

# Leadership Network/Generis Multisite Church Scorecard

*Faster Growth, More New Believers and Greater Lay Participation*

By Warren Bird

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## Overview

The multisite movement is booming across the continent. Multisite churches report amazing growth levels, much of it through new believers. These churches also experience very high levels of lay participation. Multisite churches touch 5 million people weekly through congregations of all sizes. Their number includes many of North America's largest, most visible, and most influential churches: 89% of multisite churches are over 500 in current attendance, 72% are over 1,000, 20% are over 5,000, and 8% are over 10,000.

Leadership Network conducted the largest cross-denominational survey of multisite churches ever, and this illustrated report unpacks more than 25 new and significant findings.



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## Follow-Up Resource: Multisite Resource Toolkit

This unique release contains roughly 30 different resources organized by five broad categories: (1) those related to the Leadership Network/Generis Multisite Church Scorecard Report, (2) interviews on various topics with a wide assortment of multisite practitioners, (3) short video conversations between Dave Travis and Jim Sheppard on a variety of topics, (4) excerpts from the two most popular books on multisite, (5) and additional readings.

The entire kit is available for only \$99. For more information see page 34 or go to <http://leadnet.org/multisitetoolkit/>.



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## Introduction

Leaders at The Summit Church in Raleigh-Durham, NC ([www.summitrdu.com](http://www.summitrdu.com)), probably couldn't have drawn up a smoother blueprint for how multisite ministry is supposed to work.

A member at one of Summit's eight locations was serving a needy family in a neighboring city. As the relationship developed and the people being helped expressed an interest in attending church, the Summit member was able to connect them to a Summit campus closer to home.

"It was a good example of one church reaching out across a larger metropolitan area to meet needs," says David Tran, one of the Summit's pastors. "Our congregation really gets the vision of the church to be a Gospel-centered community that is here to reach people and bless our city."

J.D. Greear, Senior Pastor at The Summit, adds, "We can bless people when we are closer to them. That's why we plant campuses—to bring the ministry closer to home. The entire church gets excited about it and gets behind it."

## More than 8,000 U.S. Multisites—By Broadest Definition

In the United States alone, **5 million people worshipped at one of 8,000 multisite churches last weekend**, according to the National Congregations Study sponsored by Duke University.<sup>1</sup> That's **9% of all Protestant churchgoers** and **3% of all Protestant churches**, respectively. The wording of that survey<sup>2</sup> allowed churches to call themselves multisite if they had multiple venues—such as services in the sanctuary, chapel and gym, but all on just one campus.

However, for the rest of this report, multisite will be defined as one church in two or more locations, under one overall leadership and budget. Even within this stricter definition, multisite churches can be found in almost every U.S. state plus Washington D.C.,<sup>3</sup> Canada's nine largest provinces, and several dozen other countries.<sup>4</sup>

"We are able to be a church that comes to people's communities rather than asking them to leave their community and come to us," says a leader in an Ohio church that became multisite four years ago. "We are seeing people become passionate about reaching their own community and being a part of a church in the middle of their community."

## Largest-Scale Multisite Research to Date

To learn more about the still-burgeoning multisite movement nationwide, Leadership Network conducted what is likely the largest cross-denominational survey of multisite churches to date. It included Leadership Network multisite clients (44% of our client base is multisite, averaging 3.6 campuses and 4,542 in attendance—all significantly above the norm of other multisite churches) as well as many additional multisite churches, both on this continent and around the world. Usable responses came from 535 churches across 12 countries (91% USA, 4% Canada, 3% UK, 4% other<sup>5</sup>)—together representing 1.8 million in weekly worship.<sup>6</sup>

Multisite churches grow faster, have more lay participation and reach more new believers than single-site churches.

The survey asked 185 different pieces of information, plus it offered many places for “optional comments.” This wealth of information led to all kinds of new discoveries. Plus we compared many of the responses against similar questions asked in earlier surveys.

