk of life, in every possible region (19). In Luke 8, Jesus meets a man possessed by a demon and he delivers the man from demon oppression. The man insists on going with Jesus; instead, he sends him away, telling him, “Return home and tell how much God has done for you.” Jesus sends a man he had healed and delivered to go and proclaim the work of God in his region.

On multiple occasions, Jesus sent out the disciples to spread the good news through signs and wonders. Chand suggests that through the testimonies of the work of God in the life of followers of Jesus Christ the community is inspired to join the mission and participate in that work (92). Uhlhorn supports Chand’s assertion, suggesting that the urge to reach outward illustrated in God’s mission encourages the church to go to the lost in the world. Venture Church believes that going to different places and different cultural contexts in communities that desperately need to hear about the love of Jesus offers the best way to exemplify and follow these teachings today.

Revealing self in Trinity suggests the desire of God to be known across humanity. God sent the begotten Son to the world as a way of salvation, expressing the purpose to save the universal creation (Hildebrandt 17). Upon Jesus accomplishing his mission, the Father and Son send the Holy Spirit to make people aware of salvation through faith. According to Uhlhorn Jesus’s teachings demonstrate God’s justice through the law and also the Father’s love through the Gospel, God’s proclamation of the good news of forgiveness and redemption to humankind (20). Jesus gathers a group of followers and gives them specific instructions upon his death and resurrection. Jesus says, “Go into all the world and preach the good news to all creation” (Mark 16:15). Jesus instructs his

disciples to reach out to people, “Go, then, to all people everywhere and make them my disciples: baptize them in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, and teach them to obey everything I have commanded, you always, to the end of the age” (Matt. 28:19-20). This implies that Jesus imparted the divine mission to the disciples.

This mission imperative transfers to today’s church through faith and belief in Jesus and the gifts of the Holy Spirit. The church mandates its followers to reach out to the whole world and “shed light on the path to follow according to God’s commandments” (Searcy 22). This missional mandate encourages Venture Church to activate a multi-site model of ministry, which enhances effectiveness in reaching out to different communities in need of the Gospel.

The mission of God, a central biblical theme, enhances effectiveness in the church. In addition, the imperative mission serves as an essential contributing factor in the multi-site development of Venture Church. To effectively transition to a multi-site structured church, Venture Church requires keeping Christ’s mission at the forefront. The church also encourages its individual members to act as missional ambassadors of Christ and reach out to their various communities and different spheres of influence.

The Great Commission

Before Jesus ascended to heaven, he commissioned his disciples to “Go then, to all people everywhere and make them my disciples: baptize them in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, and teach them to obey everything I have commanded you. And I will be with you always, to the end of the age” (Matt. 28:19-20). The church carries this same commission today and ultimately exists to accomplish this command of Jesus to go out and make disciples (Herrington 24). Schmidt shares

Herrington's position, proposing that the New Testament teaches the supremacy of Christ's kingship and the church's responsibility for demonstrating his reign as loyal subjects of the Kingdom (44). As the Apostle Paul noted, "God put all things under Christ's feet and gave him the church as supreme Lord over all things. The church is Christ's body, the completion of him who himself completes all things everywhere" (Eph. 1:22-23). For any multi-site church or movement to flourish, it requires the support of Christians who accept this commission and stand willing to devote their hearts and minds to the mission of God (Fosner 76).

Beery agrees with Hilderbrandt's opinion, suggesting that the church's mission contradicts the belief that the church exists to meet personal needs. The mission of the church does not end once an individual finds faith in Jesus. That constitutes only a small part of the mission. The church, saved from the dominion of darkness and sent out into the world with a message from Jesus Christ, must commit itself to the goal of reaching the world (32). As seen in Acts 1:8, Christ sent the Church as a witness of God's deeds all over the world, creating the need to establish multi-site churches in many different communities and cultural contexts. Followers of Jesus live to proclaim the good news of Jesus.

Jesus sent his disciples to spread the gospel throughout the world: "As you sent me into the world, I have sent them [all those the Father had given Jesus] into the world" (John 17:18). Earlier in his ministry, Jesus commanded his followers: "Go! I am sending you like lambs among wolves. Heal the sick in that town, and say to the people there the Kingdom of God has come near you" (Luke 10:3, 9). Nicholson argues that the verse encourages Christians to persevere and go to people hostile to the gospel, for wherever

they go, the Good Shepherd goes (17). The Scriptures encourage Christians to fulfill this mission even in the midst of fear. The Old Testament is relevant to this point: “Even if I go through the deepest darkness, I will not be afraid, Lord, for you are with me. Your shepherd’s rod and staff protect me” (Ps. 23:4). Catchings proposes that this concept encourages churches to establish new churches in regions where people have not yet accepted the gospel and acknowledged God as the Supreme Being in the Creation (22). The Church should have no fear when preaching the word of God but rather have faith in God who will deliver and strengthen His followers wherever they go.

In Matthew 10:7, Jesus commands his disciples to preach the Kingdom of Heaven. In Matthew 10:1, “Jesus called his twelve disciples together and gave them the authority to drive out evil spirits and to heal every disease and every sickness.” Today, churches have assumed this responsibility, as well as various parachurch ministries that organize missions independent of churches (Gordon 18). Maxwell suggests that churches prepare mentorship programs centered on the principles and doctrines of spreading the gospel and recruiting more disciples (33). Schmidt expands on Maxwell’s opinion, proposing that the Holy Spirit dwelling in Christians will offer guidance to the truth as well, as evidenced in John 16:13 “When, however, the Spirit comes, who reveals the truth about God, he will lead you into all the truth” (48).

Chand supports the assertion by Schmidt, suggesting that Jesus set an example for how to encourage new believers to share the gospel and testify about the Kingdom of God (32). He offers an example in the case of the Gerasene Demoniac, whom Jesus instructed to “[t]o back home to your family and tell them how much the Lord has done for you and how kind he has been to you” (Mark 5:19). This illustrates the need to

encourage new believers to share their experience with Christ with other unsaved friends and family.

The mission of God aims at pursuing the lost, an outward ministry seen in Jesus's own words, "The Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost" (Luke 19:10). Cordeiro laments that the church does very little to achieve this mission. Cordeiro expresses the need for active leadership strategies on mobilizing the spread of the gospel to unchurched communities and people groups (12). Uhlhorn shares Cordeiro's opinion, proposing that churches should reevaluate the goal of missions and evangelism ministry and focus on the outward ministry of sharing the good news of the gospel and making new disciples (44). Ward expands on this idea, proposing the mission as the core responsibility of the Church. All ministries, therefore, must focus on the mission by incorporating the Great Commission (34). To accomplish the mission, churches must use all their resources, including time, prayer, finances, and physical resources, to set up avenues to reach more people.

In the New Testament, many people who surrendered their lives to Jesus immediately obeyed the command to be baptized. Peter described baptism in a unique way: "This water symbolizes baptism that now saves you also- not the removal of dirt from the body but the pledge of a clear conscience toward God" (1 Pet. 3:21). The church views baptism as an outward symbol of an inward commitment to Christ. Peter suggests that baptism also serves as a reminder to individuals that they now have a "clear conscience" before God. Hilderbrandt suggests that believers publicly declare their allegiance to Jesus Christ after baptism (27). The story of the Ethiopian Eunuch in Acts 8 provides a key example of a person who pledged his allegiance to Jesus Christ publicly

through baptism. Bergman argues that, through baptism, people enter the Kingdom of God and receive the gift of the Holy Spirit, who safeguards and instills in Christians power and unity in the Body of Christ (22). There is clear evidence of this concept in the case of Lydia and her household: “After she and the people of her house had been baptized, she invited us to come and stay in my house if you have decided that I am a true believer in the Lord” (Acts 16:15). The scripture teaches that the Church should baptize all who repent, believe in, and follow the teachings of Jesus Christ.

Every member of a church needs to commit fully to the mission of the church by sharing the gospel in their sphere of influence. Schmidt proposes that people need churches to teach them how to explain their beliefs. Not only does this solidify their faith, it also keeps them motivated to learn more (24). Christ gives gifts to church members to remain strong in faith and know the Son of God. Paul declares, “It was he who gave gifts, he appointed some to be apostles, others to be prophets, others to be evangelists, others to be pastors and teachers. He did this to prepare God’s people for the work of Christian service, to bring up the body of Christ” (Eph. 4:11-12). Nicholson proposes that new believers become powerful followers of Jesus and have strong faith after declaring the experience of their salvation (37).

The Apostle Paul often shared his story of encountering Jesus on the road to Damascus. He shared how God blinded him, was later healed by Jesus, and given the power of the Holy Spirit (Acts 9:20, 22). He went straight to the synagogue and began to preach Jesus as the Son of God. Catchings would suggest that Venture Church use testimonies from individuals about how Jesus transformed their lives. This should be an active part of any worship experience because it encourages others to have the same faith

and belief in God (36). It is difficult to deny the effectiveness of this strategy for sharing the gospel whenever churches utilize it.

The church accomplishes the Great Commission through Christ, who strengthens believers in the Kingdom of God and goes with them wherever they go (Beery 35). Jesus declares, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me,” and promises, “And surely I am with you always to the very end of the age” (Matt. 28:18, 20). The church functions as the ambassador of the Kingdom of God and expresses the will of God on earth (Uhlhorn 23). Tomberlin and Bird propose that Jesus developed the church through his mission on earth. Leaders should then inspire the church to live on mission and spread the gospel (23). People frequently hear at Venture Church gatherings that Jesus is the hope of the world. The gospel changes lives. God chose the church, referring to it as the institution to use as his tool to spread this good news. As such, God expects the church to display and advance God’s rule and reign in the world. Venture Church describes, defends, and applies the teachings of the Great Commission by supporting a multi-site church mission that aims at spreading the gospel and raising up more disciples.

Luke 10:1–12

The consideration of a multi-site church, defined as a congregation that holds worship services at many different geographic locations, finds biblical justification from Luke 10:1-12. From the context of multi-site churches, one can infer that Jesus Christ opened multi-site churches through the instructions He made by appointing 70 disciples and sending them out:

After this, the Lord appointed seventy others and sent them two by two ahead of him to every town and place where he was about to go. He told them, “The

harvest is plentiful, but the workers are few. Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into his harvest field. Go! I am sending you out like lambs among wolves.” (Luke 10:1-3)

In consideration of the first verse, “After this the Lord appointed seventy others,” Jesus saw His time being rather short preceding His crucifixion and ascent, yet many regions and populations had not received His Word. Therefore, as Johnson argues, Jesus needed to employ the services of a larger group of disciples to serve as His messengers and to make ready populations in these regions to await His coming “to every town and place where he was about to go” (634). Further, the actions of disciples in their evangelism is similar to the operations of multi-site churches as they multiply. In the era of Jesus’s ministry, the disciples memorized the instructions and teachings of Jesus word-for-word and relayed them to respective audiences. Such a phenomenon consistently follows the video sermon model outside the historic model where a preacher made decisive choices independently and makes presentations on the Word of God in non-verbatim reports.

The leadership at Venture Church follows a similar framework in the commission to reach more people. As the church population grew larger, and its facilities became inadequate for the number of attendees, there needed to be a long-term solution to continue expanding its influence and mission. The leadership decided that planting satellite campuses in communities that where people received the church’s preaching of the gospel offered the greatest way to continue expanding its missional influence. To a lesser extent, this strategy parallels Jesus sending out the seventy. In sending out its members, Venture Church acted in a comparable manner through the satellite churches. The multi-site movement aims to expand in fulfillment of the mission by replicating

effective work from one area in many different areas locally and around the world. This allows a church to expand its missional influence and continue to fulfill the Great Commission.

The early church began employing this strategy from its very onset, as evidenced in Acts 2:42-47. As it grew, converts began meeting together in many different locations and environments. In Verses 42 and 43, the believers “devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer. Everyone was filled with awe at the many wonders and signs performed by the apostles.” There was unity under one central leadership and mission. In Verse 46, the variety of locations at which they met is illustrated by the declaration that every day they continued to meet together in the temple courts, breaking bread in their homes and eating together with glad and sincere hearts. In a similar way, the members of Venture Church meet regularly in large gatherings on weekends but also prioritize gathering during the week in smaller gatherings at a variety of locations.

In Verse 44, the Bible identifies the believers working together in harmony, consistent with the teachings in Luke 10:1-2, in which Jesus required the chosen to evangelize in twos, depicting the sharing of a common purpose. While multi-site models exemplify having different satellite campuses in unique locations, all satellite campuses share a unified belief and receive all teachings in common. Equally, Venture Church currently manages seven multi-site campuses, which all strive to fulfill the mission of reaching more people with the hope and love of Jesus Christ. Four of Venture Church’s campuses congregate in buildings owned by the main church, allowing for greater long-term stability, while the remaining three campuses meet regularly in rented facilities.

These vary from a community center, a Men's Gospel Mission residence, and a local public school. While the facilities vary greatly, the church targets unifying the believers by a shared mission, shared commitment, shared teachings, and a shared belief.

As noted in Luke 10, Jesus "sent them out two by two" (Luke 10:1). According to Payne, sending the disciples in pairs allowed each disciple to have a witness over Jesus' message delivered to their audience (3). Moreover, this decision allowed one to offer comfort and support to the other in the accomplishment of the difficult task of evangelism. Venture Church has established a similar strategy where the main campus provides a live video feed to the satellite campuses two times a month and individual campus pastors engage their congregants through preaching twice a month. As demonstrated in Luke 10:2, "the harvest is plentiful" in that many people have not received the Word of God. Therefore, the church seeks multiple ways to reach them.

Jesus used the analogy of a ripe grain field to exemplify the urgency of expanding His works (Guignard 473). The Bible likens humanity to a field ready for harvest awaiting laborers to gather its produce. As Bauer asserted, Jesus saw the human need as great, and based on the analogy, the "field" of humanity stands large and ready (185). As the United States continues its cultural shift into a post-Christian era, the potential of the harvest continues to increase, but the workers continue to decrease. Jesus said, "The harvest is plentiful but the workers are few. Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into his harvest field" (Matt. 9:37-38). The opportunity and need to fulfill the Great Commission and share the Gospel compares to how the churches transform believers today. The church needs to disciple and send out workers into the harvest in every creative way possible.

Dwelling on the perception that “the workers are few” (Luke 10:2), bringing in all the harvest from the field within a short time necessitates abundant laborers. It entails engaging more people in the works and refocusing those already in the field into accomplishing the work at hand. Bauer asserts that in a situation where few workers must perform plentiful work, then one of the workers must take the lead role (185). This understanding motivates the main campus of Venture Church to work to raise up more disciples and execute the expansion of more satellite campuses effectively. Fortunately, expanding campuses allows for the potential of more workers, which allows for the even greater expansion of more campuses in the future.

On the other hand, Beery argues that going online to feature multi-site churches with an eminent death of the mother church posits to magnify the current problems and church irrelevance to the virtual community (27). Following Beery, Reed argued that depending on the relevance and management structure of the church leadership might be harmful. The effects from the demise of the founding pastor may impact the growth of the multi-site church model (31). Its significance heightens with the implementation of poor succession guidelines or where site pastors are limited in expanding their executive functions. Developing a workable multi-site church model helps churches seize the opportunity to reap the harvest before it gets lost due to the lack of God’s workers. In essence, Jesus alerts the church in this passage that it may lose opportunities to address the human need and redirect populations into the Kingdom of God as a consequence of laborer shortage.

In Luke 10:4-8, Jesus provided specific guidelines for the ministry. For instance, in Verse 4, Jesus instructed, “Carry neither money bag, knapsack, nor sandals.”

Additionally, he noted the need to pray, when to go, and how to go. Lear noted that Jesus gave specific instructions relative to the magnitude of the work that needed to be accomplished (29). The instructions require that appointees avoid the influence of material needs or tedious ceremonies associated with their visitation. The design of the multi-site church strategy by Venture Church follows the same model. The model, according to Payne, defines the use of a leadership structure that does not consider earthly powers, a communication structure that does not embrace material gains, and an expansion of the congregational volume that does not consider monetary gains from church proceeds (6).

Finally, Verses 9 through 12 explain the mission of the selected to heal and to preach. Jesus added, “Heal the sick who are there and tell them, ‘The kingdom of God has come near to you’” (Luke 10:9). This teaching depicts the healing power of the Kingdom of God over sickness as manifested in acts of kindness and mercy. In concurrence, Brenneman argued that healing formed as a component of preaching involving describing and demonstrating God’s power to the witnesses as ascribed in the teachings of Jesus Christ (1). Healing would make manifest the presence of God, “coming near to [the people],” and remarkably display the power of God in preparation for the death and resurrection of Jesus in the near future. The mission of multi-site churches features their intent to espouse the power of God to the masses.

Theoretical Review

The study addresses the relevance of group theory, inculturation theory, the satellite church model, and systems theory to multi-site church ministry. Group theory studies groups, which describe systems encompassing a set of elements and operators

applicable to two or more elements in the set in order to satisfy a particular postulate or assumption (Steffaniak 109). Hartwig argues that the two elements in a group require the closure of a group in the process of operation such that the blend of any two elements leads to the production of another element added to the group, obeying the associative law that uniquely identifies the new element (29). The new element, as Steffaniak determined, in combination with any other group element results in no changes to the latter. Yet each of the elements elicits an inverse, which explains the combination of an element with other elements to deduce an identity element. In a situation where a group mollifies the commutative law, it describes a commutative group (Hartwig 29).

Group theory contains a vital construct in explaining the basic structure found in multi-site churches. One main church forms the central operating unit that operates by opening unique elements defined as multi-site outlets equivalent to uniquely identified elements in a group (Steffaniak 108). The multi-site church elements connect through some operator engaged in the relay of services and digital events from the main element. Robinson confirmed Steffaniak's argument that for the success of diverse multi-site church models the basis of group theory explains their structure and leadership to capture their relatedness in actuating the church activities (7). The theory explains the variations between multiple sites, especially based on unique characteristics of the model implemented, type of service offered, and available isoforms.

Inculturation theory, on the other hand, applies to church leaders and theologians as they define the process of engaging Christian evangelism and diverse cultures. According to Ballano, theologians conceptually use the theory in the facilitation of safeguarding the integrity of God's word and in nurturing sensitivity to unique cultural

affiliations (101). The theological notion of inculturation, as Wachege and Syengo asserted, relates directly with the evangelism strategy of Pope John Paul II in adherence to the “new evangelization,” focusing on cultural values consistent with traditional Christians while currently demonstrating modern Christianity (18). The theory explains the relationship between theology and culture, pointing to significant rational reasons. Inculturation characterized the imbalanced emphasis between the Catholic church and the other mainstream churches in tandem with the local churches and episcopacy (Ballano 101).

Schreiter expanded Ballano’s position, suggesting that Catholicism articulated unique values in the late 19th, 20th, and early 21st centuries (52). According to Schreiter, these values stressed the universality of the Word of God across all denominations, thus creating a conducive environment for church growth (52). Using gifted communicators for evangelism in multiple sites sought to address the difficulty of asking evangelists to pay attention to specific cultural contexts that affected church campuses in different locations. Further, Campbell and Osteen assessed the perceptions of Ballano with regard to the significant connections, linking the role of multi-site churches and valuing the contribution of various cultures in evangelism (433).

