

## DEVELOPING AN EXTENSION CAMPUS MOVEMENT

# R eaching O ut

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**“We are running out of room. Only a few seats left for visitors and members.”**

**“We already have several services on Sunday. How can we add any more worship services here?”**

**“Won’t it be too expensive to offer worship in other places?”**

These are questions which many pastors and laypersons have raised as their churches grow and reach more people. How are some of our healthy congregations dealing with this issue?

The answer is in developing an extension campus. This concept can take several approaches. One approach is to develop a daughter congregation. Over time, it is anticipated that this new community of faith will grow, make disciples, and become a chartered congregation. The other approach is to develop another site for worship and ministry. This, then, becomes one church in several locations, or one church with several campuses.

This concept is becoming more and more popular among healthy congregations across many denominational lines. A recently published book, *The Multi-Site Revolution*, refers to this phenomenon as a revolution. It is a challenge to the church to be church, to do church, and to reach people in a totally new way.

This new “revolution” is occurring in the life of many healthy churches. Why is it becoming so popular? Why is it an effective

way of reaching new people in order that they might become disciples of Jesus?

It is a revolution centered on those outside the fellowship of the church. This revolution is not centered in simply holding the hands of those who are already counted among believers in Jesus.

Churches begin to take seriously the Great Commission (Matthew 28:19-20) by taking the church outside its walls. Churches that are growing and healthy have a heart for people. They take the words of Jesus seriously—“Go, make disciples.”

Vision becomes a key component of this outreach effort. Synergy begins to develop around reaching people in neighborhoods not currently being reached.

The reality of God’s presence in one’s life is acknowledged. There is a strong desire to grow deeper in one’s spiritual life and relationship to God.

Many United Methodist churches that are committed to fulfilling the Great Commission and to reaching the hundreds of unreached people around our churches are seeing results. Their worship services are filled. Ministries are expanding to reach real needs for real people. Space becomes a premium. All of a sudden, there are more ministries in which to be engaged and worship space is filled.

What is becoming a popular and effective option? To develop an extension campus.

### **What are some additional reasons for developing an extension campus?**

- Obviously, lack of additional worship times being available.

When a current worship site has no more appropriate times available to develop additional worship services, it becomes very practical and feasible to consider an off-site location to expand a church's outreach through worship.

- A healthy church has strong DNA, which can be transferred and reproduced in another location. Leaders from the existing campus make a commitment to this new outreach. The existing church makes its resources—staff, finances, equipment, and vision—available for this new outreach ministry.

- Different styles of worship can be offered. When an existing congregation believes that everyone in its neighborhood has a desire to worship as they do, then it loses the possibility of reaching new people through other viable, healthy ways.

- Such a venture becomes a means of reaching people in a different area who have no commitment to or understanding of God. They are people who are not currently being reached by existing churches in their neighborhoods.

### So why develop an extension campus movement?

- It is economically feasible. An existing healthy church has staff that can be used to guide and direct the formation of a new site for worship and ministry. There is no need for an overlapping of support staff and programmatic staff during the opening year(s). Staff is being shared from the initiating campus.

- There are human resources that can be tapped. The initiating campus sends forth missionaries from among its members and leaders to be leaders in this new extension campus. These are committed laypersons who have deep spiritual roots and have heard and understood the call to make disciples. This group of missionaries has a vision for reaching uncommitted people. They want their church to be on the cutting edge of missional outreach to the community. So the pastor of the new site begins with an already committed cadre of leaders.

- The church's DNA is based on the New Testament understanding of the church and how life together as a community of faith is to be lived out. This DNA produces additional healthy faith communities.

- Financial resources are shared from the initiating campus to assist in the birth of this new community. There is no need to start without people and funding as we seek to expand the kingdom of God.

- Renting or leasing facilities is easier than having to purchase property initially. Extension campuses can begin in short order once a decision has been made by the local church.

The United Methodist Church has a great opportunity to reach more people in new locations with resources from existing healthy churches. The need is greater than any one church can handle in any given area. Healthy churches understand what it means to be in mission and to make disciples. They have resources that unhealthy churches do not have.

## Healthy Conference Support Structure

The development of this kind of system depends upon a healthy conference support structure. Such support includes the following components:

1. Buy-in from the top: bishop and cabinet
2. Conference New Church Development team
3. District New Church Development team (or equivalent)

In addition to the above components being needed, a conference must have the following minimum processes in place for leadership:

1. Nomination process for potential leaders;
2. Discernment process for identifying leaders with the appropriate gifts;
3. A teaching/training vehicle for potential leaders;
4. A deployment method for identifying the "fit" between a leader and a potential site;
5. Funding stream(s).