## Key Discoveries and Fast Facts

1. An impressive 85% of surveyed multisite churches are growing—and at the strong rate of 14% per year.
2. Churches typically go multisite in the 1,000 size range, though almost half say they could have become multisite at a smaller size.
3. Campus viability starts at 75-350 people, depending on your model.
4. The typical multisite church is just 4 years into the process, and 57% plan to launch an additional campus in the next 12 months.
5. One in three (37%) churches started a multisite campus as the result of a merger.
6. The vast majority (88%) of churches report that going multisite increased the role of lay participation.
7. The vast majority (87%) of campus pastors are found internally—trained and hired from within the church.
8. Multisite campuses grow far more than church plants, and likewise multisite campuses have a greater evangelistic impact than church plants.
9. Nearly half (48%) of multisite churches directly sponsor new churches.
10. The recommended distance between campuses is a travel time of 15-30 minutes.
11. In rating what campuses do well, spiritual growth and volunteering are near the top, and newer campuses do better at reaching the unchurched.

## Big News, Major Findings

Overall the news is optimistic: Multisite churches grow faster, have more lay participation and reach more new believers than single-site churches. To understand those highlights in light of overall multisite development, we’ve grouped the survey findings into four sections as follows:

- Introduction
- How Multisite Churches Start and Grow
- Staffing, Supporting and Funding a Multisite
- Balancing In-Person vs. Video Teaching
- Growth Challenges for Multisite Leaders
- Interview: How Generis Helps Multisite Churches

Our hope and prayer is that this information will help your church’s planning—whether you’re already multisite, considering a shift to multisite, or simply wanting to understand the movement better. If this is a totally new concept for you, don’t overlook it: the movement’s continued growth projects that if there’s not already at least one multisite church in your community, there will be soon.

As one multisite leader put it, “We believe our style and approach to ministry works wherever we go. We’ve seen thousands saved throughout our multiple locations.” Certainly not all will have had results on that scale, but enough spiritual fruit is happening to fuel a steady increase in the number and size of multisite churches.

# How Multisite Churches Start and Grow

The multisite movement today shows no signs of slowing down, according to Leadership Network surveys. The first significant wave of multisite churches started coming onto the North American church scene roughly two decades ago. In the 1980s there were well under 100 and in the 1990s at most 200.<sup>7</sup> During the 2000s growth increased at a rapid pace with the greatest number of multisites being birthed with the last ten years.

With more than 500 different responding churches to our survey, the statistics and the stories we gathered affirm that the multisite movement is growing strongly, supporting the sentiment of this multisite leader: “Multisite is allowing us to grow and reach more areas much faster than a single gathering place.” That church in Alabama has been multisite for eight years.

“We set aside money each year in missions to save up for our next campus. The idea is always to have the money to start a new campus each year,” says a Texas-based multisite leader. “We have people from surrounding communities begging for us to launch new campuses. We can’t go fast enough!”

Multisite is also thriving elsewhere around the world. “By God’s grace, most everything is working right now in our multisite model,” says a church leader in the Philippines. “We are seeing growth across almost all our satellites, in spite of having just opened a new 10,000-seat facility. We have planted at least ten new satellites this year, including several outside of our own country.”

Indeed, in the global megachurch list I compiled,<sup>8</sup> over a third are multisite. Many offer services in more than one language as well.

This section highlights the growth and expansion of multisite services by exploring several questions.

## Who Becomes Multisite?

- **Likelihood of multisite increases with size.** Our survey confirms that the larger the church, the more likely to be multisite and the more campuses and services it has. In fact, drawing from Leadership Network’s database of large churches, independent of this survey itself, the trend lines are unmistakable as Chart 1 illustrates.

## How Fast Do Multisites Grow?

- **New campuses grow by 28% the first year and 25% the second year—on average (median).** We asked churches to identify worship attendance (children through adults) for their most recently launched campus. They compared the first month to the one-year mark and again to the two year mark. These averages held up consistently across church sizes from 1,000 and up in overall attendance with one exception: churches of 15,000 and higher saw first year growth of 50% on average, but then the second year declined almost back to the size of the campus’s starting point.

Combining all church sizes, the average (median) new campus attendance was 125 in the first month, 160 after one year, and 200 after two years.