Campbell and Osteen demonstrated that multi-site churches refine inner-church concerns with the credibility of the church and culture-evangelism issues. The theology of inculturation exemplifies the classical works of Jesus and culture, exploring the strengths and weakness of diverse multiple site church models underscored in the present study while highlighting the rationality of the need for universal faith. The application of multi-site churches, under inculturation, fosters a positive cultural appreciation by

viewing the church as a major contributor of human culture and marks autonomy balanced with social responsibility while remaining open to the transcendent.

The study also explores systems theory, which defines the practice enabling stakeholders and professionals to holistically evaluate the conditions of a client and the prevailing environmental conditions to acquire a unified understanding of the potential hardships and why they occur (Reeves 4). Examining organizational behavior, Tucker expounded Reeves's view that systems theory applies to bundle together elements that elicit influence on the wider view of the organizational behaviors and choices (9). According to Tucker, the theory defines the relationship between systems with one another across a more complex, larger system. When holistically evaluating how smaller systems integrate into affecting the larger complex system, Wangoto asserted that cumulative elucidation or rationalization of specific characteristics of the whole system might not occur by examining any one of the constituent systems singularly (17). This theory consistently supports the characterization of multi-site churches by assessing the attributes of one campus site to explain the operationalization of the entire church. Systems theory builds postulates surrounding the characteristics borne by complex systems, such as multi-site churches, that technically and seemingly originate from many singular entities into the whole multi-site church.

Nicholson accepted the view of Wangoto in inferring the systems attribute as emergent behavior, such that when the larger complex system expresses its emergent behavior, it outlays characteristics unique to the properties of the singular small systems (4). The theory is applied in the present study to clearly identify the attributes of individual sites to better explain their working within the larger multi-site church. Within

the discipline of theology, the application of systems theory in this study entails the examination of how all the site churches come together and integrate into the larger and complex multi-part church leading to the result that none of the individual site churches could exist on their own without an alteration of their emergent characteristic, especially their environment.

Finally, this study follows the satellite church model, which describes an approach that characterizes the primary location and offsite location in the way the church delivers service (Gordon 10). For instance, Catchings showed that within the multi-site approach, the primary location with the largest physical attendance and site locations receives tailored services, such as music worship and announcements that address the immediate congregation (83). Lehto furthered the sentiments of Catchings, showing that common sermons air via satellite broadcasts from the primary location (399). Beery contested Lehto's view that in some multiple site churches on-site lead pastors are used to deliver sermons tailored to present the same message to all congregants across all satellite locations (11). Further, the model explains the expansion plan of churches through the church planting mission, especially among Pentecostal churches (James 118). As James intimated, the multi-site church, referred to as the mother church, takes the lead role of providing the initial and fundamental resources and leadership to begin a satellite church, referred to as the daughter church. As such, the model in the present study explains the thriving approach towards church planting where unique strategies for service delivery moderate the satellite church.

Multi-Site Campus Launch

America and other regions of the world have witnessed a rapid rate of church growth and expansion over the last two decades (Floyd 21). According to Surratt et al., the rapid growth of individual churches exacerbated the limitations of the number of services that churches can offer in one location motivating many Christian churches to embrace launching a multi-site ministry (*The Multi-site Church Revolution* 18). Venture Church experienced numerous discussions of when to add additional services. It concluded that a multi-site location with a gathering at an optimal service time worked far better than trying to fit in another service at an inconvenient time. In a study to evaluate the effects posed by the increased number of worshippers in the US, Cordeiro suggested that a weekly increase in the attendance of churches translated to the emergence of a comparable number of new satellite churches (19). In other words, the vast majority of churches that have experienced numerical growth have had to embrace a multi-site model of ministry in order to facilitate continued growth. Unfortunately, recent research on the rate at which churches in America launch new campuses argues that only one out of every thirty churches have currently adopted the multi-site model (Warren and Kristin 15).

According to MacMillan, the main contributing factor for the success of a high number of growing multi-site churches entails good coordination between the church leadership and the congregators (13). Additionally, Floyd suggested that leaders of successful multi-site churches take inspiration from the biblical teaching that states: “Then the master told his servant, Go out to the roads and country lanes and compel them to come in, so that my house will be full (Luke 14:23 NIV)” (27). Many pastors who feel the responsibility to fulfill the Great Commission launch new campuses in furtherance of

the teachings in Luke and deem it better than investing extravagant resources into expanding their current facilities (Floyd 28). In support of these assertions, Searcy and others believe Christian churches bear the responsibility of ensuring they spread the good news to other regions following the example of Jesus, who went on to different places after gaining followers in a particular place (Searcy 25). Mark 1:35-37 relates an interesting moment in the life of Jesus. Jesus had gotten up early in the morning and found a private place to pray. His disciples sought him unsuccessfully for some time, and when they finally found him, Simon (Peter) made the profound statement, “Jesus, everyone is looking for you.” This reality serves as the primary motivation for pastors of growing, multi-site churches today. Everyone is looking for Jesus (Surratt et al. *A Multi-Site Church Roadtrip* 86).

While studies have shown that different churches have opted to incorporate multi-site campus launches in the United States, many churches have faced great challenges that have resulted in the collapse of some of the campuses within a year of the launch (Patterson 41). In this regard, Terry Scott noted that the launching of a multi-site campus calls for understanding that God is a God of mission and plan (36).

Then the LORD said to Moses, —Get up early in the morning, confront Pharaoh and say to him, This is what the LORD, the God of the Hebrews, says: Let my people go, so that they may worship me, or this time I will send the full force of my plagues against you and your officials and your people, so you may know that there is no one like me in all the earth. For by now I could have stretched out my hand and struck you and your people with a plague that would have wiped you off

the earth. But I have raised you for this very purpose, that I might show you my power and that my name might be proclaimed in all the earth. (Exod. 9:13-16)

Referencing this passage, Terry Scott indicated that effective multi-site campus launches call for proper planning and incorporation of the best models and practices, just as God had a mission to deliver the people of Israel (36). Jim Tomberlin and Rick Warren maintained that for effective delivery of the required message to all the launched campuses, the management should constantly ensure the support and continual re-training of existing staff (13). Sharing a similar idea, Hughes intimated the need to establish whether the church budget and the congregation support the launching of a new campus since the survival of the launched campus depends on the support of church members (40). Similarly, Hughes emphasized that ensuring the mother church offers full support to the daughter church in finances and a committed leadership team offers the most effective way of ensuring success in launching a site. Such support also includes other critical assistance with the potential of developing the new campus into a self-reliant, independent church (41).

Further, many of the most successful multi-site churches largely found their inspiration in Rick Warren's *The Purpose Driven Church*. According to Bird and Walters, for the effective launching of a multi-site church campus, the leaders of the mother church must situate the campus at a strategic location that best matches with the standards and composition of believers of the mother church (19). From this point of view, Bird and Walters maintained that members of a particular church have the potential of reaching and convincing people with whom they comfortably mingle since they best fit the culture of their church (29). Venture Church believes that living missionally means

there will come a moment where church members will need to leverage their relationships for the mission of Christ and invite people to a church service. This works more effectively for services offered in the local area.

Verlon Fosner recommended that, before launching a new campus, especially in urban centers where congregators are from different backgrounds, the leaders of the church ought to survey the cultural affiliations and spiritual backgrounds of the target population (18). Robinson supported the idea that consideration of these factors helps the pastors to develop the best ways of reaching a particular people group according to their interest or felt need and makes receptivity to the Gospel much easier (63). Additionally, Warren Bird emphasized the need to change the evangelism method when needed through the use of more than one strategy, while remaining firm not to compromise the message of Scripture (13).

Moreover, Ross advised that multi-site churches wishing to launch a new campus should focus on the Purpose Driven model, which largely emulates Jesus's teaching that focused on meeting the experienced and felt needs of people (82). Through that approach, pastors get to know the desires and needs of the unchurched, thereby developing ways of more effectively reaching them (Ross 83). Robinson challenged that when pastors take the time to meet with unchurched and new converts, they will get a greater understanding of the needs and desires of people in a specific community. This will ultimately make the church or multi-site campus more effective at reaching people in that community for the gospel (56). Subsequently, Ward maintained that to effectively launch a multi-site campus, leaders of the planting church should follow the teachings of the Apostle Paul and not judge the unchurched in that community (79). Paul asserted that Christians

should “[g]ive no offense either to Jews or Greeks or to the Church of God” (1 Cor. 10:32). Similarly, Surratt et al. maintained that no pastor should keep the unchurched from participating in the church by judging their deeds but instead guide and teach them on the ways of the Lord, and they will transform as they continue learning God’s purpose in their lives (*The Multi-site Church Revolution* 81).

In contrast, the success of a campus launch stems from the Lord’s will to manifest Himself to humankind for His glory to be witnessed. According to Surratt et al., there exists a great deal of difference between the plans of a man and those of God the creator (*The Multi-site Church Revolution* 05). In support of this assertion, Scott quotes Proverbs 19:21 to confirm the key success factor for multi-site church campus launch: “Many are the plans in a man’s heart, but it is the Lord’s purposes that prevail” (108). Robinson concurred with these contrasting views, noting that launching a new multi-site ministry indicates God’s accomplishment of His word (72). Further, Surratt et al. claim that evidence shows the four different occasions in Genesis where God said things and they happened which proved that whatever He purposes to do will overcome whatever circumstance, as Isaiah noted (77).

For as the rain and the snow come down from heaven, and do not return from there without watering the earth and making it bear and sprout, and furnishing seed to the Sower and bread to the eater; so will My word be which goes forth from My mouth; It will not return to Me empty, without accomplishing what I desire, and without succeeding in the matter for which I sent it. (Isa. 55:10-11)

Consequently, Scott contends that the growth of a particular launched campus of a multi-site church into an independent church fulfills God’s Word and does not result from

human effort and commitment in such launched campuses (112). Venture Church wants to develop an effective strategy to launch campuses but understands that without the favor of God, it will not succeed.

Multi-Site Church Structure

The number of multi-site churches rapidly rose in the United States over the last twenty years, resulting in a major shift from the megachurch movement (*Warren Purpose Driven Church* 34). Hybels et al. suggest that although many churches shifted to the multi-site operation of their services to evangelize they later came to realize multi-site churches also provided an opportunity for the development of new great leaders from the newly launched campuses since many members lacked an opportunity to put their gifts and talents into practice in megachurches (14). Maxwell discovered that effective training and support of church leaders resulted in the fast growth of the newly launched campus when they utilized their gifts. Church and Alan discovered in multi-site research that in the US there are eight thousand multi-site churches. Moreover, the study indicated that 80% of growing churches in the US operate their churches in a multi-site system (Church and Alan “Capture, Capacities, and Thresholds” 149). Another study conducted in the US to determine the rate of multi-site church attendance revealed that over five million believers confessed to having worshipped at a multi-site church at least one weekend in their lifetime (Holdsworth 4). In support of these sentiments, Andy Stanley suggested that multi-site churches have promoted the maximization of evangelism in both small local churches and big churches in urban centers (*Visioneering* 9). Moreover, Bergmann and others espoused that churches that train their leaders on the best ways to evangelize and

on how to relate with nonbelievers develop higher chances of gaining new converts, hence sustaining their new campuses (31).

Rick Warren, however, argued that despite the increase in the number of multi-site campus launches in the US, many churches that have tried to launch new campuses have failed to support and develop them into fully independent churches (*The Purpose Driven Church* 36). From this perspective, the success of a multi-site church system relies on an array of reasons, strategies, and structures adopted by churches planning to launch new campuses (Warren *The Purpose Driven Church* 38). In this regard, Stanley argued that various multi-site structures exist, including the franchise model, modified franchise model, and live teaching model, among others, that lay the foundation for the establishment of an effective and successful multi-site (*Visioneering* 18).

Zafeiropoulou maintained that incorporation of the franchise structure entails live streaming or broadcasting pre-recorded sermons to congregations (11). In addition, Jones asserted that the franchise model helps pastors understand the need of pre-recording prepared content in advance when they opt to use such media to deliver their message to their congregators (21). As such, Chand suggests the franchise model works best when the pastor prepares and records the message to be delivered one week prior to the day of the service (27). Zafeiropoulou asserted the importance of prior preparation and recording of the prepared message since it ensures the development of a high quality of playback, making it appeal to the church members and encouraging them to continue participating in services dependent on video (13).

Groeschel embraces the livestream method of teaching, the key emphasis in franchise structure, as it minimizes the number of staff needed by the church since all the

campuses share the same message streamed from the central campus by one pastor or speaker at a time (7). Sharing a similar idea, Van Aarde asserted that live teaching done primarily at the main campus ensures uniformity of message delivered, thus limiting the need for church members to drive to the main campus since they receive the same message at the multi-site campus (3).

On the contrary, Birkey maintained that, although the franchise structure seems effective in promoting multi-site ministry, it does not work in churches where the staff lacks commitment and does not devote time to prior message preparation since recording and streaming require thorough practice (27). Further, Church and Alan suggested that many churches will have difficulty applying the franchise model as they lack the quality technology to produce and rebroadcast the message effectively (“Anti-cover” 111). Evidently, many churches need and use cost-effective broadcast and video-conferencing technologies.

In addition, Zafeiropoulou argued that a multi-site ministry could embrace the use of a modified franchise model, which involves the development of uniformly branded programs disseminated to all campuses for use every week. This practice assures the consistency of teachings. (12). However, Birkey noted that the use of a modified franchise structure in multi-site churches only unifies the sermon, since the model allows every site to program its worship session independently according to its taste, so long as the liturgists do not violate the set mission and vision of the church (15). In a study on the structures used by multi-site churches in the US to launch campuses, Van Aarde discovered that the modified franchise structure is the most popular and successful (5). Blanchard shared a similar idea, maintaining the adoption of a modified franchise model

helps the church promote the development of independent leaders who can more easily convince the unchurched in the community to accept the Word and join the launched campuses (14). On the other hand, Stanley disagreed with the opinion that the modified franchise structure works best for multi-site churches, arguing that the structure undermines the principle of consistency in communication (*Visioneering* 41).

Multi-Site Communication Methods

Crystal-clear communication in a multi-site church becomes the senior pastor's number one priority and improves productivity, safety, cost-effectiveness, organizations, and the churches (Ward 14). According to Rick Warren, multi-site churches use the video-venue model conferencing method to videocast live and recorded sermons at multi-site locations during a service (1). As one of the rapidly growing church service conveyance methods, pastors more often than not use it in multi-site organizations. Venture Church services and events typically employ particular music, languages, or styles. Through the realization of how the value of video venue intersects with its low cost and high effectiveness (Ward 15), the satellite campus and the multi-site models have expanded to reach tens of thousands of people from a handful in weekend attendance. Incorporating a video teaching strategy within a multi-site church model allows the church's potential influence to multiply exponentially.

There are four subcategories of video venues constituting a major boost to the digital technology development that facilitates communication in multi-site churches (Ellingson 77). These include overflow video venues, video café video venues, independent satellite campus video venues, and interactive satellite campus video venues. In overflow video venues, churches may run out of space and, in return, opt to open

another room next to the main church, run a cable for the audio and video to the new facility, and set up a projector for the congregation. Video café video venues use a space other than the main service auditorium but utilize videotaped sermons. Interactive satellite campuses and independent satellite campus videos cost more to install compared to the overflow and video café video venues (Brown 223).

Video venues have some advantages over in-person teaching churches, primarily the substantial financial savings. Video venues require less staff and churches can easily broadcast them to rented facilities (Ellingson 77). Gordon warns that setting up a video venue can increase the amount of money spent rather than reducing the cost, depending on the type of the video-venue installed (9). Venture Church provides video venues to enhance small-town churches through the provision of quality pastors and leaders during the online or recorded services. One study found that video venues greatly empower persecuted churches. In countries where Christians face persecution for their faith, video venues have provided a safe avenue for the gospel to continue (Ellingson 77). Many pastors and church leaders now record and send videocast sermons to the most remote of churches operating under fear of persecution.

A multi-site church utilizing a video venue strategy allows churches to start or continue in areas with space or facility limitations, thus making them cost-effective. An effective video venue can begin in almost any location. Churches can build facilities, rent auditoriums, or meet in homes while effectively utilizing a video venue to accommodate the growing number in the congregation. Churches in space-limited urban centers have small parking lots or, at times, no parking areas for the attendees. Video venues allow opportunities for the small gatherings in these locations to have excellent teaching.

Attendees can watch a variety of live or recorded videos from different pulpits depending on where the Venture Church pastor records the video. Video venues can release pastors not gifted at teaching or preparing messages to thrive in their areas of strength. Pastors can focus on caring for and shepherding their people versus spending hours preparing messages. Most pastors of smaller churches must wear many different hats with comparatively few resources. While some have the ability to do many things at once, most do not (Ellingson 77). Video venues remove the need for pastors to develop strong interpersonal and public proclamation gifts in order to lead a church, increasing the number of individuals who can become effective pastors.

Venture Church pastors who preach via video venues, on the other hand, possess some disadvantages when ministering. Video venues limit the speakers' ability to connect individually with those within the congregation. A pastor preaching in a live congregation can abandon their notes and, in return, follow the prompting of the Holy Spirit. At times a Pastor may sense the presence of the Lord in the room and pause to leave room for the Holy Spirit to minister, but a video venue does not allow for any delineation of the service. Utilizing video teaching exclusively also removes the opportunity to train and mentor ministers in their ability to deliver biblical messages. An effective communicator not only knows how to preach a good sermon but also how to empower and inspire others to fulfill the mission of Christ in their context and sphere of influence. The church does have a responsibility to mentor and train people to communicate the gospel in an effective, creative way. Within the video preaching model, preaching could remain the privilege of only one exceptionally magnetic leader and no others (Brown 223).

According to his “Analysis of Models of Teaching in a Multi-Site Church Setting,” Ward observes that video-venue ministry exacerbates the phenomenon of “celebrity pastor syndrome” in churches. Communities engineer churches around one church pastor with unique lead characteristics. When the multi-site church ministry insists on having a celebrity pastor solely to evangelize, this may institute negative effects in the public domain and adversely affect church attendance. Video venues underestimate the worth of physical gatherings to reconstitute a church.

While there is a universal church, the first time the New Testament discusses the church, it refers to the physical gathering of God’s people respective of time and place. A church entails more than simply a digitized content delivery mechanism. The Bible defines a church on the basis of people meeting physically for worship, sharing the Word of God, and submitting to the leadership of church elders.

Churches also employ the regional-campus model in multi-site communication. In the article “The Multi-Site Church: Examining Methods of Expansion to New Campuses,” Gordon observes that with the regional-campus version, the churches have a couple of campuses in a region, each intending to replicate the originating church (17). The regional-campus version frequently works well when the originating campus faces spatial constraints or when the church’s mission dedicates itself to extending the gospel and its ministries to different groups in different places within a geographic area. Churches need talented leaders and effective communicators to serve at a campus, but they no longer always require talented preachers. When churches plant new, regional campuses, people start to demonstrate the gift sets needed to lead churches

independently. The regional campus model can combine with the video venue conferencing model for video casting sermons from the originating campus.