### Two Multi-Site Churches

Grace UMC, Cape Coral, Florida; [www.egracechurch.com](http://www.egracechurch.com)

Peace UMC, Orlando, Florida

Spanish and English Extension Sites; [www.peaceumcorlando.org](http://www.peaceumcorlando.org)

*One* of the learnings from Natural Church Development is that churches with scores of fifty-six or higher in all eight characteristics of a healthy church are more likely to reproduce healthy communities of faith. These churches are healthy because they are missional, outward-focused, and other-centered. Their resources and their mind-set are kingdom-focused. Evangelism is part of the fabric of these churches. All of these elements within the life of the church create a desire for them to reproduce in areas that are not being reached with the love of God.

As a church, district, or conference considers developing an extension movement, there are several roadblocks/challenges that need to be addressed. It is not all smooth sailing. First, this is a new concept. Many congregations have not heard about this steadily increasing movement within the church. Newness can generate negative thinking until it is explained and understood. Just because it is relatively new (from ten to fifteen years old) does not mean that it is without merit.

*Second*, our ecclesiology is determinative of our acceptance of this new outreach tool. What we understand as the mission of the church and how that mission is to be lived out will have tremendous weight as a congregation discerns God's calling into this new way of being the church. A narrow understanding of the church will probably preclude a church from even discussing whether or not it will implement an extension campus. A broad

understanding will tend, at the least, to give a community of faith an opportunity to pray and discern if God might be leading them in this new direction of outreach. A church's understanding of its vision and mission will be influential in its openness to this new way of extending its ministry to a new area.

*Third*, an understanding of the concept of the church in many locations must be considered and discussed. In Florida, we are beginning to get an understanding of this new way of ministry. A component of our mission statement is the following: "God's transforming grace calls us to become one dynamic church with diverse people in many settings. . . ." This continually reminds us that, as a conference, we should not only be starting daughter churches but also encouraging our healthy churches to consider opening a multi-site extension campus

*Fourth*, sometimes the issue of apportionments becomes a roadblock to starting multi-site extensions. The United Methodist Church's mission is funded through the apportionment system. The more a church spends on itself and others, the more it is expected to provide for the mission of the church in general. The Florida Conference Committee on New Church Development has worked with the conference's CFA to encourage healthy churches to participate in our multi-site movement. **This partnership allows churches to exclude from the conference apportionment formula what they spend on multi-site campuses. The amount they spend is reported on the appropriate line for the GCFA end of the year report. This has been one of the biggest encouragements for local church buy-in to this missional outreach.**

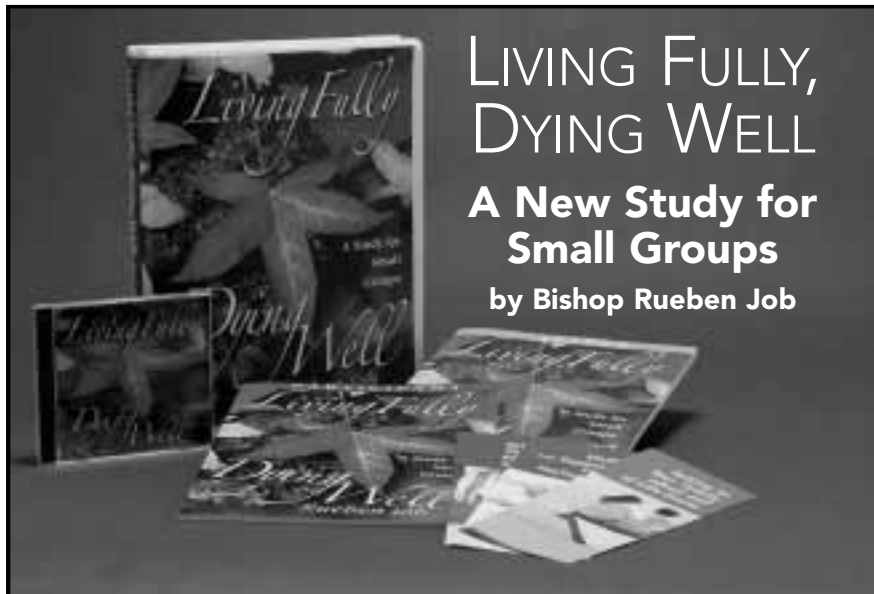
There are several advantages for a conference encouraging and implementing a multi-site movement. The chances of starting a new, healthy extension are greatly improved. (An unhealthy church is less likely to see or even catch the vision of extending its ministry to a new site.) A healthy church is looking for ways to make disciples and to extend missional outreach to new areas and people. It will design into the fabric of the new site its own healthy DNA. Thus, health reproduces health.

Another advantage is the resource support that the sponsoring church provides for the new site. Besides the financial undergirding, there are people resources—missionaries (trained leaders)

to the new site as well as the sharing of staff (children and youth leaders, office support personnel). It is "easier" to get a multi-site campus functioning with this kind of immediate support.

The train has left the station. What a valuable tool God has given the church to create a new movement of reaching new, uncommitted people for the Kingdom of God. □

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