- **85% of multisites in our survey are growing—as measured from the year they became multisite to the present.**<sup>9</sup> This is a very significant number because the typical U.S. Protestant church is not growing. In any given year, various denominations report that roughly four out of five of their churches are plateaued or in decline, while only one in five are growing. Among multisites, the larger the church’s overall attendance, the more likely to be growing.

- **Multisites grow at an impressive 14% per year.** While many churches were growing when they became multisite—and growth was a trigger for many to become multisite—the average growth rate from the year a church went multisite through 2013 is an impressive 14% per year. That growth rate does not change by overall size of church.

The multisite movement today shows no signs of slowing down, according to Leadership Network surveys.

## The Larger the Church, the More Likely to Be Multisite

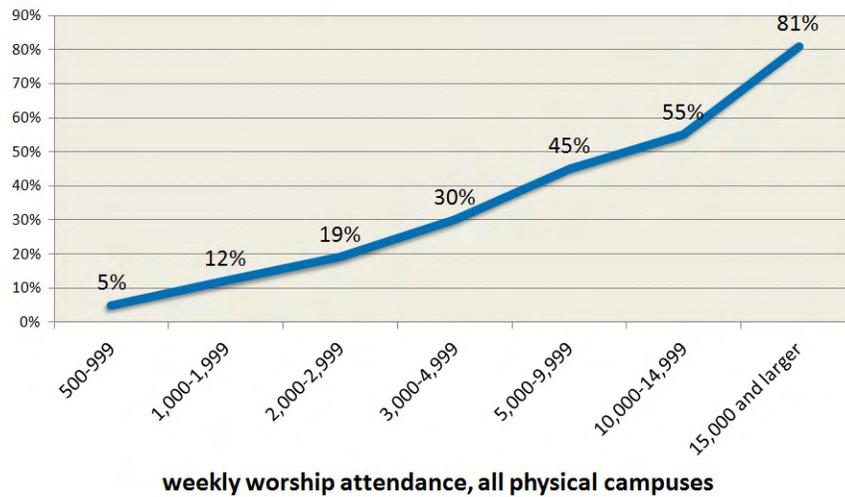


CHART 1

Source: Leadership Network's general database of U.S. churches, 2014 statistics

## The Larger the Church, the More Campuses and Services it Has

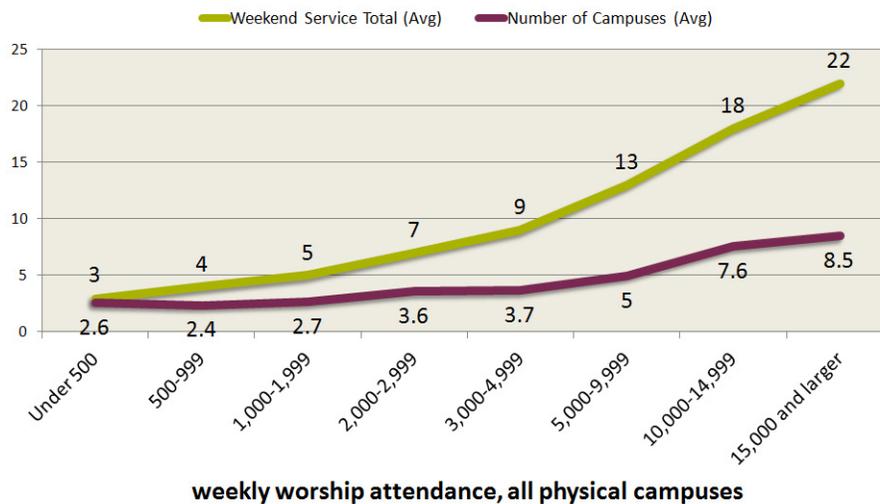


CHART 2

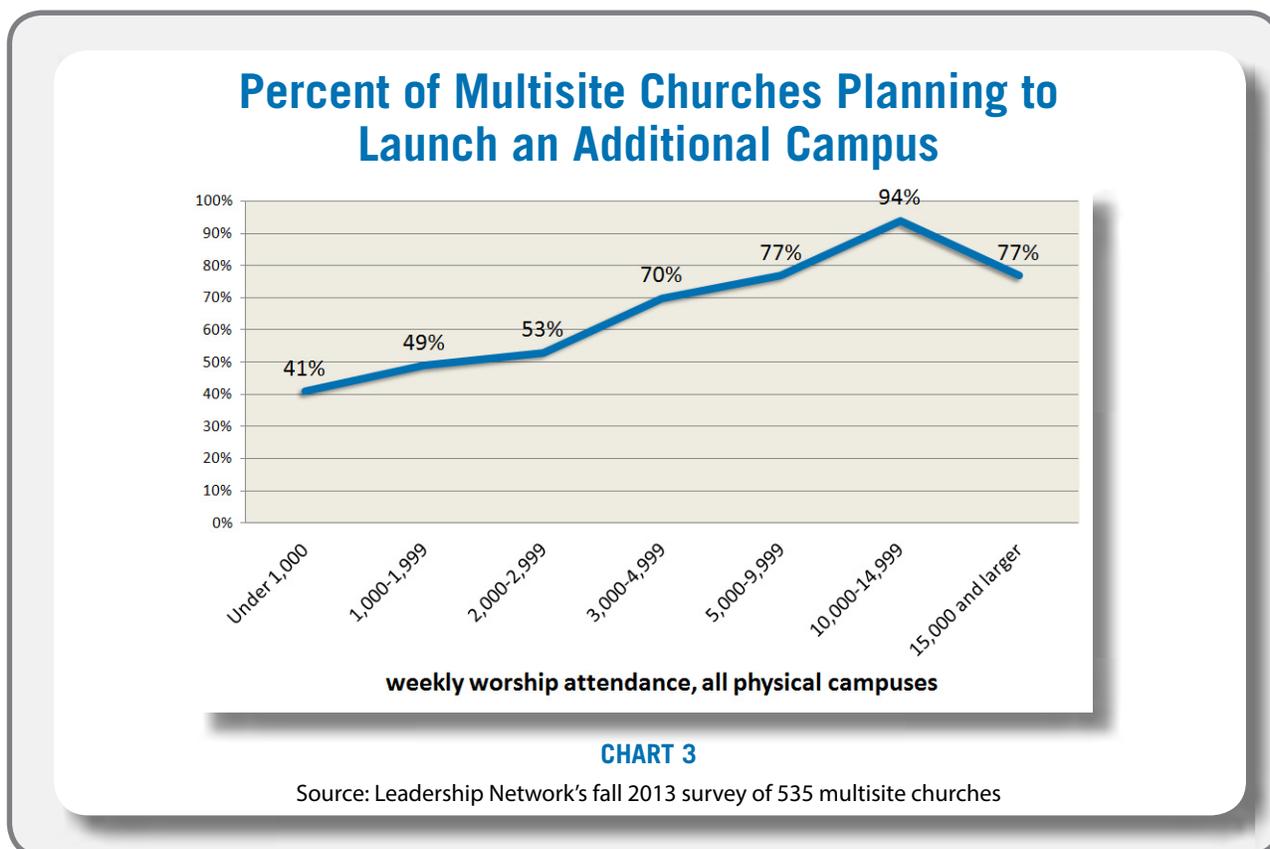
Source: Leadership Network's fall 2013 survey of 535 multisite churches

## How “New” Is the Typical Multisite Church?

- **The typical multisite church is just four years into the process.** The “oldest” church in our survey had been multisite for 23 years, but an impressive 60% of the survey participants have been multisite less than five years.<sup>10</sup> Average (median) for all survey participants is four years as a multisite church. This affirms the newness and youth of the movement.

Further, when asked, “Are you likely to launch another campus in the next 12 months,” more than half (57%) said yes. The larger the church’s overall attendance the more likely it was to plan another launch in the next 12 months, as Chart 3 shows. Similarly, the more campuses a church already has, the more likely it is to launch another campus in the next 12 months. Same idea with the number of weekly worship services it already has: the higher the amount, the more likely to launch another campus soon.

However, the momentum wasn’t the same for a church’s length of time as a multisite. There is a tipping point at the ten-year mark. Among those who have been multisite two to nine years, over half (63%) say they’re likely to launch another campus in the next 12 months. But if they’ve been multisite for ten or more years, only one in three (37%) anticipate launching another campus in the next year.