The team-teaching strategy employed by Venture Church allows it to have a quality teaching team responsible for praying and preaching at multiple sites of the same church. Team teaching allows for more interaction time between the attendees and the teachers. In teamwork, teachers respect interdependence, differences, and conflict resolution skills (Gordon 17). The team members jointly determine the course objectives and content, select general materials such as movies and texts, and design the final video for presentation (Brown 223). Venture Church team teaching messages and series can be scheduled next to each other or one after the other. The quality of delivering the message improves as different team members approach each section in distinct ways. Teamwork can distribute responsibilities, foment creativity, cultivate friendships, and build communities among team members. The team members complement each other. They exchange ideas, come up with new methods, and question assumptions. By observing each other, they understand new viewpoints, insights, methods, and values (Scalen 51). Team teaching allows the opportunity for the various teachers to grow and learn.

According to Brown, team members reduce the teaching effort and improve morale (225). The presence of another team member reduces personality problems between the attendees and the teachers. The team members also participate in decision making, which strengthens self-confidence. When teachers see improvement in the quality of their teaching and learning, their self-esteem and happiness increase. The team-teaching model method can work in combination with both the video venues model and the regional campus model, airing both live and recorded team teaching (Brown 223).

Multi-site teaching can yield terrible results if the site does not tailor messages to address the unique demands of the people in the communities where a multi-site church ventures. Video and multi-site technology offer nothing more than a tool. Wisdom, strategy, and anointing must come from those utilizing the technology.

Multi-Site Locations Strategy

The modern generation made geography and time much less limiting for churches. Planting new multi-site churches requires consideration of multiple factors (Turkoglu et al. 236). Of all the multi-site churches in America, only a handful manages three or four satellite sites. At Venture Church, the leadership investigated multiple factors before starting or planting new campuses in different areas. Ayoub et al. explain that when setting up new multi-site churches, the facility represents a major factor to consider (23). Whether the sites employ an existing church facility, a leased room, or newly bought property, the facility should meet the basic standards to accommodate a church. D'Onofrio et al. supported the view of Turkoglu et al. that a campus church needs a large space with an additional area to allow for expansion in the future (3).

According to D'Onofrio et al, churches should consider feasibility when planning to start a new satellite campus (5). Wang and Chen demonstrated that feasibility involves the study of the cost, models, the numbers of sites, the size of the building, and the financial expectations of planting different church satellite campuses (787). The church should choose the best model to fit the financial expectations of multi-site pastors. The three major models highlighted in multi-site communication methods differ from each other in their cost of installation. In addition, Ayoub et al. argue that considering the number of campuses the church plans to plant influences financial expectations while

setting up one of the sites (107). A multi-site campus costs less to install than building a large church that accommodates all the attendees (D'Onofrio et al. 6).

Nelson and others share the opinion that the logistics of church location influence the ability of a multi-site church to achieve its mission and vision. Karatas and others suggest that location logistics are influenced by the distance between the campus site location, homes of congregants, and residences of the campus leaders and pastors (275). The longer the distance, the more the financial cost of acquiring or holding church services to both the congregants and the campus pastor. Transportation should be available to enable Christians to access the church. Nelson et al. furthered the opinion of D'Onofrio et al. that, even when movement to and from campus does not frequently occur, consistent and reliable means of transportation must exist to serve those seeking or delivering service in the respective satellite campuses (1349).

When deciding the location of a multi-site church campus, churches must consider branding as a crucial guide to foster the growth of the church. Branding of a church name and logo includes a vision statement, mission statement, color palette, icons, editorial style guide, and typography (Stone and Erickson 133). Nelson et al. examined the perspective of Stone and Erickson which states that the establishment of branding guidelines help the newly created church campuses stay within a specified framework and reinforce all the ideas at the heart of the church (1349). Turkoglu et al. assert that the brand of one multi-site campus may differ from that of a different campus of the same church depending on the buildings, streets, geographic appearance, shops, hotels, and other businesses in the nearby location. They suggest limiting changes in branding to maintain the original taste of the brand (Stone and Erickson 133).

According to Wang and Chen, church culture defines the positioning of a multi-site campus and serves as a glue that holds all church campuses together (788). The church culture connects systems, structures, and Christians through protecting and correcting the failures of the members. D'Onofrio et al. intuited that the church culture demonstrates the main values which drive the actions of the Christians worshipping in established satellite campuses (6). For instance, Ayoub et al. urge that campus pastors should have the mandate to instill the church culture in every campus. Creating a culture within a multi-site church includes factors such as church vision, values, languages, philosophy of different church leaders, traditions, and behaviors of the church members (107311). Maintaining the same mission and vision within every campus in a multi-site church requires a strong understanding of what the church wants to achieve in the long run.

The leadership and governance of a multi-site church define the location of different campuses (D'Onofrio et al. 3). The campus pastors lead the satellite sites while the board of directors or members protect the main church by instituting care plans for local community needs, those in recovery, those in grief, those in financial crisis, and through prayer. Growing multi-site churches typically adopt a policy governance model rather than a program governance type of model (D'Onofrio et al. 5). Stone and Erickson shared the opinion of D'Onofrio et al., asserting that the board of directors not only manages the church's daily operations but also focuses on leading different church ministries to achieve specifically defined goals (135). In such situations, the church board may give campus pastors the mandate to lead the satellite church campus and hold them accountable for the achievement of goals initially set by the church board. The

achievement of these goals drives the strategic positioning of satellite campuses relative to the main church. Further, churches must establish satellite campuses in locations that offer easy access to campus pastors, considering their significant role in officiating and moderating sermons and ministry to members.

Turkoglu et al. argued that the relative locations and number of the newly planted campuses might challenge the training and assigning of pastors to campuses (240). In agreement, Ayoub et al. affirmed that, when assigning a pastor to campus, the traits of the individuals and characteristics of the location exhibit an interplay, which influence decisions (107311). A campus pastor's ability to communicate is important, especially coupled with their ability to meet the church vision and financial targets. Karatas and Yakici confirmed the sentiments of Ayoub et al., intimating that the campus pastor should relate from top to bottom with the people and enhance the vision, mission, values, and culture of the church (277). Excellent campus pastors are self-driven and understand how appropriate church location influences the success of the multi-site church, with reference to the presented challenges and potential solutions (Karatas and Yakici 280).

Karatas and others explain that growing churches utilize multi-site models as a church planting technique for more outreach and influence (277). Prior to setting up multi-site churches, the management and the planning departments must identify locations with the target group and population, as well as the availability of physical space. In support of Karatas and Yakici, Ayoub et al. intimated that the number of church members available to join the service and serve makes up the core strength of a multi-site church launch. A multi-site church involves generally moving the church to the congregation. The larger and stronger the launch team that lives in close proximity to the

campus, the faster it may reach financial and functional sustainability (108). Further, Turkoglu et al. demonstrated that the traits of the campus location might determine the number of congregants (241). A large audience can be found near schools and theaters, which allows easy targeting for new members from the lower risk area for starting a campus.

The availability and support of digital technology in an area define the location of the campus for a multi-site church (Turkoglu et al. 238). Launching a new campus requires the church to have the technology to assist with communication and other functions. Communication is the key part of having a successful multi-site church. D'Onofrio et al. agreed with Turkoglu et al., arguing that communication between different campuses mostly involves digital communication equipment and gadgets (3). Campus pastors deliver their sermons through real-time video broadcasting or recorded videocasts. According to D'Onofrio et al., the use of the franchise model and modified franchise model require campuses to have screen and internet connection for live streaming and broadcasting of recorded sermons and events (4).

Multi-Site Church Leadership

Research (Frye 5; Nash 23) demonstrated the importance of diversity in leadership styles in the management of churches with multi-site campuses. According to Nash, the leadership of multi-site churches with four or fewer campuses differs from the management of churches with more than four campuses (21). Cederblom concurred with Frye, that a multi-site church with four campuses or fewer could effectively use a centralized leadership structure (7). The centralized leadership model works effectively in asserting command and control over church programs, operations, and budgets. On the

other hand, in transitioning the multi-site church to five or more campuses, as in the case at Venture Church, Ross asserts the need to implement a decentralized leadership model in the church (11). In this regard, the primary approach involves the empowerment of every multi-site campus and its leadership by the main church. A balance between centralized and decentralized leadership ensures success and growth in the respective churches.

The consideration of a decentralized leadership model defines the need of area leaders (what Venture Church refers to as campus pastors) at every campus, determined by the location of the campus, since it requires a campus pastor to live in the locality to minimize relocation and acclimatization with the local community. In this regard, a multi-site campus builds a blend between the centralized leadership model for the main church campus and a decentralized system for the satellite campuses (Gordon 46). The central staff must establish an upward communication structure with campus leaders and pastors so that multi-site campuses can offer feedback and communications, effectively ensuring replication of the ministry.

In some multi-site churches, such as Life Church, based out of Oklahoma and led by Craig Groeschel, the central ministry plays a role in the replication of the church by assigning every campus a leader or lead pastor from the central church, as Venture Church does. According to Robinson, synchronized communication between the central staff and onsite leaders ensures the success of the centralized leadership model. Such communication involves well-coordinated visitations facilitated from the central body (21). These visitations ensure that areas requiring observations and improvements get noted and addressed (Gordon 38).

Robinson agreed, noting that the campus pastor takes note of the presence of issues within different campuses and takes responsibility for assessing the issues of concern and developing reports over the same, ensuring the flow of feedback from bottom to top and from top to bottom (84). In this regard, problems and troubleshooting on the leadership and management of any campus call for a campus pastor to lay leaders to the central ministry leaders. Different central ministry leaders have experiences with every campus ministry. Further, creating an embedded directional leadership team facilitates a smooth running of the multi-site church, encompassing the teaching and preaching, discipleship, campus leadership, and the innovation and digital team to facilitate the online presence of the church.

The leadership model of the Savior's Church, on the other hand, differs slightly, considering the presence of frames to ensure a balanced control and freedom while using specific metrics. Value creation leads to the establishment of new campuses, which depend on the main church. According to Cederblom, the church invites key personalities into leadership positions without dictating their roles in the big picture (14). Gordon explored the leadership framework described by Cederblom, concluding that a high-feedback model exploits the discipleship process for feedback while eliminating micro-management within the multi-site church (31). Moreover, only established church leaders and pastors launch and operate new campuses, an endeavor congruent to the operations at Venture Church. The model defines increased community engagement in the leadership and the established community culture, helping the main church leadership infer the type of campus pastor sent to the site. In addition, in order for a campus pastor to receive

assignment, the pastor must have the ability to manage a large congregation through experience earned from discipling others.

In the directional team model, an executive team composed of the lead pastors and the campus pastors play a major role in vetting personnel for senior positions in the church, including staff pastors who work in teams with campus pastors and the financial operations in the church (Doyle 1). As Trahan established, the executive team should meet once every month, collectively and one-on-one, to deliberate on inputs towards the growth of the church and set the church's direction (7). Below the executive council come the elders, who constitute the church council and set benchmarks of accountability for church personnel. Doyle showed that a collaboration team offers the central support of the multi-site church under the directional team model, encompassing lead campus-level ministry leaders, youth, children, church choir and music, media, and personal ministries made of small groups, dream teams, and growth teams (1).

Whether led via the centralized leadership model or decentralized leadership framework, Cederblom intimated that the leadership plays the role of determining the capacity of the church to replicate new campuses (16). Size constitutes a major factor of consideration. When comparing the additional campus to the main church and its location, the leaders assess the number of people in the space and the impact of dynamics in the experience. The leadership also takes on the task of evaluating the number of paid positions when considering staffing a new campus. Watt argued that a paid staff member must deliver a higher output in relation to an individual in the same position on a volunteer basis (125). Thus, the consensus holds that the number of people contracted on

paid positions in a newly-launched campus moderates the ability of a multi-site church to replicate comparable campus experiences.

Communication is a key factor in the management of a multi-site church and an important component of leadership. Trahan established that using different communicators in various campuses may induce changes in how a particular message gets shared and presented across all campuses (19). Watt concurred with Trahan, that using a specific communicator to share and present the same message across all campuses significantly improves its consistency (126). Diverse forms of training emerge within any church, singular or multi-site. Consequently, people consider a central team of leaders and identified in many multi-site churches with the main purpose of growing a training and resourcing ministry as key areas to ensure successful growth and excellence of the entire ministry. As Trahan argued, the level of centralization or decentralization depends on the number of existing campuses and the level of freedom the campus-level leadership enjoys, including the level of adherence to campus constraints, which impact the relayed experiences from campus to campus (14).

The primary consensus holds that each multi-site church differs from the other. No two multi-site churches are the same. Watt has a similar perspective as Venture Church, that leading multi-site churches results in some degree of incompleteness, such that the leadership still tries to figure out the best practices (126). On the other hand, Gordon contrasted with Watt, showing that irrespective of the leadership shortcomings, the church shares the Sacrament uniformly in the expression of unification among the multi-site campuses and furtherance of the church's mission and the heart of God (4). While successful multi-site churches involve dynamic leadership, both centralized and

decentralized frameworks share major leadership principles to ensure the successful multi-site ministry.

Creative Multi-Sites

The Dinner Church

The ideas defined above point to the concept of creative, multi-site churches. For instance, the Dinner Church is composed of different churches across the globe that share a eucharistic meal described as a form of worship. Churches in the Dinner Church model have unique services, and each service embodies the main church through a commitment to a prayerfully shared meal. Tomberlin argues that the Last Supper formed the basis of the Dinner Church, where people commune together and celebrate a meal as a way of fulfilling Jesus's orders (22). Chand expands on this, proposing that during the Dinner Church the Christians in a neighborhood merge, share the gospel, and receive healing and divine power (34). The development and use of an online campus, a website that seeks to reach every member around the world and commune with others, constitute the major tools in connecting all members of the Dinner Church.

Online Campus

Jesus gave the first disciples the role to fulfill the Great Commission around the world. They used infrastructure models such as roads and boats to spread the gospel. Janzen contends that the church today adopts digital technology and the internet to advance the potential of God's mission by introducing online churches (43). Online churches remove time and distance barriers, enhancing the reach of individuals on a twenty-four-hour timeline. Wangoto concurs with Janzen in that, through online platforms, pastors can share the message of God's hope and grace and attend to the

prayer needs of the congregants (22). Churches have adopted online learning programs for discipleship courses, enhancing spiritual growth in people without having to physically attend church at a specific time (Ross, 32). Akinbinu supports Ross's assertion, proposing that the church focus on increasing Christ-followers through discipleship. Accordingly, online classes will create a sense of community and provide channels for growth (18). An online campus creates a powerful tool for one-on-one mentoring through teleconferencing and instant messaging. As the church expands its reach to people all around the world, it serves its mission to expand the Kingdom of Heaven on Earth.

Online churches exhibit a high potential of facilitating evangelism ministry in churches with multi-site campuses. Fosner suggests that the online campus operates regardless of geographic and physical borders, which enhances the spread of the word of God in real time (44). In countries like China, Sudan, North Korea, and Afghanistan, where Christian missionaries and the teachings on Christ are banned by law and punishable by death, the online campus provides a viable, powerful tool for evangelism (Lehto 57). Jones suggests that since nefarious actors use the internet to spread information that increases immorality in the world and widen the gap between God and his people, the church should utilize the internet as a means to retaliate and inform people of the ways of the Lord (25). Online churches can play a major role in spreading Christianity in communities that oppose the spread of the gospel.

The internet presents an opportunity for the church to extend its reach beyond the walls of the church buildings. The churches can live-stream the services or have online services in multi-churches. To improve the worship experience of the community,

churches also use interactive websites. Some of the websites allow discussions among congregants in an online community (Wangoto 26). However, Akinbinu reports that not all parties approve of the idea of multi-site churches with reference to the celebration of the holy communion (28). Lehto counters Akinbinu, arguing that Pentecostals provide their own holy communion elements and bless them together. Jesus says, “I am telling you the truth if you don’t eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, you will not have life in yourselves. Those who eat my flesh and drink my blood have eternal life on the last day” (John 6:53-54).

Stiller asserts that a community is a unified group of individuals making livestream services communal (22). The individuals experience unity in the service with the aim of fellowshiping together, growing spiritually, and worshiping the Lord. Generally, people get connected to the Christian community before accepting Christ, and online churches play a large role in connecting the church to the non-believers, a major step in transforming people (Searcy 43). Viewers can form a new community through sharing the truth about Jesus Christ “by speaking the truth in a spirit of love, we must grow up in a way of Christ who is the head, under his control all the different parts of the body fit together, and the whole body is held together by every joint with which it is provided” (Eph. 4:15-16). This view believes that God will support any gathering to worship Him and allow online churches to grow.

Craig Groeschel’s Life Church in Oklahoma offers one example of churches that use online ministries. Cordeiro reports that online churches provide a platform where pastors can access millions of people around the world compared to thousands of congregants in a particular location (73). Life Church adopted technology to share the

word of the Lord by creating an online congregation. Janzen expands on this assertion stating that the online congregation provides a chance of fellowship to those who had never dreamed of walking into the church (24). Life Church uses invitation links to enable members to invite others to join in the service. Podcasts with episodes of television series and sermons offer more understanding of biblical ideas (Gordon 33). Maxwell complements the assertion by Gordon, suggesting that the increased popularity of podcasts proves a reliable means of continuing with evangelism through audio gospel content (26). Life Church also uses the multi-site worship model to reach the whole globe. The multi-site model provides a sense of flow by connecting remote campuses to the main campus through pre-recorded sermons and delayed or livestreamed videos. The multi-site model allows small groups of individuals to join the larger worship congregation.

The Christ Fellowship exploits a unique calling to families and individuals with special needs. Blanchard argues that with current technological advances the church can reach persons with disabilities at any place or time (17). The church follows Jesus's parable, "I tell you, whenever you did this for one of the least important of these members of my family you did it for me" (Matt. 25:40). Jesus explains that the church should do charitable deeds to portray His grace and mercy for people with special needs. Through online platforms, the church can reach the needy in society and offer physical and emotional support by sending text messages and updates through social media (MacMillan 22). Proverbs 14:31 says, "He who oppresses the poor shows contempt for their Maker, but whoever is kind to the needy honors God." The church, too, must show kindness to the needy by reaching out with the Gospel and providing food and help.

Online churches and live streaming have the potential to promote church planting. Online worship platforms like Facebook, teleconferencing, and YouTube allow members to convene spiritually (Stiller 33). Through such platforms, congregations could choose a leader for mentoring and development. The leader can start pastoring without the burden of preaching each weekend. Gordon proposes that the pastor can livestream the worship service or organize online bible studies to enable the church to grow before getting a physical location (47). The potential of online churches to grow into physical churches improves the development of multi-site churches while promoting evangelism around the world (Jones 43). As more people appreciate the use of online platforms to spread the gospel, the church increases the potential to build communion and fellowship among the members.