Many multisite leaders express excitement about the growth potential of new multisite venues, with new areas of ministry and a group of people that most likely would not have connected with the original congregation. “Our vision is to build a church without walls,” wrote a pastor from a large city. “Multisite fits with our vision as we take church to neighborhoods. In many cases people walk to their worship gathering.”

Some multisite leaders say the bigger the city, the more that multisite churches can meet a need and produce significant growth. One Philadelphia pastor stated in the survey, “We find that church works best by planting smaller campuses in these communities rather than asking people to drive longer distances to get to a church.”

## Does a Church Have to Be Megachurch Size to Go Multisite?

Churches had an average (median) attendance of 1,200 when they became multisite.

- **Churches typically go multisite in the 1,000 size range.** The multisite movement was heavily pioneered by megachurches (congregations that draw 2,000 or more adults and children on a typical weekend). With each survey we conduct, the typical participating church is less likely to be a megachurch—but still large. In our survey churches had an average (median) attendance of 1,200 when they became multisite. The average size of 1,200 is probably higher than reality because the survey involved a disproportionate number of Leadership Network clients who tend to be very large churches, so the important learning is simply that the typical size of a church that becomes multisite inches downward year after year.

However, is multisite found only in large churches? No. Launching multisite locations is less limited to big churches these days. Several survey respondents have original campuses of 100 to 400 people, and in many cases have spawned multisite locations that have outgrown the original site.

“We have taken a neighborhood approach to reaching a big city,” wrote one multisite leader with an original campus of 85 people. “We believe we’re more effective in many neighborhoods rather than drawing everyone to one location.” As a leader from a church in Topeka, KS, wrote, “We are a church of 400 preparing to launch our first site.” Indeed, the smallest church in the survey that said its multisite has a combined total of 80; it was a church of 50 that added a second campus from a church that was about to close.

41% say they could have gone multisite “at a smaller size.”

Yet these less-than-1,000-size churches continue to be the exception rather than the norm for now.

- **Almost half say they could have gone multisite at a smaller size.** An even stronger evidence of the “not megachurches only” trend is the number of church leaders that feel their congregations could have become multisite when they were a smaller size. Only 5% of survey responders say they went multisite too soon for their size (i.e., they should have been bigger first), 54% say they were about the right size, and the remaining 41% say they could have gone multisite “at a smaller size.”

- **Minimum overall attendance recommended for going multisite starts around 850.** Is there a sweet spot or tipping point for what the ideal size might be? Those who say they were “probably too small to go multisite” when they did averaged (median) 450 in attendance when they first became multisite. Those who said they were “about the right size” were 851, and those who “could have gone multisite at a smaller size” were 1,500.

Time will tell whether that recommended launch size will continue to inch downward. Is the 850 number based on the fact that the surveyed churches are mostly larger? We don’t know. We do know that with each passing year, more churches are moving sooner (thus smaller) to become multisite. Maybe in the future maybe we’ll even see church plants regularly start with two sites.

## What’s the Minimum Attendance Needed for Campus Viability?

- **Core groups for new sites range in size, typically made up 2/3 of adults and 1/3 of children.** We asked churches: “For the newest (most recently launched) campus, what was the size of the pre-launch core group?” The average (median) was 75 people (50 adults, 10 youth and 15

### Core Groups for New Sites Vary in Size

Weekend Worship Attendance	Average Size of Pre-Launch Core Group
15,000 and larger	170
10,000-14,999	153
5,000-9,999	140
3,000-4,999	122
2,000-2,999	75
1,000-1,999	85
500-999	55
Under 500	35