With the continued evolution and advancement of technology, the community becomes more experienced and enlightened on the use of technology. Ross contends that the online church will follow the right steps in advancement and provide deep and lasting communion for decades (20). Akinbinu argues that the church makes use of the internet and technology to increase the ability to reach the ends of the world with the message of Jesus Christ the Savior (30). Lehto urges the church to view the internet as God's move and plan to bring the gospel to every man, woman, or child on the earth, for with the internet the church enjoys an opportunity to reach people from all walks of life (44). The church should take on the challenge and use the available technological resources to spread the gospel and recruit more disciples in the Kingdom of God.

Literature Gap

The literature explored demonstrated potential for church growth to reach more people across the world using the multi-site church model. Multi-site church models demonstrate a direct influence on the spread of the Word of God via a missional strategy effectively targeting people. The literature further shows that various methods of communication exist for use by multi-site churches on different campuses to address their congregants. On the other hand, despite the need to build an effective multi-site church model, the literature lacks the best practices and leadership models implemented in multi-site churches to nurture their sustainability and expansion.

Research Design Literature

The type of research involved in this project classifies as pre-intervention research. Sensing adds that “[q]ualitative research involves being reflexive and autobiographical; therefore, when the researcher shares some of his stories, the community will have a sense of where he is coming from, where his heart is, and what the influencing factors are for him” (208). This project evaluates the circumstances and process behind launching and sustaining a multi-site church. The project does not provide a strategy for launching and sustaining a multi-site church into the future. Rather, the method only determines best practices derived from the churches studied.

Summary of Literature

This chapter provided an empirical review that explored the biblical foundations towards the mushrooming of multi-site churches basing the arguments on the great commission and Luke 10:1-12. Further, the chapter examined the theoretical foundations of the present study and highlighted the significance of group theory, inculturation theory, systems theory, and satellite church model in the growth of multi-site churches.

The study explored different tenets supporting the establishment of a multi-site church campus featuring multi-site campus launch, multi-site church structure, communication methods supporting multi-site organizations, multi-site locations strategy, and multi-site church leadership. Finally, the chapter outlined the potential for online campuses. The next chapter explores the materials, processes, and methods entailed in the collection of data, its analysis, and its interpretation to address the research aim and objectives.

CHAPTER 3

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY FOR THE PROJECT

Overview of the Chapter

This chapter covers the research methodology of this project as well as an analysis of the methods utilized to choose the participants and conduct the research. After a brief review of the nature and purpose of the project, the research questions and the description of the instrumentation used to address each of them follow. The chapter also covers the cultural context of the project and the specific parameters used to choose the participants in the study. Additionally, addressing the ethical considerations helped pinpoint the researcher's behavior and actions when dealing with the participants. The instrumentation section provides an overview of the various tools used to conduct the study. In addition, this chapter includes a data collection section, which establishes the various processes upheld in collecting the data. The data analysis section provides insight into the data analysis methods adopted by the researcher to examine the collected data.

Nature and Purpose of the Project

This dissertation addresses the topic, "The best practices to launch and sustain a multi-site church." Venture Church in Mill Creek, Washington, has maintained consistent numeric and spiritual growth over its sixteen years of operation, developing into a multi-site church with five campuses. Such growth has not come without numerous challenges. The project seeks to research and determine how best to navigate and avoid the various challenges and implement suitable practices to launch and sustain a multi-site church movement.

As referenced in Chapter One, over eight thousand churches in America have attempted a multi-site ministry in one form or another. Because of a lack of research-derived information on the subject to guide best practices, many of these churches have closed their campuses. Such deficiencies informed the decision to carry out this study to help future similar endeavors among churches. The purpose of this project was to determine the most suitable approaches for launching and sustaining a multi-site ministry by meeting with and interviewing various multi-site church pastors across America. Given that successful multi-site churches have survived where others have failed, the experiences drawn from pastors of the chosen institutions will offer important keys to setting a road map towards multi-site churches in the US and on a global scale. The researcher then studied and evaluated the interviews, determining similar trends and strategies that assisted in the effectiveness of the ministry and deriving the most suitable ones to guide other multi-site churches.

Research Questions

Three questions guided the research project to find similar trends and strategies when interviewing successful multi-site leaders.

Research Question #1. What were the circumstances surrounding the launch of your church's successful multi-site campuses?

The purpose of this question is to help the researcher understand the critical factors that led to the multi-site expansion of the church. Data for this question was procured as the researcher interviewed ten leaders or senior pastors of churches with at least three multi-site locations, with at least one campus existing for at least three years. Questions 1-3 established the credibility of the interviewees, which is critical for the

collection of trustworthy data to extrapolate to the global scale. Questions 4-8 addressed the specific circumstances behind the decision to launch the multi-site campus. Questions 12 and 13 offered important help in determining the time duration needed to develop a successful multi-site. Question 14 allowed the researcher to understand what the interviewee deemed a successful multi-site campus. Such information offered critical insights for creating recommendations for developing successful multi-site churches.

Research Question #2. What strategies did you execute to develop a multi-site church?

The establishment of multi-site churches can occur through multiple mechanisms dependent on the adopted organizational leadership and project management methodologies. This question allowed the researcher to evaluate if there were commonalities in the planning, strategizing, and executing of successful multi-site churches. It also allowed the researcher to understand the motivating factors that led to a church expanding via a multi-site ministry model. Questions 8 and 9 addressed the strategy behind recruiting and developing the campus pastor and the multi-site team. Questions 5-7 explained the practical realities of the multi-site launch, including facilities and finances. Questions 10 and 11 helped comprehend the intentionality behind the vision, culture, and demographic of the multi-site church.

Research Question #3. What critical practices have sustained multi-site churches that have persisted for a minimum of three years?

To answer this question, the researcher used an additional qualitative survey. Congregants of the multi-site churches used in this study all received anonymous surveys from the researcher. The survey of congregants allowed the researcher to accurately

confirm the assessments of the various interviewees. It proved essential in determining the factors that allowed a multi-site campus to persist over three years. Interview questions 12-15 helped determine similar trends that led to successful multi-site churches. Questions 16, 20, and 21 focused on multi-site campuses that had, in essence, failed. The interviewees' perspective on what led to the failure helped identify ineffective strategies to avoid in future efforts. Question 17 explained the long-term, successful relationship between the campus pastor of the multi-site and the main church. Questions 18, 19, and 22 helped the researcher determine best practices applicable in most multi-site churches.

Critical practices identified in this study are potentially applicable to most similar multi-site organizations, especially churches. Information obtained from this study is suitable for determining the best practices to enhance the functionality of multi-site churches. Furthermore, information drawn from this study helps Venture Church gain knowledge of current trends that help them grow. This church benefits by understanding the practices adopted by other organizations and comparing their practices to those of their peers. Consequently, these comparisons helped the researcher devise the most effective practices.

Ministry Context

Founded over sixteen years ago and still led by the current lead pastor, Venture Church serves the metropolitan Seattle region. As the church grew, growing pains became a reality: limited facilities, parking, and resources. The need for a long-term growth strategy became critical. Venture Church transitioned to a multi-site church, with the motto "One Church in Many Locations." Adopting a multi-site approach led to more challenges and, thus, to this research.

This study only involved large, multi-site churches. To participate in the study, the church must have had three active multi-site campuses with at least one that has existed for over three years. All churches included have their main campus located in a metropolitan area of the United States. Multi-sites of these churches, located in a wide variety of areas, from urban to rural, also indicate multiple socio-economic and ethnic regions. While Venture Church is associated with the Assemblies of God, the study did not limit based on denominational affiliation. The goal involved including many different types of churches whose similarities encompassed a multi-site strategy. The study included many different denominations, as well as some non-denominational churches. Interviews with lead or senior pastors included men and women, ranging from founding pastors to recently hired. The churches varied from new churches to historical churches.

Participants

The nature of the research required two different types of participants. An intentional selection of the lead pastors for interviewing arose from their perceived expertise and success in multi-site. The study also practiced a random selection of chosen congregants of the various churches for the study.

Criteria for Selection

The churches chosen and lead pastors interviewed for this study met the following three criteria:

1. The main campus is in a major metropolitan region of the United States.
2. The church has at least three multi-site locations.
3. At least one of these multi-site locations has existed for a minimum of three years.

The participants attaining these three criteria assured the researcher that pastors and the ministry context would meet the project's objectives. The contextual similarity helped the researcher utilize Venture Church as a representative sample of other similar churches. While maintaining differences, churches in major cities face similar issues, even though these communities have diverse populations. Major metropolitan areas tend to have a lower percentage of the population that professes faith and attends church regularly. Churches in those contexts tend to display more creativity with their facilities due to the higher costs.

Requiring the church to have at least three multi-site locations eliminates most churches that claim multi-site status. Many churches indicate themselves as multi-site because they have multiple, different services at the same venue, dissimilar to multi-site churches. While it is a proven successful strategy in many contexts, it does not meet the requirements of the study. For this research, a multi-site church has churches or services in at least three separate locations.

Finally, because a multi-site establishment represents a relatively new church strategy, finding churches with a multi-site location in existence for at least three years narrowed the participants substantially. An emerging trend amongst churches, one can find multi-site churches with ease. The challenge includes finding those who have done it successfully for an extended period. As for the survey participants, the criteria narrowed the possible participants. Interviews only involved congregants of one of the multi-site churches. One hundred random members of each church received emails from the researcher, as approved by the lead pastor. The congregants anonymously responded to

the online survey provided via Survey Monkey. The instrument helped verify the answers provided by the various pastors.

Description of Participants

As stated above, the ten pastors that were interviewed included all current leaders of large multi-site churches. Participants used only involved those over the age of 18. The study did not include limitations based on age as long as participants served as the primary lead at their church. The interviewees included both males and females drawn from a variety of ethnicities. Their length of tenure at their churches had no impact on their consideration. Some interviewees included the founding pastors of relatively new churches while others had taken over historical churches. The churches and pastors also came from a variety of denominations or non-denominational churches. In addition, the participants for the survey underwent random selection from congregants eighteen or older at the participating churches.

Ethical Considerations

The interviewer sought informed consent from the interviewees by providing consent forms. The interviewer performed and recorded the interviews via Zoom. Consent was obtained through verbal form, by answering “yes” to the question, “Do you consent to your name and your church participating in this study, limited to the answers provided in this interview?” The recordings were archived for any future needs. The recordings also underwent transcription, with a copy provided to the pastor at their request. If the pastor requested to exclude their name and church, the researcher completed the interview but did not use the information in the study.

Survey Monkey's privacy protocols (found at <https://www.surveymonkey.com/mp/policy/privacy-policy/>) ensured the confidentiality of the online survey. All survey responses were strictly confidential, and the researcher reported the data from this research only in the aggregate. The information, coded by Survey Monkey, remained confidential and was only accessible by using a login and password on the site. Once the research was completed, all paper copies of the survey underwent shredding; moreover, the researcher deleted all emails. The pastoral interviews application remained only in aggregate to determine similarities and trends to determine best practices to launch and sustain multi-site churches.

Instrumentation

The application of two researcher-designed instruments procured the data for this qualitative research. The first technique applied involved a semi-structured pastoral interview used to interview lead pastors of large, multi-site churches. The second method encompassed an online Congregant Survey distributed to random attendees of those multi-site churches. The pastoral interview applied a researcher-designed, semi-structured, qualitative instrument to allow ten unique lead pastors of large, multi-site churches to share their candid reflections and strategies that led to the formulation, success, and sustainability of their multi-site strategies. The interviews were also semi-structured in that the researcher had twenty interview questions that allowed for some variation, depending on the interviewee's responses. On average, a total of twenty-five interview questions appeared in the interviews. The rationale was to allow the lead pastors to reflect on their journey of becoming a multi-site church and share their honest

feedback about that process. Additionally, the pastoral interviews allowed the interviewees to assess the successes and challenges of their multi-site model.

The Congregant Survey involved a researcher-designed quantitative instrument for evaluating the accuracy of the Pastoral Interview responses. Spradley argues that in qualitative research, “I want to understand the world from your point of view. I want to know what you know in the way that you know it. I want to understand the meaning of your experience, to walk in your shoes, to feel things as you feel them” (17). While gaining the perspective of the lead pastors remained imperative to the overall research, the Congregant Survey allows the researcher to navigate any personal bias that may have come from the respondents. The goal of this survey involved verifying the conclusions of best practices that came as a result of the Pastoral Interviews. The survey included ten questions, a mixture of five multiple-choice questions and five forced-choice Likert-scale questions with answer values of one through five. The researcher received over 100 completed Congregant Surveys.

Expert Reviews

The researcher initially designed two different research methods and then submitted them to the following individuals for modification and feedback: the dissertation advisor, Dr. Joseph Castleberry, President of Northwest University, an Assemblies of God college located in the Seattle area; Dr. Robert Carlson, Senior Pastor of Bethany Christian Assembly, a large, multi-site church located in the city of Everett, WA; Christian Lindbeck, Senior Pastor of Hillcrest Church, a medium-sized church located in Bellingham, WA; and Dr. Beth Backes, Church Planting Director for the Northwest Ministry Network, an organization affiliated with the Assemblies of God that

oversees 350 churches. Dr. Backes also currently leads in the launching of a new church plant.

The researcher also sent the research instruments to two key leaders at Venture Church for their feedback: Alex McGregor, Executive Pastor with oversight of all multi-site campuses at Venture Church, and Scott Underwood, Campus Pastor for the Palouse Campus of Venture Church located in Moscow, ID. The expert reviewers responded to the researcher with their suggestions, modifications, and additions. The researcher updated both the Pastoral Interview and the Congregant Survey and sent them back to the reviewers for additional feedback. The expert reviewers then fully endorsed the two different research instruments.

Reliability and Validity of Project Design

The research methodology used demonstrated effectiveness in determining the best practices for launching and sustaining a multi-site church. The Pastoral Interviews provided reliable insights and perspectives from a broad perspective of various leading multi-site pastors. The parameters used to determine the pastors chosen for interviews by the researcher narrowed the interviews to experts in their field. These parameters provided the researcher with the confidence needed to determine the best practices from these expert practitioners. The reliability and validity of Pastoral Interviews resulted from following the best practices for a semi-structured interview, including a recorded, private setting between the researcher and the interviewee, as well as consistent order and reading of the questions positively reviewed in advance by the expert reviews.

The Congregant Survey, sent to random attendees of the various multi-site churches used in the research, enabled the researcher to verify and confirm the thoughtful

responses of the lead pastors. The random selection of congregants alleviated any potential bias in responses that could have come had the lead pastors chosen those surveyed. Surveying the larger group allowed for a more accurate conclusion. Both sets of research instruments were administered to the participants consistently. The Congregant Survey included online administration via Survey Monkey for seven days. Each participant answered the same ten questions. The Pastoral Interviews occurred in one-hour periods via Zoom.

Each interview was recorded and transcribed by the researcher. The Lead Pastors in the semi-structured interviews answered the same twenty questions in the same order. Based on their answers, though, other spontaneous questions elicited greater clarity and additional information. The researcher intentionally refrained from making any comments or indicating any approval or disapproval of answer to the questions. The unique perspectives of the different pastors in the study lent credibility, accuracy, and trustworthiness to the overall findings. The Congregant Survey affirmed the perspectives of the Lead Pastors interviewed as offering the best practices.

Data Collection

The type of research involved in this project classifies as pre-intervention research. This project evaluates the circumstances and process behind launching and sustaining a multi-site church. The project does not provide a strategy for launching and sustaining a multi-site church in the future. Rather, the method only determines best practices derived from the churches studied. The Pastoral Interview involved a semi-structured interview that engaged in qualitative research. Creswell describes the questioning in a qualitative interview, “In terms of practice, the questions become broad

and general so that the participants can construct the meaning of a situation, a meaning typically forged in discussions or interactions with other persons. The more open-ended the questioning, the better, as the researcher listens carefully to what people say or do in their life setting” (488). Sensing adds that “[q]ualitative research involves being reflexive and autobiographical; therefore, when the researcher shares some of his stories, the community will have a sense of where he is coming from, where his heart is, and what the influencing factors are for him” (208).

This project involved interviews with ten pastors of large, sustained multi-site churches. The recorded interviews allowed the pastors to share their unique experiences and perspectives. The researcher intended to gain wisdom from their specific multi-site journeys to determine the best practices that align with each situation. The semi-structured interviews included twenty questions asked in the exact same order for each interviewee. The researcher took the liberty of asking additional questions to provide greater clarity and insight. The researcher recorded and transcribed each interview. The researcher then categorized the answers into two categories: pre-launch and post-launch. After dividing the answers into these two categories, the researcher created sub-categories under each, highlighting the key success factors.

The information categorized from each interview underwent comparison with other interviews, looking for mutual themes and common practices. These then identified the “best practices.” The second research tool included a quantitative instrument done in the form of a Congregant Survey. This survey, created on Survey Monkey and distributed to a random group of fifty attendees at each multi-site church, included ten questions that varied from multiple choice to a forced-choice Likert scale of 1-5. Each survey

participant received the same questions. The survey remained available for seven days. The survey responses remained anonymous, thus encouraging the most honest responses. The results of the Congregant Survey underwent compilation, with each question listing the most common answer to the least common. The “best practices” derived from the Pastoral Interviews went through comparisons to the results of the Congregant Survey to examine commonalities, differences, and potential anomalies between the views of the pastors and the attendees of the churches.

Data Analysis

Once the Pastoral Interviews and Congregant Surveys underwent comparisons with each other, the researcher attempted to interpret the information. Merriam postulates that “[d]ata analysis is the process of making sense out of data. And making sense out of the data involves consolidating, reducing and interpreting what people have said and what the researcher has seen and read-it is the process of making meaning” (202).

The goal entailed not just determining what the pastors thought but also comparing it to what the attendees thought. Comparing this data helped the researcher determine the clear themes and common practices helpful to the pastors and appreciated by the congregants. These results went through synthesis with the finding from the literature review to create a thorough and congruent list of best practices to launch and sustain a multi-site church.