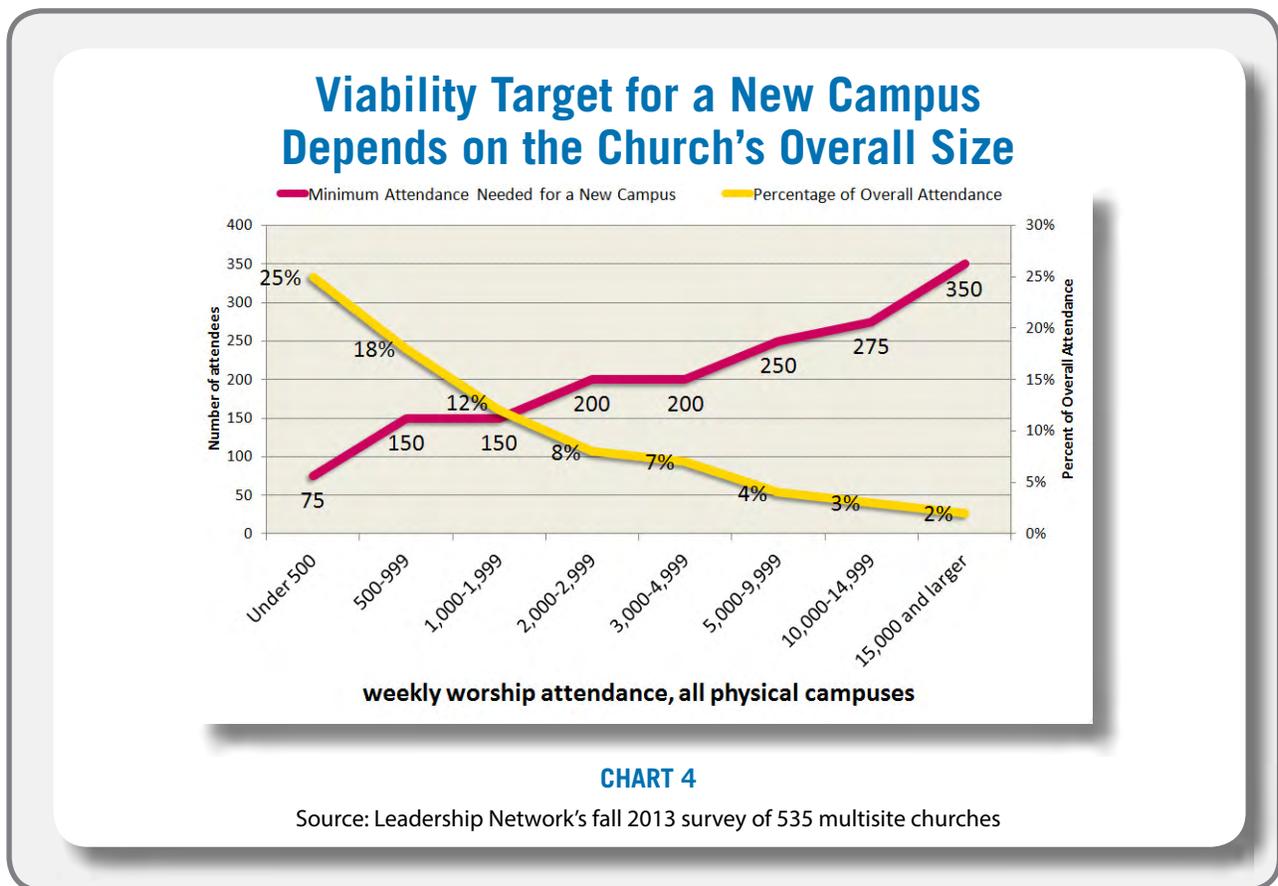
TABLE 1

Source: Leadership Network’s fall 2013 survey of 535 multisite churches

children). This ratio of 2/3 adults and 1/3 children didn't change much across church sizes, but the specific numbers did, as you can see in Table 1.

- **Campus viability starts at 75-350, depending on your model.** We asked, “For any campus of your church, what is the minimal attendance at which it needs to be to be fully functioning and financially self sustaining?” Answers were all over the map, which suggests that any specific optimal number is model dependent. In general, the larger the church’s total worship attendance, the larger the size desired for viability (see Chart 4).