CHAPTER 4

EVIDENCE FOR THE PROJECT

Overview of the Chapter

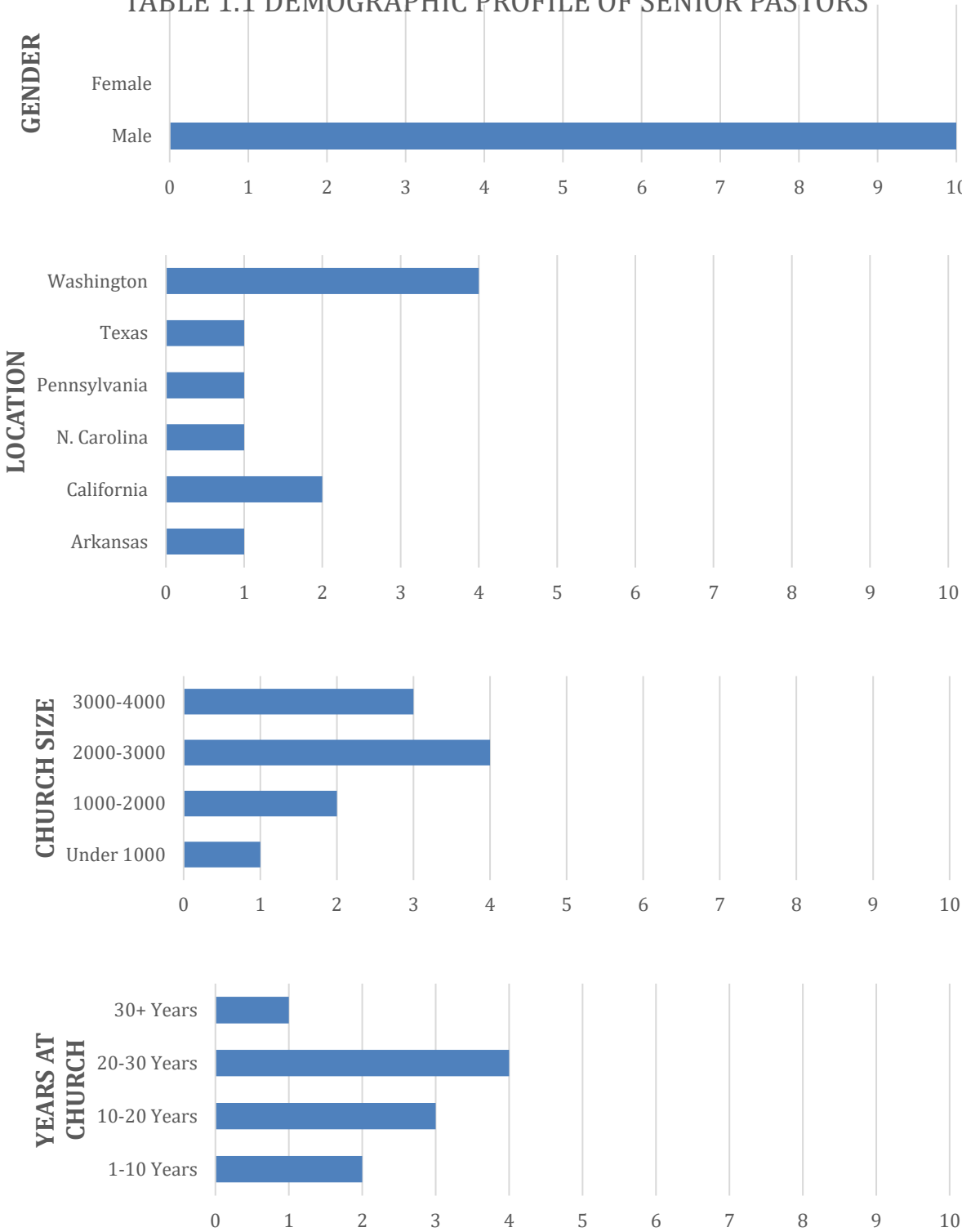
The purpose of this project is to determine the most suitable approaches for launching and sustaining a multi-site ministry by meeting with and interviewing various multi-site church pastors across America. Given that successful multi-site churches have survived where others have failed, the experiences drawn from pastors of the chosen institutions will offer important keys to setting a road map towards multi-site churches in the US and on a global scale.

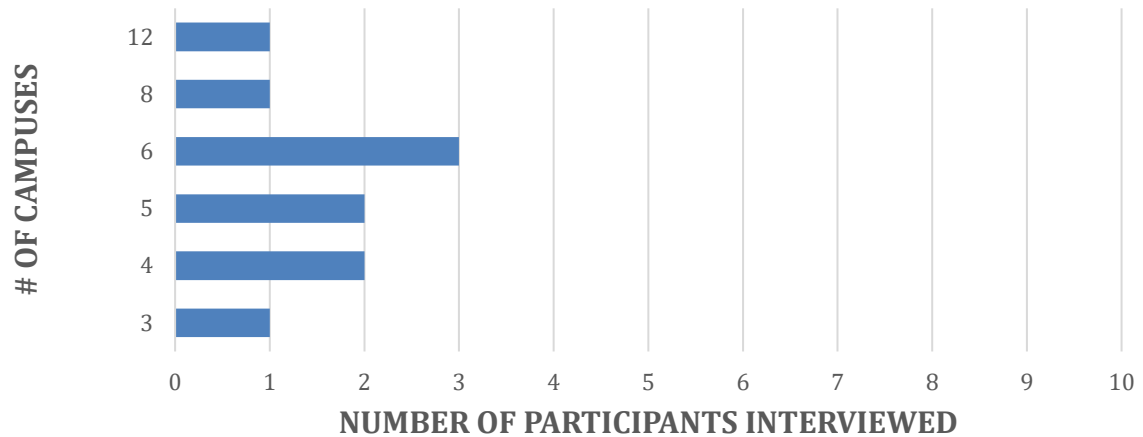
This chapter identifies the participants in this study and their demographic makeup. The chapter also presents the quantitative data from the Congregant Survey and the coded qualitative data from the Pastoral Interviews for each of the three research questions. The chapter concludes with a list of the major findings from the research and presented data.

Participants

The Congregant Survey was sent out to 278 members or attendees of various multi-site churches used in the research. 276 people responded with anonymity to the survey. As a result of the anonymous nature of the participants, the respondents' demographics are unknown. It is also not known which of the churches surveyed they are a member or attendee of. Ten lead or senior pastors of multi-site churches took part in the Pastoral Interview. The demographic profile of those who took part in the Pastoral Interview is represented in Table 1.1.

TABLE 1.1 DEMOGRAPHIC PROFILE OF SENIOR PASTORS





Research Question #1: Description of Evidence

What were the circumstances surrounding the launch of your church's successful multi-site campuses?

The tool used to collect the information needed to answer this research question was the Pastoral Interview. The Pastoral Interview consisted of twenty to twenty-five questions that assisted the researcher in determining themes and similarities for successful multi-site churches. Interview Questions 4, 9, 10, and 19 proved particularly helpful in understanding the circumstances behind each church's successful launch. The answers to these questions are illustrated in the following charts.

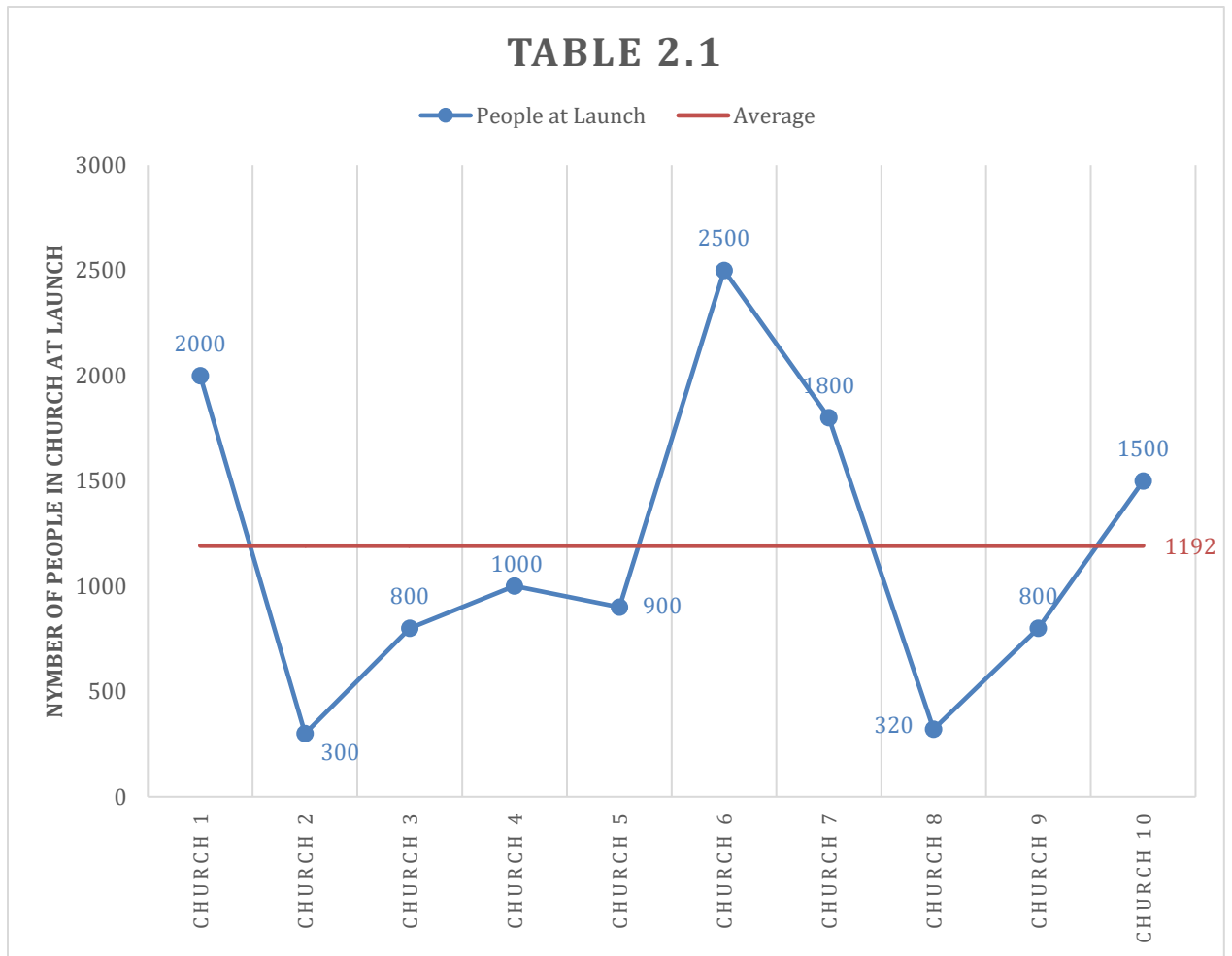


Table 2.1 visualizes the response to the question how large the church was when it launched its first multi-site campus. This chart shows that the churches varied in size from three hundred up to 2500 before they launched their first multi-site campus. The chart also reveals that the average of the sampled churches attendance at launch was 1192.

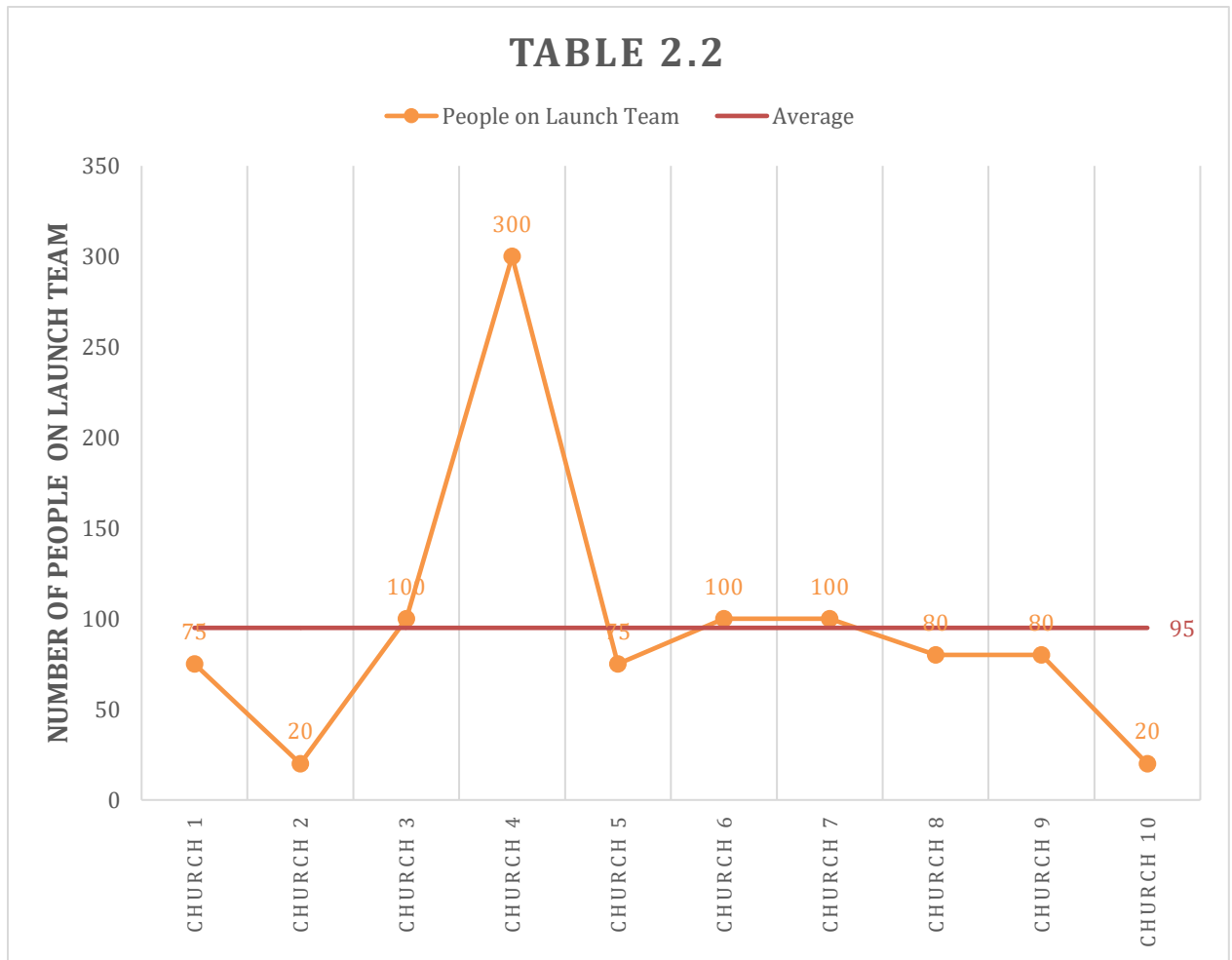


Table 2.2 shows responses to the question of how many people were committed to being a part of the new site from the launching campus or community, at the time of the launch. This chart shows the lowest number of committed people before the launch was twenty and the largest group before launch was three hundred. The chart shows that the average launch team for a successful multi-site church was ninety-five.

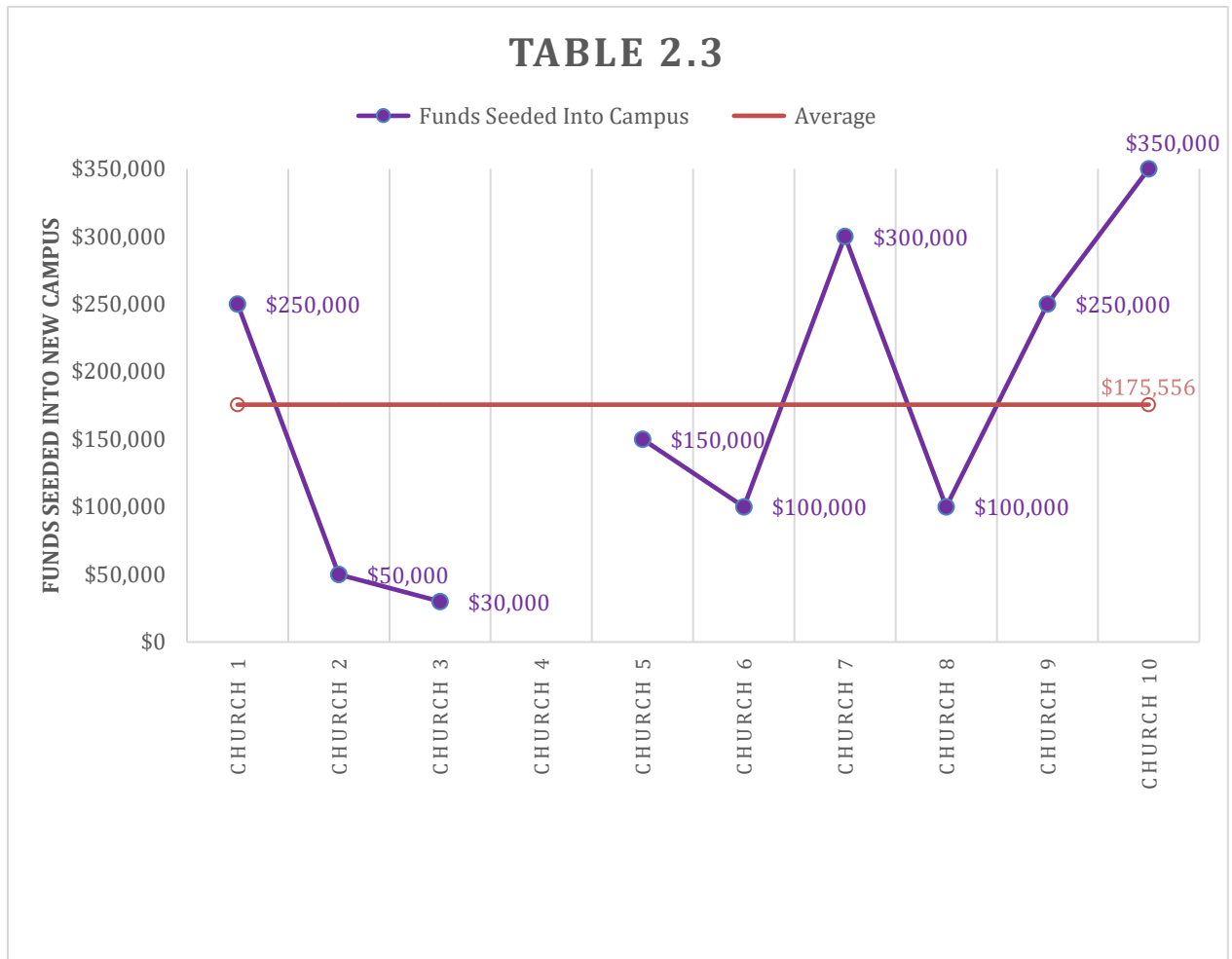
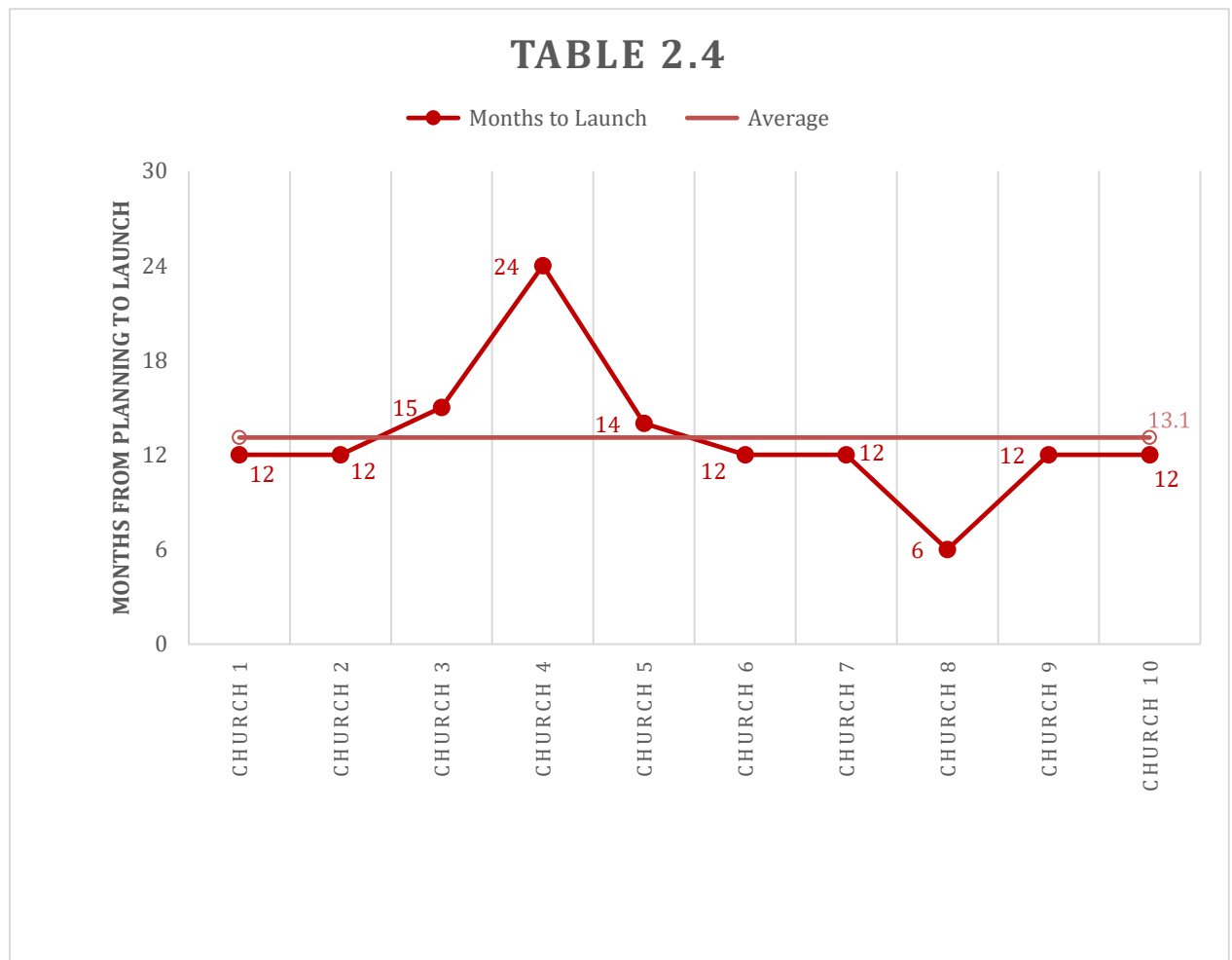


Table 2.3 illustrates responses to the question regarding the amount of financial resources each church invested or “seeded” into their successful multi-site campus. The interviewer asked each respondent for their best guess. The chart shows that successful multi-site churches vary in their initial investment from \$30,000 up to as high as \$350,000. Church 4 did not give a specific number so they are not listed. The Pastor of Church 4 answered this question by stating, “If the relationship (with campus pastor) was right, I think we would seed money to facilitate the lease of a location and then obviously a salary of some sort for the campus pastor. Then we would help with resourcing a launch team. So, there is no limit on what we would seed initially for the right leader.” Not

including Church 4's answer in the calculation, the average amount seeded into a multi-site campus was \$175,556.



Finally, Table 2.4 answers the question concerning the duration of time between the conceptual idea of the multi-site campus and the actual launch. The chart shows that the duration of time was as brief as six months to as far out as twenty-four months. The average duration of time from concept to launch of a multi-site campus was thirteen months.

Research Question #2: Description of Evidence

What strategies did you execute to develop a multi-site church?

The Pastoral Interview assisted the researcher in developing themes, through qualitative research, that answered this research question. Pastoral Interview Questions 11-14 addressed the strategy behind recruiting and developing the campus pastor and the multi-site launch team. Questions 5-10 explained the practical realities of the multi-site launch, including facilities and finances. Finally, Questions 16 and 17 helped comprehend the intentionality behind the vision, culture, and demographics (DNA) of the multi-site church.

Campus Pastor

The interviewees came from a variety of church sizes and locations in America as described in Table 1.1. Eight of the ten respondents emphasized the importance of campus pastors being “raised up from within the church.” The pastor from Church 10 was the exception, stating, “Several were in our church, most were outside our church. It’s kind of a mix, you’ll find with me, I don’t have one overall strategy.” The other exception was the pastor of Church 6 who answered the question by explaining their 45/45/10 strategy for recruiting campus pastors. The pastor of Church 6 explained, “Meaning 45% we raise up through the house, whether that’s a junior high pastor or youth pastor or a student from our Southeastern extension site. 45% are connections to someone outside the church but with a similar vision. 10% through adoption (of a small, struggling church).”

All of the respondents strongly emphasized the importance of the campus pastor when it comes to the sustained success of a multi-site campus. The various comments were:

- “The one thing I did right was choosing the right people, the right leaders.” Church 2
- “I love (multi-site) campuses because of the great amount of space it gives great leaders to grow.” Church 3
- “Outside campus pastors have never worked for us. The longest someone from the outside has stayed is eighteen months.” Church 9
- “Finding the right leader is more important than finding the right location. It is all about finding the Apostolic Leader and then where do they feel called to plant.” Church 6
- “We’ve had a couple people (campus pastors) who have come from the outside, and the longest we have kept one is eleven months.” Church 5
- “We had a campus pastor that was doing his own thing. Through shepherding and pastoring and conversating, it was obvious God was calling him to be a head pastor, so we had a hard conversation and said, ‘You’re here to do this vision and work this plan; if you refuse to do it you must move on.’ When DNA is not a fit, we move campus pastors on.” Church 4

Once it was determined the importance of the campus pastor for the success of the multi-site campus, the researcher inquired about the desired amount of time needed to train a campus pastor. The interviewees that responded stated the following:

- “They must be a part of church leadership for one to two years before they will be considered for a campus pastor role.” Church 1
- “We would like a campus pastor to have served on our staff for two to four years prior to leading a campus.” Church 9
- “We want all campus pastors to be ‘apprenticed’ for two years at our church.” Church 8
- “A campus pastor must intern and train at the church for one year before the campus launch.” Church 5
- “The potential campus pastor must have served for a minimum of one year on our staff.” Church 4

The interviewees that are not mentioned were asked the question but never gave a clear response so they were not included. It was clear the importance of training the campus pastor for a minimum of one year prior to launching a campus.

The researcher asked several of the interviewees an additional question about campus pastors. Since it was determined that a key factor in a successful multi-site is the campus pastor, some interviewees were asked how often they met with the Campus Pastor once the multi-site was launched. Their responses were as follows:

- “Meet twice a month.” Church 6
- “Meet with our campus pastors weekly.” Church 4
- “We meet weekly to strategize Sunday messages.” Church 9
- “We meet monthly.” Church 7
- “We have a bi-monthly lunch.” Church 3

Practical Realities

TABLE 5.1 Congregant Survey Results

Questions:	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
2. I attend a multi-site venue or campus regularly	272 <i>99%</i>	4 <i>1%</i>	0 <i>0%</i>	0 <i>0%</i>
3. I attend a multi-site venue or campus because it is more conveniently located to my home	202 <i>73%</i>	54 <i>20%</i>	20 <i>7%</i>	0 <i>0%</i>
4. The multi-site venue or campus I attend still allows me to feel a part of the larger main church	76 <i>28%</i>	92 <i>33%</i>	51 <i>18%</i>	57 <i>21%</i>
5. Feeling connected to the main or central church campus is NOT important to me	82 <i>30%</i>	75 <i>27%</i>	70 <i>25%</i>	49 <i>18%</i>
6. I enjoy participating in the campus closer to my home, but still appreciate being connected to a much larger church	103 <i>37%</i>	139 <i>50%</i>	21 <i>8%</i>	13 <i>5%</i>
8. I enjoy video teaching	47 <i>17%</i>	78 <i>28%</i>	106 <i>38%</i>	45 <i>16%</i>
9. Being a part of a multi-site venue or campus, I sometimes feel disconnected with what is happening at the overall church	92 <i>33%</i>	108 <i>39%</i>	41 <i>15%</i>	35 <i>13%</i>
10. If I were to move to a new area, I would have no issue attending another multi-site venue or campus	176 <i>64%</i>	40 <i>14%</i>	35 <i>13%</i>	25 <i>9%</i>

	Live from Campus Pastor	Video by Lead/Sr Pastor	Hybrid (Live & Video)	Live by a Teaching Team
7. The campus or venue that I attend utilizes this method of teaching:	67 <i>24%</i>	101 <i>37%</i>	102 <i>37%</i>	6 <i>2%</i>

The Pastoral Interview, as well as the Congregant Survey, helped bring clarity to practical realities of multi-site ministry. The Congregant Survey was sent to a random group of members or attendees of the various churches represented in this study. Of the 278 that responded, 276 completed the survey. The results are shown in Table 5.1. Most

of the respondents enjoyed participating in the multi-site campus; 64% (strongly agree) and 14% (agree) they would consider a multi-site campus if they moved to a new area.

The respondents were clear that the reason they attend the multi-site campus is due to convenience of location. A full 73% strongly agree and 20% agree that they attend a multi-site campus because it is more conveniently located to their home.

An interesting data point is that the strategy for the location was not that important for the majority of the interviewees in the Pastoral Interview. They were asked about the importance of proximity to their main campus and the answers varied:

- “Proximity matters. We want to be in South King County. But opportunity matters more than location.” Church 1
- “We want all of our campuses to be within 10 to 40 minutes of each other.” Church 2
- “Proximity is important but what matters most is a leader with a Macedonian Call to a particular location.” Church 3
- “Proximity doesn’t matter. All that matters is opportunity and need.” Church 10
- “We care more about opportunity than location or proximity to the main campus.” Church 9
- “We want all our campuses to be within one hour driving distance of each other.” Church 8
- “All we care about is opportunity.” Church 7

- “For us proximity does not matter. We look for strategic locations that can become Apostolic Centers to eventually launch more campuses from.”

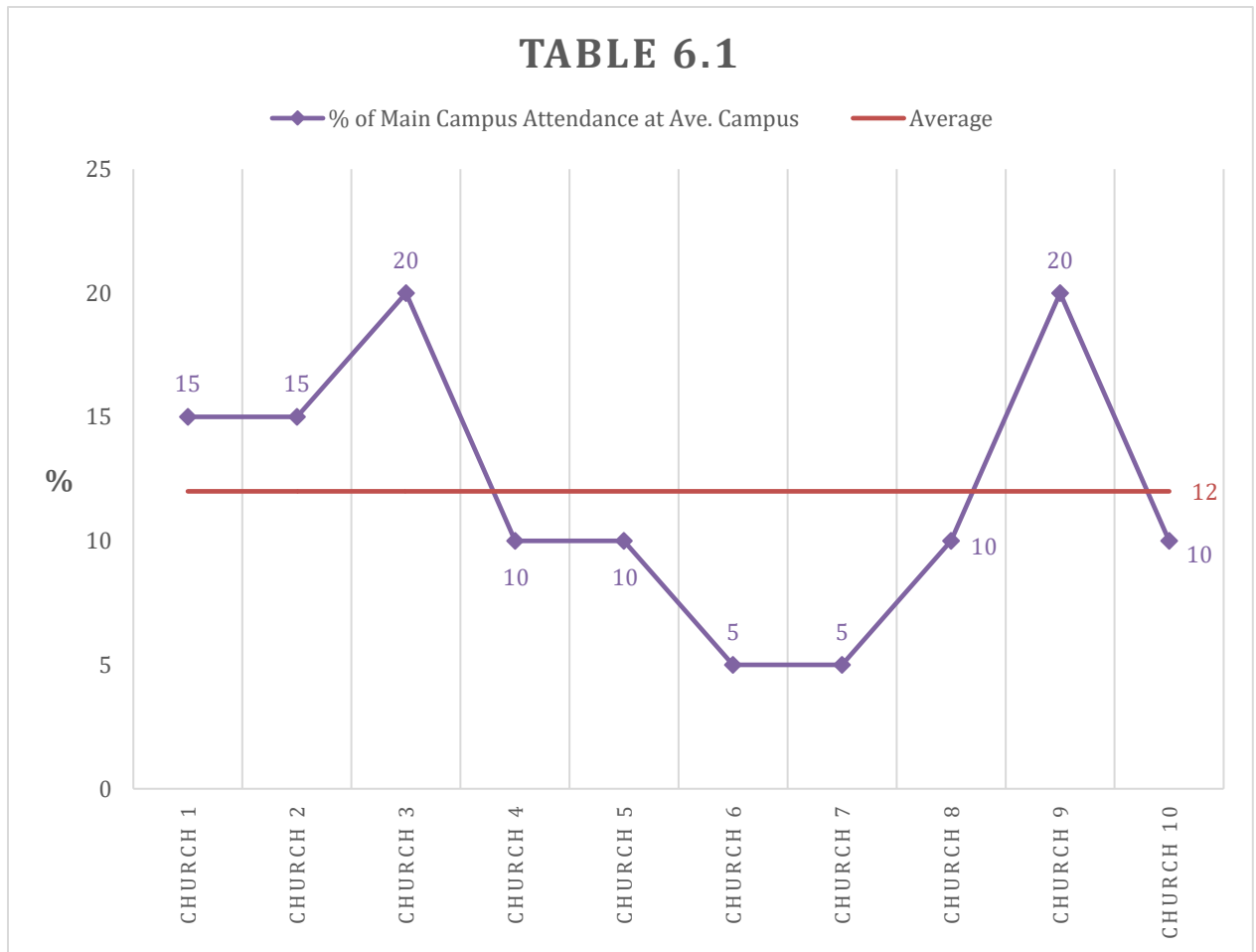
Church 6

- “We look for opportunities. When we find a facility, that determines the location.” Church 5

- “We do not care about proximity or location. We look for an opportunity. For us the opportunity is tied to a building, a core group of people, a catalytic leader, or a strategic growth opportunity.” Church 4

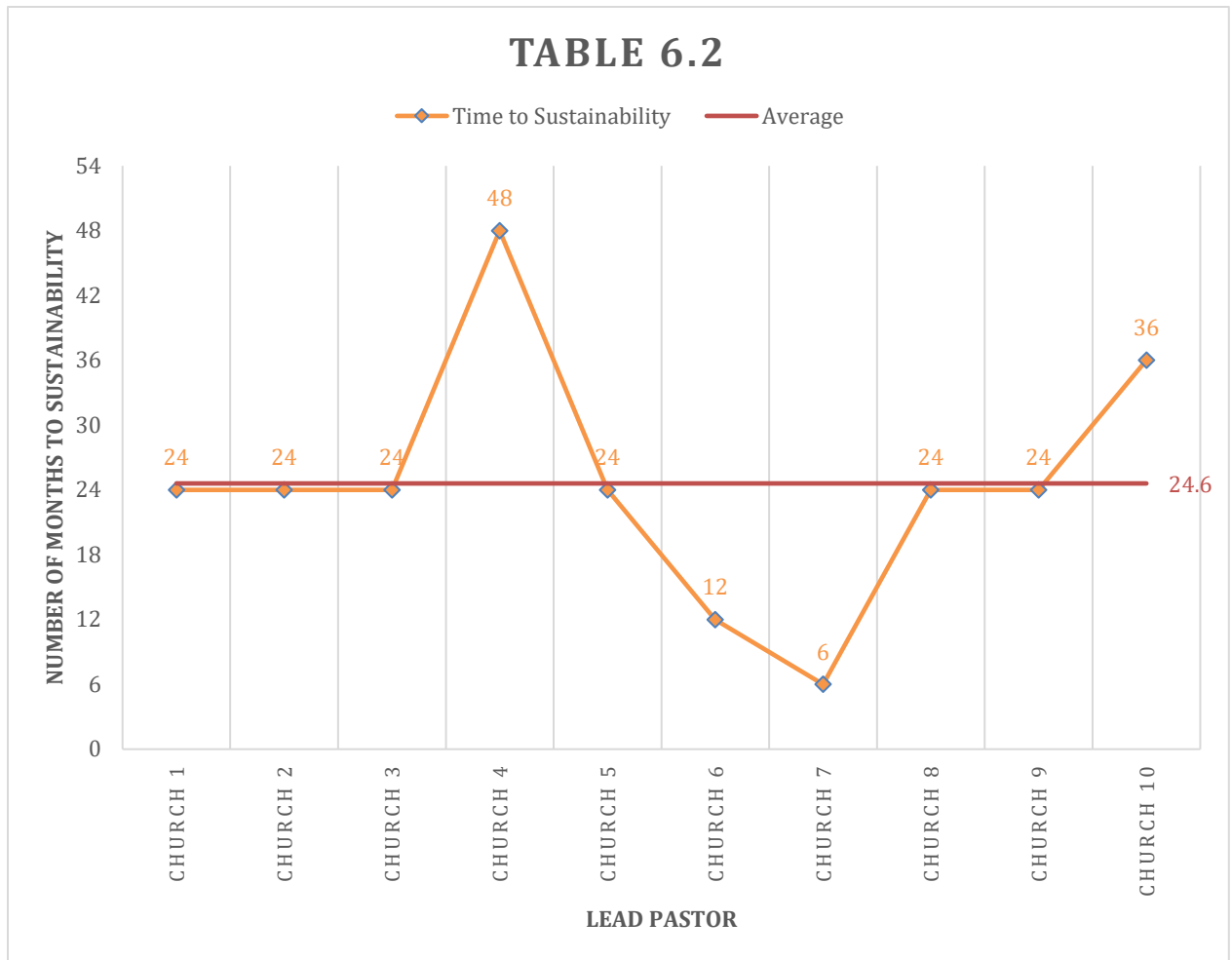
For the majority of the congregants, attending the multi-site was due to convenience more than any other factor. For pastors who launched the multi-site, convenience for the current attendee was not a factor in consideration for the campus.

Years ago, when Venture Church was first starting multi-site ministry, the researcher went to several conferences led by leaders of multi-site churches. Nelson Searcy, Pastor of the Journey Church in Manhattan, shared “The dirty little secret of multi-site is that nationally the average multi-site campus is only 10% the size of the main campus.” This quote led to asking the Pastoral Interviewees the percent of the size of their multi-site in comparison to their main campus. Some of the respondents gave the average attendance of their multi-site instead. The researcher divided the total attendance of the multi-site by the total attendance of the main campus to answer the question. The results are seen in Table 6.1. The churches represented in the research varied from multi-sites on average of 5% up to as high as 20% of their main campus. The average was 12%.