- **Campus viability ranges from 2% to 25% of the sending church’s overall attendance, directly related to size.** Churches with 15,000 and higher attendances said they can start a viable campus with the equivalent of 2% of their total attendance (or 3% of the attendance at their largest campus). That’s 350 people on average. But these are averages, and there’s a lot of variation in the range of specific answers, which again suggests they are model dependent. On the “heavyweight model” side, three different churches said they need 2,000 to start a viable new campus—and those were churches of 3,000, 8,000 and 10,000. On the other “lightweight model” side, a number of churches said they could start a viable camp with fewer than 100 people—and those were also churches in the thousands.



The percentages needed for a new campus to be viable change in direct proportion to the overall size of the church, as Chart 4 shows. So rather than aim at a standard “rule of thumb” number to offer across all church sizes—such as 5% or 10%—it seems better to peg the percentage with the church’s overall size.

## What Type of Communities Do Churches Pick for New Sites?

- **Almost half have a campus in a small town or rural area.** Another big surprise of the survey was how many churches (47%) have a campus in a small town or rural area. A Montana church opened its first multisite location in a rural location instead of in a larger city. A Texas congregation is reaching into multiple small towns, because there aren’t any large cities within a three-hour drive. A North Carolina multisite leader notes: “We are reaching people in smaller markets and rural areas outside large cities.”

All sizes of churches tend to have campuses in small towns or rural areas, with no clear trendline according to size, as Table 2 depicts.

• **The vast majority (83%) consider their small town or rural area church healthy.** Another surprise was the high percentage of churches that described their small town or rural campus as either “somewhat healthy” (48%) or “very healthy” (35%). When asked about the growth patterns of the small town or rural campus, about half (52%) said that the small town or rural campus was growing faster than the church’s other campuses.

One rural multisite church that was part of our survey is barely two years old, and is already running 1,200 in a town of only 17,000. Another church has launched both of its multisite locations in rural communities, with more planned in small towns because of the growth potential. “We launch where we have people coming from, so that becomes our basic core team,” the lead pastor of the original church states.

Another pastor couldn’t temper his enthusiasm about what his church has experienced with small-town multisite launches: “We have been able to bring life back to the church in a small rural community,” he responded in the survey. “We have seen young couples bring their kids and bring life back to not only the church, but also to the community.”

## How Widespread Are Mergers as a Pathway for Adding a New Campus?

• **One in three (37%) churches started a multisite campus as the result of a merger.** This finding is consistent with the research Leadership Network conducted on mergers as highlighted in the book *Better Together: Making Church Mergers Work* by Jim Tomberlin and Warren Bird.<sup>11</sup> The percentage differs with each church size, as illustrated in Table 3.

“We became multisite as a result of a merger,” one church leader stated. “We are finally seeing growth after a year due to getting the culture of the church in line with our vision. Once the culture was solid, our new guests felt welcome and are staying.”

A Southeastern U.S. pastor that his church’s most successful multisite came as the result of a merger with a church that ran 800-900 people in attendance. He describes that merged campus as today the largest, most healthy, and fastest-growing church in its family of multisite locations. “God is up to something pretty special,” he adds.

Whether by mergers, new campuses in small towns or rural areas, or other means, multisite churches are experiencing a remarkable level of growth. Taken together they represent a movement that continues to increase in number, influence, and innovation as it finds new and relevant ways to make disciples of Jesus Christ.

### Overall 47% Have a Campus in a Small Town or Rural Area

Percent who said “yes” by weekly worship attendance (all physical campuses)

15,000 and larger	38%
10,000-14,999	61%
5,000-9,999	47%
3,000-4,999	49%
2,000-2,999	44%
1,000-1,999	39%
500-999	51%
Under 500	51%

**TABLE 2**

Actual question: Do you have a campus in a small town or rural area?  
Source: Leadership Network’s fall 2013 survey of 535 multisite churches

### 1 in 3 Started a New Campus as the Result of a Church Merger

Percent of Churches that Added a Campus from a Merger, by Weekend Worship Attendance (all physical locations)

15,000 and larger	45%
10,000-14,999	46%
5,000-9,999	44%
3,000-4,999	34%
2,000-2,999	48%
1,000-1,999	31%
500-999	31%
Under 500	37%

**TABLE 3**

Source: Leadership Network’s fall 2013 survey of 535 multisite churches

# Staffing, Supporting and Funding a Multisite

In developing eight multisite locations, High Rock Church in North Carolina ([www.highrockchurch.net](http://www.highrockchurch.net)) has adopted an all-for-one and one-for-all approach for making sure its locations have the support and strength they need to flourish.