Another practical reality is the need for a facility to meet in. The researcher is currently coaching a church planter in the Seattle area. She has a great team and has raised a significant amount of money. Her biggest hurdle has been procuring a facility. She first looked at renting space in a school, but in the Seattle area all schools require proof of Covid vaccination for individuals to be in their facilities. This proved problematic. She then started looking at community spaces. Unfortunately, all of those had the same restrictions. She eventually found a location in a local shopping mall. Since facilities are always a challenge for church planters and multi-site churches, the Pastoral Interview included questions about facilities. The responses were as follows:

- “I love when an established church wants to merge with us. Primarily because they already have a facility. I would do a school again but it would be with the goal of not staying there more than three years.” Church 1
- “We want a permanent facility before we launch a campus. This can include buying an established building, building from dirt, or being gifted a church building from a struggling church. We have done all three.” Church 4
- “We have built facilities in five places. We’ve inherited facilities in a couple places. We are in a rented facility in another. We don’t really have a strategy for this.” Church 10
- “We care about accessibility and visibility of a facility the most. So sometimes we rent a school because of its central location. Our goal is a permanent facility as soon as possible though.” Church 7
- “We prefer to own our facility.” Church 6
- “I’d like to own them.” Church 9
- “To help us because we don’t have a lot of money, we ask to use an extra room in an established church. So, we build relationships with other churches.” Church 2
- “We rent schools because they are cheap.” Church 3



Finally, Table 6.2 illustrates the goal for the multi-site campus to reach sustainability. The interviewees all agreed in some form or another that sustainability means it makes financial sense for the overall organization. Some interviewees said there were circumstances that would cause them to reconsider this timeline, but Table 6.2 illustrates that hope of when the new multi-site campus will reach a financial “break even” point. The shortest duration of time for hopeful sustainability was Church 7 at six months from launch; the longest expected duration was Church 4 at forty-eight months. The average duration of time for a multi-site to reach sustainability is twenty-four months. The interviewees were quick to discourage the idea that if a multi-site campus

has not reached sustainability by their time line, they would shut the campus down. In some circumstances, that would be the case, but, under some circumstances, they would not. It is at the time where a multi-site campus has not reached sustainability, most churches consider what needs some change or adjustment.

DNA Importance

The interviewees of the Pastoral Interview were asked a series of questions in relation to the intentionality of reproducing the DNA of the main campus to the multi-site campuses. DNA refers generally to similar language, mission, vision, and values but can be as particular as similar aesthetic of the facilities. They all responded that reproducing DNA was important, but they varied in how important it was. Here are the responses:

- “Reproducing our DNA is vital. We are like Starbucks. We believe in the franchise model of multi-site church.” Church 1
- “Reproducing our DNA is a must. It is the primary responsibility of the Campus Pastor.” Church 2
- “DNA is important, but we want it contextualized to the culture where the multi-site campus is located.” Church 3
- “DNA is randomly reproduced at our campuses. We only require that the language on mission, vision, and values be the same.” Church 10
- “We implement a franchise model. It is vital that all campuses do the same things.” Church 9
- “Reproducing DNA is important, but we want it translated in the region where the multi-site campus is located.” Church 8
- “Reproducing DNA is our #1 priority.” Church 7

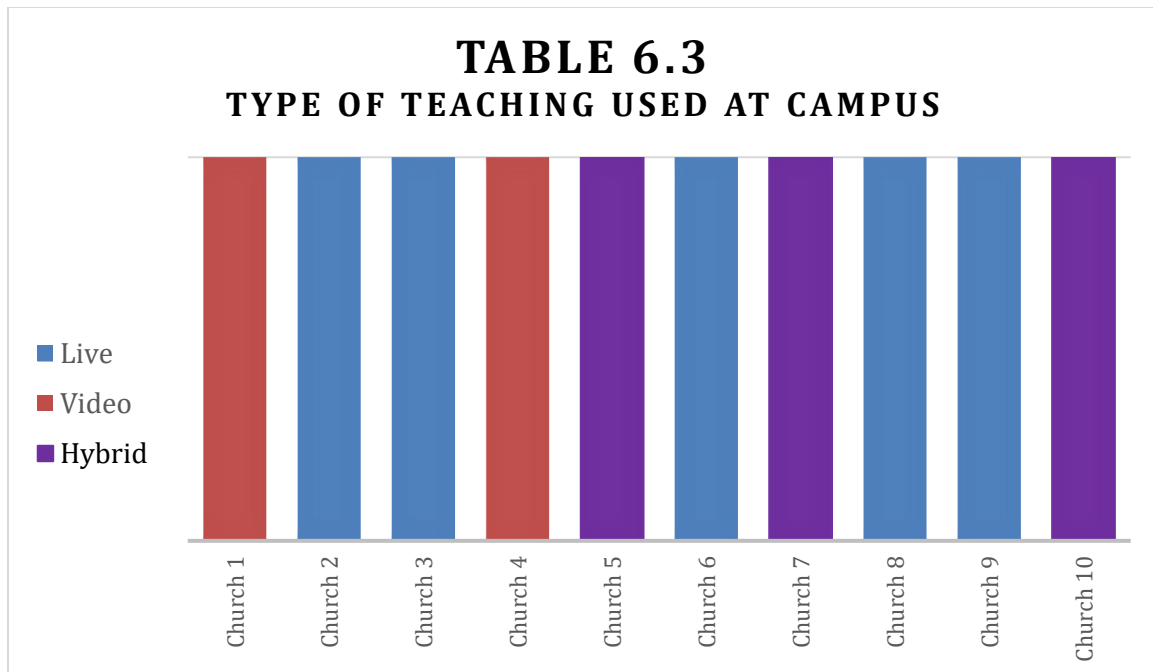
- “Reproducing DNA is vital. Every future campus pastor is required to train for 6 months in our churches DNA.” Church 6
- “We want our DNA as it pertains to mission and values replicated. We understand that it can be practiced uniquely. We are more the Dairy Queen model versus the Starbucks model.” Church 5
- “We want our DNA contextualized to the surrounding community. So we have a franchise model but allow each multi-site to have its individual strategy for execution of mission.” Church 4

This question was not explored in detail, but several of the interviewees shared that all of their campuses pay a franchise fee or central service fee to the main campus. This fee helps offset the costs associated with the facilitation of the multi-site campus. The responses were as follows:

- “We charge a central service fee to all of our campuses of 20% of their giving. This fee starts at the launch of the campus.” Church 1
- “We charge a fee of 10% of their giving that begins at the campus launch.” Church 2
- “We charge a 5% franchise fee. We would like to charge more but none of our campuses could afford it.” Church 10
- “Every campus pays a 25% central service fee.” Church 4

Research Question #3: Description of Evidence

What critical practices have sustained multi-site churches that have persisted for a minimum of three years?



The Pastoral Interview participants were asked about their method of teaching the gospel at their various multi-site campuses. The interviewees were given three options: all live teaching, all video teaching, or a hybrid option (a mix of live and video teaching). Table 6.3 shows the results. The responses from the churches were that five were all live, two were all video, and three were hybrid, or a mix of both. Two of the pastors that responded shared they were rethinking their strategy of communication. Church 3, which is currently all live teaching, shared,

We do live everywhere but that's one of the things I am rethinking. I am not sure I want to be one speaker and video everywhere else. I don't think I am going to take an existing campus and push them to video. But people have gotten use to video broadcasting because we've been doing it for a couple years (due to Covid). I think we are going to have a blended approach in the future.

Church 1, which is currently all video teaching, shared, “I am open to a Campus Pastor preaching ten to fifteen times a year, but we haven’t made that transition yet.” It seems like more and more multi-site pastors are moving towards a hybrid model of communication.

Interestingly, those that responded in the Congregant Survey (Table 5.1) were not as enthusiastic about video teaching. When asked if they enjoyed video teaching, 17% strongly agreed, 28% agreed while 38% strongly disagreed and 16% disagreed.

Summary of Major Findings

The information received from the survey and interviews yielded significant findings regarding the launching and sustaining of a multi-site ministry. These findings have relevance for any church considering launching a multi-site ministry. These major findings, or best practices, will be discussed in Chapter 5:

1. The right campus pastor is more important than the right location.
2. Live teaching is not critical.
3. The cost is more than just financial resources.
4. A strategic leadership pipeline is essential.

CHAPTER 5

LEARNING REPORT FOR THE PROJECT

Overview of the Chapter

The purpose of this project was to determine the most suitable approaches for launching and sustaining a multi-site ministry by meeting with and interviewing various multi-site church pastors across America. Given that successful multi-site churches have survived where others have failed, the experiences drawn from pastors of the chosen institutions offer important keys to creating a fruitful road map towards multi-site churches in the US and on a global scale.

This chapter identifies the four major findings from the research project and explains how they correspond to personal observations, the literature survey, and the biblical framework of the project. This chapter will also identify limitations of research, some unexpected observations, and provide some recommendations for further study.

Major Findings

The Right Campus Pastor is More Important than Location

Prior to this research, most of the researcher's opinions about the launching and sustaining of a multi-site church were from personal experience through trial and error as well as direct communication with a handful of successful multi-site pastors. Harold Samuel famously stated the importance of "location, location, location." Location seemed to be what mattered most. Location was the primary consideration when planting Venture Church, including regional demographics, new construction, convenience to freeways, and even proximity to major universities. This same strategy strongly influenced beliefs about launching multi-site campuses. Location has always been first; the leaders were

interchangeable. The belief was that the culture and strategy of Venture Church would allow any Campus Pastor just to step in and “plug and play” within the system, and a lead pastor’s ability to train, mentor, influence, and persuade campus pastors would help them align with the overall mission of Venture Church.

During this research, the successful multi-site pastors interviewed placed a low priority on location. For most, their multi-site campus location was determined by extenuating factors, such as being given a building, momentum of a small group in the area, or the assimilation of a smaller church. Opportunity influenced the location far more than strategy. Most pastors just preferred their multi-site campuses to be within an hour of their main campus. Even this was not a limiting factor. The one common thread shared by all was the importance of choosing the right leader or campus pastor. When asked what would they do differently or what regrets they had in their multi-site journey, almost all responded with, “I would not have hired this campus pastor.” The pastor of Church 9 stated, “Bad campus pastor hires have cost me greatly.” It became clear that choosing the right leader is far more important than choosing the right location. The right location with the wrong leader will not work. Several of the pastors interviewed stated they find the right leader (campus pastor) and allow that leader to decide where the multi-site campus is located.

The Congregant Survey respondents showed that, over time, their connection to the campus pastor is much more important than their continued connection to the main campus. Fifty-seven percent of those that responded stated that feeling connected to the main campus was not important to them. Ninety-three percent agreed with the statement, “I attend a multi-site campus because it is more conveniently located to my home.” This

research has demonstrated that while location is important to the attenders, to sustain a multi-site location over the long term a campus pastor must be carefully chosen.

In the literature review, location was not as important of a factor as had been assumed. Nelson Searcy, in *Launch: Starting a New Church From Scratch*, stated when evaluating a campus location “distance between the campus site location, homes of congregants, and residences of the campus pastors” should be considered. Most of the authors that emphasized the importance of location were considering a business franchise perspective instead of a church multi-site perspective. Choosing the campus pastor was also not an emphasis in most of the literature. Most of the authors focused more on leadership structure and diversity versus choosing the right leader. In *The Multi-Church Phenomenon in North America*, Brian Frye emphasized the importance of diversity in leadership with multi-site campuses. In *Identifying, Equipping, and Sending of Laypersons to Lead a Multi-site Church*, Kenneth Nash discussed how the leadership style needed to lead a church with multiple sites changes as the organization gets larger. To summarize, the emphasis was on leadership structure and style more than choosing the right leader. John Maxwell is the exception; he has stated in many of his books, including, *21 Indispensable Qualities of a Leader*, “Everything rises and falls on leadership.”

The biblical and theological framework for this project centers around Jesus’s command to his disciples in Matthew 28:19-20: “Go, therefore, and make disciples of all nations baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe everything I have commanded you.” The Great Commission is the motivation behind every multi-site campus. Jesus also challenged his followers in

Acts 1:8 to “be my witnesses in Jerusalem, in all of Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.” Reflecting on this command, every location matters. There might be demographic studies that make a location seem more appealing strategically, but ultimately Jesus has called his followers to go everywhere. There really is not a bad location if churches adhere to his command.

When considering the importance of choosing the right campus pastor, Titus 1:5-9 and 1 Timothy 3:1-7 lists the qualifications to be a leader within the church. Whereas Christians are commanded to go everywhere and evangelize, the qualifications for a leader within the church are very specific. It seems clear from a biblical standpoint that choosing the right leader is very important.

Live Teaching is Not Critical

The most polarizing issue in multi-site church ministry is the method of teaching. This researcher is a gifted communicator whose teaching translates well via video, live stream, or podcast. Venture Church thus utilizes a hybrid teaching model with preaching via video twice a month and campus pastors preaching live the other two or three times a month. The issue of live versus video teaching is a constant challenge. There is a contingent of people, usually from an older age demographic, who only want live teaching. After years of dealing with the same issue, it seemed that live teaching might be the only effective way to do multi-site. This research yielded surprising results. There was not a clear right or wrong way to teach based upon the churches represented in the interview. They were firmly split between live teaching or some form of teaching via video. The pastors of the churches that use only live teaching shared that they were considering utilizing video on occasion to help keep the church aligned under one vision.

The pastors of the churches that solely used video teaching shared that they were considering having their campus pastors preach live more often.

The diversity of teaching used in the various successful multi-site churches represented in the Pastoral Interview showed that the mode of teaching is not critical for the success or failure of a multi-site. The results from the Congregant Survey were especially intriguing. Fifty-four percent of those surveyed shared that they did not enjoy video teaching. Yet, they still faithfully attend the church because the multi-site campus is conveniently located near their home. Ninety-three percent of those surveyed said convenience to their home is the primary reason they attend a multi-site. It is clear from the research that the mode of communication is not critical for the success of the campus. The key is to manage the expectations of the attenders. If it is clearly communicated that the multi-site campus utilizes video teaching, the attenders know what to expect and are not disappointed. Live teaching might be preferable, but video teaching is also effective.

In the literature review, it was evident that some authors were opposed to the idea of video teaching. Christopher Ward, in his *Analysis of Models of Teaching in a Multi-site Setting*, believes that video teaching exacerbates the phenomenon of a “celebrity pastor.” He argues that churches built on a sole communication gift will have negative results should the pastor transition. In *The Multi-site Church: Examining Methods of Expansion to New Campuses*, Terry Gordon argues that the cost to set up the technology to broadcast effective video can be significantly more expensive than live teaching. Stephen Ellingson counters his statements in *Explaining the Emergence and Expansion of Mega Churches* by explaining that video venues require less staff and, due to advances in technology, churches can easily broadcast to rented facilities. Despite his philosophical

disagreement, Ward could not dispute the low cost and high effectiveness of video teaching. The effectiveness of video teaching is undeniable. Andrew Beery, in *Multi-site Churches as a Strategy for Revitalization*, concluded there are over eight thousand multi-site churches in America and over 80% of those utilize video teaching. Finally, Nathan Reed, in *A Comparative Analysis of Church Membership Practices*, stated that the application of modern digital technology transforms remote access in real time, making it no longer a limiting factor for church services. It is clear that while people might prefer live teaching, video teaching has proven successful and effective.

The biblical and theological argument for video teaching is that the gospel is being shared. 2 Timothy 3:16 reminds us, “All Scripture is inspired by God and is profitable for teaching, for rebuking, for correcting, for training in righteousness.” If Jesus’ command was to take the gospel to the “ends of the earth,” there is not a more cost-effective way to spread the gospel than through technology. It allows believers to share the gospel in countries that are closed off to missionaries. It allows them to preach the gospel without being limited by geographical boundaries. Paul stated that “all Scripture is inspired by God.” This implies that the Scripture is what is inspired rather than the communicator or the communication method.

The Cost is More than Just Financial Resources

Because of the researcher’s experience leading a multi-site church, he was aware of the resource cost to Venture Church. Venture Church launched a new multi-site because they had an opportunity. In 2014, the church was presented with the opportunity to acquire a church building in Moscow, ID. Venture Church was expanding in multi-site, and the opportunity to receive a debt free building was too great to pass up. For the next

three months, the attention of the entire organization was focused on launching this new campus. The Elder Board Vice President had expressed a desire to sell his successful business and transition into full-time ministry. Venture Church presented him the opportunity to be the campus pastor at the new Palouse Campus (Moscow, ID), and he accepted.

The first five years of this multi-site campus were a struggle. It steadily grew but required constant financial assistance from the main campus. It also needed time and energy from the Main Campus staff. Furthermore, the main campus was consistently encouraging people to move from the Seattle area to Moscow to assist with the campus. The Palouse Campus is a huge success today but came with great cost to the entire organization. That story has consistently represented the journey of all six of its multi-site campuses. The hope was always that they would reach financial sustainability within six months of their launch. Only one of the campuses Venture Church has launched over the years has reached that goal. It was no surprise that tremendous resources are needed to launch a multi-site. Unfortunately, it was hard to know ahead of time the expected cost. The research can help illuminate just how great of a cost each multi-site campus is.

The hope is that this research creates a beneficial road map for launching a multi-site campus that would not only assist Venture Church moving forward but be helpful for churches around the country. The Pastoral Interviews brought clarity to the actual minimum amount of resources (including finances, time, and people) needed to launch and sustain a successful multi-site. From the research, the average cost of launching a multi-site campus from the churches represented was \$175,000. The average amount of time needed to prepare prior to the actual launch was thirteen months. Once the multi-site

campus was launched, it required an average of twenty-four months before it reached a point of financial sustainability. Based upon this research, it takes an average of three years from concept to sustainability for each multi-site campus. Finally, successful multi-site campuses need an average of ninety-five committed attendees before the official, first service launch. When considering that the vast majority of multi-site campuses are created due to an opportunity, one can assume that many churches do not prepare adequately for the actual expenses of birthing this new work.

When resources were mentioned in the literature review, it was presented more as an observation or a practical reality. Verlon Fosner, who created The Dinner Church model of multi-site expansion, articulated that the end goal of a Dinner Church is not to reach financial sustainability but to reach people that otherwise would not come to a church (Fosner 43). Fosner suggests that a Dinner Church campus will consistently cost the main campus between \$1000-1500 a month and need several dozen volunteers. Fosner does not see this as a negative; instead, he believes it is an opportunity for people to serve and give to an effort that is meeting practical needs of people and reaching those that might never attend a “regular” church service. Craig Groeschel’s Life Church anticipates every multi-site campus to cost over one million dollars pre-launch (73). Nelson Searcy, pastor of The Journey Church in New York City, estimates that each campus takes one year of preparation and two hundred people sent to reach critical mass (43). Terry Gordan views the resources in people needed as ultimately a positive. New multi-site campuses allow people to utilize gifts and serve in a capacity when they otherwise would not have the opportunity (17).

Scripture often describes the cost associated with spreading the gospel. The first believers embodied selfless generosity. In Acts 2, they are said to have “sold their possessions and property and distributed the proceeds to all, as any had need.” In 1 Timothy 6:7, Paul reminded Timothy that “we brought nothing into the world, and we can take nothing out.” Acts 16 describes Lydia as a business woman who exuded generosity. She gave generously and allowed her home to be used. It is evident from biblical authors that generosity is a key to the Christian faith. This generosity is not just limited to finances but also includes possessions and time. It is clear from Scripture that one cannot put a limit on the cost of spreading the gospel.

Churches are not banks that people give to; they are missional institutions whose sole purpose is to spread the good news of the gospel. The church’s resources should be responsibly used to share the gospel. In Luke 14, Jesus explained to a crowd the cost of following him. He explains that individually each person needs to bear their own cross. Then, as a group, consider the cost. He states, “For which of you, wanting to build a tower, doesn’t first sit down and calculate the cost to see if he has enough to complete it?” Overall, biblical authors encourage living generous lives and fully accepting that one cannot take any wealth or time after death.

Strategic Leadership Pipeline is Essential

Developing leaders has always been important. Venture Church has raised or trained some of the best leaders. As the opportunities for multi-site expansion increased, the church’s ability to reproduce leaders within the organization could not keep up. This forced recruitment of campus pastors and key leaders outside of the church organization. The challenge was that these leaders had to be trained in every area of the church. They

had to learn its mission, vision, and values. They had to learn its ministry systems. Most importantly, they had to develop an understanding and appreciation for its unique culture and history. Trying to help leaders trained in other ministry environments to lead within the parameters of Venture Church has always proven to be difficult. For the most part, those leaders eventually transition. The vast majority of toxic situations with our multi-site campuses originated from a leader who did not completely understand the culture and strategy. Even still, the church has continued to recruit leaders from outside for critical leadership areas, including campus pastors. The hope is that the next hire will be different.

The research made it clear that this is not true. The Congregant Survey revealed that, besides location, what kept people attending their multi-site campus was their connection to the campus pastor. The longer the multi-site campus exists the less connected the congregation feels to the main campus. It is also evident that the longer the campus exists the less connected the congregation feels to the lead pastor. Since this is an unavoidable result of multi-site, it is vital that pastors have campus pastors that are completely aligned with the overall mission of the church. More than that, it is important to have campus pastors that can be trusted. During the Pastoral Interview, the pastors were asked if they ever had to close a campus and what they would never do again. Almost to a person, they shared stories of difficult situations with campus pastors that led to the closing of or releasing a site. Every pastor, other than Church 10, stated they would never have a campus pastor who had not been disciplined through the church or had not served faithfully on staff for a minimum of two years.

Multi-site campuses, just like churches, need quality leaders. Implementing a leadership development strategy within the church is key to sustained success in multi-site. Venture Church has developed a partnership with Northwest University that allows young adults to take college classes at the church while they are interning. The internship allows them to have practical hands-on experience serving in ministry. Over the last several years, the best additions to the staff have emerged from this internship. This is a direct result of this research.

The literature review repeatedly emphasizes the opportunities for service in ministry that multi-site campuses provide. Most pastors agree about the importance of leaders being trained in the culture and strategy of the main campus before launching or leading a multi-site. They encourage the training of leaders in every area of ministry including preaching. While there were not any examples of poor leadership hires, the overall emphasis was developing key leaders from within the church. As mentioned previously, John Maxwell is often quoted as saying, “Everything rises and falls on leadership.” It is evident from the many authors on multi-site ministry that multi-site provides incredible opportunities for people to lead but also potential conflict if those leaders are not properly equipped and bought in.

The biblical and theological foundation for developing leaders begins with Jesus’ own words, “The harvest is plentiful but the workers are few. Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send workers into His harvest” (Mark 9:37-38). Jesus modeled mentoring leaders himself by calling twelve men to follow him as disciples. Paul modeled leadership mentoring in his relationship with Timothy. As the early church grew rapidly the needs of the people were greater than the disciples (apostles) could manage on

their own. They chose leaders from within to serve in the role of deacons and help care for the needs of the people.

The apostle Paul compared the church to a human body in 1 Corinthians 12 by explaining that it has many unique parts that work together to help it function. He used this same analogy in Romans 12 but further explained the different giftings within the church body that make it function as a whole. Equipping people to do the work of the ministry is at the foundation of the expansion of the gospel in Scripture. Multi-site gives churches an amazing opportunity to develop and equip influential leaders if they are willing to patiently take the time. Paul sums it up well: “How, then, can they call on him they have not believed in? And how can they believe without hearing about him? And how can they hear without a preacher? And how can they preach unless they are sent?” (Rom. 10:14-15). This passage of Scripture is a great reminder to all ministers that the church needs to be equipping people for the work of ministry because if it does not, there will not be anyone available to share the gospel with those that are open to hearing it.

Ministry Implications of the Findings

From the beginning of this project, the desire was to create a roadmap that would primarily assist Venture Church in its future multi-site ministry expansion and secondarily become a resource to other churches who are exploring this strategy for ministry or had attempted multi-site unsuccessfully but wanted to attempt it again. Multi-site ministry is the greatest way for churches to expand their footprint and missional reach. Dozens of denominational studies have confirmed that the average new church gains most of its new members (60-80%) from the ranks of people who are not attending any worshipping body. Comparatively, churches over ten to fifteen years of age gain 80-

90% of new members by transfer from other congregations (“Why Church Planting Matters”). The greatest method of evangelism today is the launching of a new church. Established churches should invest in autonomous church plants but should also consider launching multi-site campuses. A new multi-site campus is just as effective as a new church plant.

The first implication for the practice of ministry is to understand that a multi-site campus will likely never reach the average weekly attendance of the main campus. At a church growth seminar with Nelson Searcy, Lead Pastor of The Journey Church in Manhattan, he said something quite potent: “The dirty little secret of multi-site is that the average multi-site campus averages about 10% of the main campus’ attendance.” He said this not to deter his listeners from launching multi-sites but to temper their expectations. The successful multi-site churches used in this research collectively average about 12% weekly attendance at their multi-site campuses in comparison to their main campus. This basically affirms Nelson Searcy’s claim.

This should not be considered a reason not to transition into multi-site. There are two realities to this statistic that should encourage churches to pursue multi-site ministry. First, the launching church sent committed people to join the launch team of the new multi-site. The churches in this study sent a collective average of ninety-five people to assist with the new campus. The average church in this study was about twelve hundred in weekly attendance before they launched their first campus. The end result was that the multi-site campus grew beyond the initial launch team, and the main church continued to grow. Do not expect the multi-site campus to grow to the same size as the main campus, or even half the size. However, it will be a catalyst to help the main campus continue to

grow, and, even though it is by percentage much smaller than the main campus, it still reaches people with the gospel that the main campus never would have.

The second implication is to understand clearly the resources needed to effectively launch and sustain a multi-site. Before a church transitions into a multi-site ministry, it needs to determine if it has the resources to do so successfully. From this research, the average multi-site campus requires a financial investment of at least \$175,000. It takes a new campus a minimum of twenty-four months to reach the point of financial sustainability. Churches considering multi-site need to consider this impact on their budget. This investment can be offset by fundraising and partnering with the vast number of church planting organizations around the US; the cost, however, is still significant. The resources go beyond financial though. Successful multi-site campuses require about a year of planning and preparation before they ever launch. This time of preparation is vital for the new campus pastor to understand the mission, vision, values, and DNA of the main campus. This requires a great amount of time commitment and investment from the main campus staff. This time commitment and investment continues for years after a campus is launched. Finally, churches must consider the resources of the people released to assist the new campus. For most churches, these are deeply committed people that are financially generous and are key volunteers that the main campus has relied on for years. There is an absence that is felt once these key leaders transition to help launch the multi-site. Venture Church has launched six campuses over the last ten years and this “absence” was felt each time. Eventually new leaders are equipped and raised up. They fill the void left behind, but it takes time.

The third implication is the harsh reality that trying to recruit campus pastors from outside the main campus does not work most of the time. Due to Venture Church being a multi-site church, many young leaders from around the country inquire about serving at it or becoming a campus pastor. Multi-site churches are very attractive to young, entrepreneurial leaders. These churches tend to be large, innovative, and with a surplus of resources. The challenge will always be assimilating outside leaders into an already established, successful church structure. Most lead pastors of multi-site churches have a missional strategy and structure and church culture or DNA they believe is vital to their success. Entrepreneurial leaders have their own ideas. Trying to merge these two together is more difficult than might be imagined.

The best leaders are raised up within the church that sends them out to launch the multi-site. It is important for multi-site churches to create a strategic pipeline for leadership development. Leaders developed inside the church already understand and appreciate the strategy and culture, or they would have left the church already. Leaders equipped within the church already buy into the overall leadership of the lead pastor and church board. Most importantly, leaders that are developed within the church are known. Before a church transitions into multi-site ministry, it needs first to implement a strategy to develop leaders at all levels of the church.

The fourth implication is accepting the reality that sometimes a multi-site campus fails. In this research and also in many informal conversations with pastors of multi-site, it was interesting that almost all do not have a clear idea of how to do multi-site effectively. They all have stories of campuses failing. Because there is no clear right or wrong way to do multi-site, a lot of what happens is through trial and error. Venture

Church has launched nine campuses over the last ten years. Six of those campuses are still in existence; three have failed. The three that failed came with great stress and pain to the leaders of the church. Each failed for different reasons.

One campus began because the pastor of a rural church in the region wanted to leave. He had developed a mentoring relationship with the researcher and had brought him in to speak on numerous occasions. When the pastor decided to transition, the leadership of the that church asked if they could become a multi-site campuses. The church had a great facility and about 50 regular attenders. It seemed a good fit. It fit within the missional strategy. Over the next six months, every major conflict at Venture Church with almost fifteen hundred persons was connected to the fifty people at this new campus. As the days passed, the situation and the people got progressively more toxic. Finally, the Elder Board at Venture Church had enough and closed the campus.

Another campus was launched “correctly.” Venture Church raised up a campus pastor and a team of leaders within the main campus and sent them out to an area with similar demographics. The campus grew initially but leveled off at about 150 people. The campus was financially self-sufficient, had great stories of life transformation, great community, and positive morale. After five years, however, the campus pastor was burnt out. He asked to be reassigned to the main campus. The people were all deeply connected to him and his wife and when they transitioned back to the main campus, the majority of the multi-site campus followed. This led to the conclusion to close the campus.

The last campus that was closed was the most painful. Venture Church had purchased a plot of land with the plan to build its main campus. The location was in another city about fifteen minutes away from where Venture Church currently existed.

The cities have uniquely different cultures and demographic make-ups. The plan was to launch a campus in the city that the church moved from. When that time came, the church hired a campus pastor from outside of the church. He spent about a year doing various different roles at the church prior to the launch. The multi-site campus ended up being the largest launch to date with about three hundred people. This was to be expected since the majority had moved from that location to the new main campus and were excited to have a Venture Campus back in their area. Over the next five years, the church purchased a building for that campus and made a significant financial investment into it. The campus grew to about five hundred in weekly attendance. It was, by far, the largest multi-site campus. Even with the growth, there was constant tension with the campus pastor. He was older. His father had been a senior pastor. He really struggled to adjust to the Venture Church strategy of ministry. He eventually rallied a group of key leaders at the campus to “break away” from the main campus. This eventually led to Venture Church having to fire him and re-launch the campus as a dinner church. It was very painful. Every pastor in this research shared similar stories.

Craig Groeschel, Lead Pastor of Life Church, is considered arguably the most successful multi-site pastor in the nation. Life Church has fifteen campuses that broadcast over one hundred services each week. Several years ago, Life Church attempted to expand into the Phoenix area. They raised a million dollars and sent a large group of people to the area to start a multi-site campus. Even with all the research and massive financial commitment, the campus folded in less than two years. Multi-site is messy. Multi-site is challenging. The harsh reality is that not every multi-site campus will last despite the amount of time and energy invested. Venture Church still has six campuses

that are effectively reaching their communities today. While not every one survived, some thrived.

Limitations of the Study

There were unprecedented challenges during this research that created some limitations. These limitations do not impact the generalization of the study findings. The most significant limitation was a worldwide pandemic. The original plan was to visit each pastor at their main campus and tour some of their sites. Due to the Covid virus, this was impossible. Interviews were shifted to Zoom and site visits were eliminated. Every pastor interviewed answered questions with the qualifying statement, “Before Covid...” Since the research was conducted during shut downs and mask mandates, the pastors primarily answered insight questions about their churches “pre-Covid.” Site visits would have provided valuable insight.

Another limitation was the sample size. Due to time restraint, only ten pastors were interviewed. A larger sample size might have been more helpful and provided additional findings. In addition, none of the lead pastors interviewed were women. No women leaders of multi-site churches could be found, otherwise one would have been included. Finally, research findings are limited to churches located in the United States.

If this research was repeated two things would be done differently. First, site visits of the primary churches researched would be prioritized. This would allow contextualization of the interview answers. Second, a larger sample size of churches would be included, likely about twenty-five different churches. This would help bring more clarity to some of the outlying The instrumentation and data collection would not be

altered because there were not limitations with either of them; they both provided quality data analysis.

Unexpected Observations

The one unexpected observation from this research was the response every pastor had to the inquiry about the confidence they had in their multi-site strategy. Not one pastor felt like they had “figured this out yet,” even those with a clear strategy. Even with all the successful multi-sites campuses they had planted and all the books that had been written, they were still not completely clear on how to launch and sustain a multi-site effectively. Through all the interviews with multi-site pastors and off the record conversations with dozens of others, they all agreed on one thing: “We don’t really know what we are doing.” This style of ministry, while around for about fifteen years, is still so new that there is not a purpose-driven model created or a proven how-to book written. Multi-site, while effective in reaching people with the gospel, is still in beta test mode.

Recommendations

While this study will be immensely helpful for Venture Church as it continues to add multi-site campuses and other churches as they transition into a multi-site model of ministry, there are ways to expand upon it in the future. Three recommendations are noted. First, there should be greater research done on the benefits, or lack thereof, of video teaching. While the churches in this study varied in their method of teaching and concluded the teaching strategy was not a major determination in the overall effectiveness of the campus, it needs to be researched more. The research should determine the actual discipleship and spiritual growth that occurs through video teaching. This could help increase the validity of the teaching method.

Second, while lead pastors were interviewed, no campus pastors were. Lead pastors all have a similar perspective. Further research should include the perspective of campus pastors. This would be especially helpful in verifying the perspectives of the lead pastors. It would also provide greater clarity on the development of campus pastors. Discovering their perspective regarding why they serve as campus pastors and how they came to embody the mission, vision, values, and DNA of the main campus would be very insightful.

The final recommendation is to “go for it.” If someone is considering launching a campus, and they have been held back by the lack of a clear roadmap how to do it successfully, this research and previous research will provide some guidelines of what has worked and has not worked. Ultimately, it is an act of faith. The greatest transition for any multi-site pastor is not the transition into multi-site. Instead, it is the transition from thinking about it in theory to actually taking the step of faith and doing it. Transitioning to multi-site will come with a lot of trial and error, but be encouraged that there are others walking this same path.

Postscript

I used to tease people that took seven years to get a four-year college degree. I will not be doing that anymore after my three year doctorate took me almost six years to complete. I convinced myself a dozen times that it was acceptable to quit. Each time, the Lord brought someone into my life that encouraged me to keep going. Over these six years, so much has happened in my life, my family, my church, and in the world. Studying for a doctorate and writing a dissertation while leading a large church through a

once-in-a-lifetime worldwide pandemic is not something I could have ever prepared myself for. Honestly, I am proud of myself for this accomplishment.

During these six years, my twin boys graduated from high school and started college (they are seniors now); my daughter began her career as a teacher and got engaged, and my wife finished her Master's degree. I continued to lead Venture Church, which went through a capital campaign, raised millions of dollars, and built a main campus facility.

The highlight of my entire doctoral process was meeting the amazing leaders that were a part of my cohort and classes. These are people that I would never have met had this Assembly of God minister from the West Coast not decided to attend a Methodist seminary in the South. I made lifelong friends. I was also blessed to interact with an amazing group of multi-site pastors for my research. The networking has proven to be invaluable for this project and will be important for the future of Venture Church.

Overall, this will be remembered as one of the greatest accomplishments of my life. I could not fathom ahead of time how difficult it was going to be. Had I known, I probably never would have started. Now I am glad to say I DID IT!

APPENDIX A

Pastoral Interview Question Guide

1. How many campuses do you have?
2. What does your church consider to be a campus?
3. How large is your main (primary) campus?
4. How large was the church when you launched your first multi-site campus?
5. What was the primary motivation for launching a new campus?
6. How did you choose the location of the multi-site?
7. Does proximity to another campus matter?
8. What sort of facility (owned, rented, and type of facility) was used at the multi-site?
9. How many people were on the “launch” team?
10. How much money was raised or “seeded” into the launch of the new campus?
11. How did you choose the campus pastor?
12. How do you train/ develop campus pastors so there is “buy in?”
13. Who is responsible for finding the key leaders to support the campus pastor?
14. Was the campus pastor a part of your church before stepping into that role? For how long?
15. Were the key leaders paid or bi-vocational?
16. How intentional were you at replicating the DNA of the original church? (Or was that not important?)
17. Do you utilize a “franchise” approach where all your campuses are very similar?
18. What method of teaching is utilized at the campus?
19. What was the duration of time from idea to execution and launch of the campus?
20. How long from the launch to the point the campus reached sustainability?

21. What metrics do you use to determine sustainability?
22. Have you ever closed a campus?
23. What factors lead to considering closing a campus?
24. How have you maintained a healthy relationship between all campuses?
25. How often do you meet with your campus pastors?
26. How often are you at the various campuses (in person)?
27. What is the average size of a multi-site campus?
28. What do you attribute the success of the campus to?
29. If you utilize metrics in evaluation of campuses is it in total or broken down for each?
30. What metrics do you use to determine if a campus is successful?

Questions if time permits:

31. Will any of your multi-site campuses go independent in the future?
32. Would you say the benefits out-weigh the costs in multi-site?
33. Why did a campus fail?
34. What would you NEVER do again?
35. What do you wish would have done differently?
36. What are you thankful you did right?

Appendix B
INFORMED CONSENT LETTER

Best Practices to Launch and Sustain Multi-site

You are invited to be in a research study being done by Brandon Beals, a doctoral student from Asbury Theological Seminary. You are invited because you lead or have led a large multi-site church having at least three locations with one being in existence for at least three years.

If you agree to be in the study, you will be asked to do a 60-minute interview, either in person or via Zoom, with the researcher. Your family will know that you are in the study. If anyone else is given information about you, they will not know your name. A number or initials will be used instead of your name.

Each 60-minute interview will be recorded and then transcribed by Tina Hale, Brandon Beals's Executive Assistant. The recordings will be permanently deleted by June of 2022. The transcriptions will be deleted, digital copies, and paper copies shredded once the research paper is complete. Please note, that although confidentiality will be encouraged, it cannot be guaranteed.

Our belief is that this research will be vital for churches considering multi-site expansion in the future. Your assistance in this study will be invaluable. Please know, that if something makes you feel uncomfortable in any way while you are in the study, you can contact the researcher at brandon.b@ourventure.church. You can refuse to respond to any or all questions.

Signing this paper means that you have read this or had it read to you and that you want to be in the study. If you do not want to be in the study, do not sign the paper. You agree that you have been told about this study and why it is being done and what to do.

Date Signed

Signature of Person Agreeing to be in the Study

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