Whatever it takes to make a multisite location strong, the other seven are there to help.

“We really drive the ‘one church’ thought through all we do,” says High Rock Executive Pastor Doug Irvin. “Even if a campus is carried by the other campuses, we will keep that one campus going because of the people we are reaching.”

This section explores the infrastructure of multisite churches, especially how they are staffed, supported, and funded. There is almost universal unanimity on the service opportunities that a new multisite location provides for lay volunteers and also the vital role of the campus pastor, even if multisite leaders may take differing approaches to funding and supporting their locations.

## Does Being Multisite Increase Spectatorship or Participation?

- **88% of churches report that going multisite increased the role of lay participation.** Even more significant, only 1% said it decreased. The rest (11%) said it remains the same. These numbers affirm the idea that that the launching of new locations fosters an increase in the congregation stepping up in more widespread participation. The responses provide solid evidence to those who wonder, “Will going multisite increase or decrease the role of lay participation?”

We had asked a similar question in our earlier 2010 survey, and I was so amazed at the level of positive response that I asked a parallel question this round. Table 4 shows the responses to both surveys.

“The opportunities that new campuses have provided for people to step out of the pews/anonymity and into service have been awesome,” reported one leader. “People in new campuses are hungry and want to reach out.” One multisite church leader notes that 10% to 15% more people get involved in a new multisite versus serving in the originating church. “People who didn’t really find their niche at one of our big campuses are totally flourishing in important leadership roles at our new sites,” he says.

- **Multisite churches take leadership development seriously.** We asked churches: “Do you have a formal leadership development process for lay participants?” and 68% said yes. Of those that said yes, 32% said some of the leadership development is centralized and some decentralized, 21% said leadership development is centralized at one campus, 15% said leadership development is decentralized at all campuses.

Some multisites develop their own training systems for campus leadership, or are partnering with other entities such as seminaries or Bible colleges to help develop campus pastors while they serve at the originating church. “We know our people, and they know us,” one leader said. “Knowing each other and trusting each other is the single biggest contributor to leadership team unity.”

### Over 4 in 5 Multisites Report Increase in Lay Involvement

Survey Answer Option	2013	2010
Increased	88%	79%
Remained the Same	11%	2%
Decreased	1%	19%

**TABLE 4**

Actual Question - 2013:  
Did going multisite increase or decrease the role of lay participation?  
Actual Question - 2010: Since our church became multisite, our leadership development through lay mobilization has...

- **When churches recruit volunteers for their new campuses, musicians top the list.** We offered a dozen possible choices for volunteer roles that “were essential to be in place” before the church launched a new site. Four out of five (80%) selected musicians. This was followed by hospitality coordinator (59%), technical/production director (58%), children’s leader (50%), and small group leader (42%).

## What Is the Key Role Required for Multisite?

- **Campus pastors serve as the “face with the place.”** Almost all campuses have a staff person who is focused on that particular campus, making sure the people there are pastored, discipled and trained. This person goes by many different names: campus pastor is the most common, but other titles are campus director, site pastor, and sometimes simply pastor.

According to Leadership Network’s survey, 82% of multisite campuses have such a pastor (whether paid or volunteer) who devotes at least 3/4 time to that location. The percentage increases with the overall size of the church: so for those with 5,000 or more in total attendance, 92% have a campus pastor of ¾ time or more, and for those less than 1,000 in attendance, 76% had a campus pastor of ¾ time or more.

For the few that don’t have a dedicated campus pastor, the most-cited reasons include role sharing, such as someone serving halftime as executive pastor and halftime as campus pastor, the church being between campus pastors, and the church having niche campuses that typically represent smaller scale efforts. These might involve a weekly campus in a correctional facility, drug rehabilitation center or nursing home.

One survey respondent summed it up for many others when he wrote, “The campus pastor position is critical. Our campus pastors must have unwavering loyalty to the lead pastor, be sold out on the vision, purpose, mission of the church, have the ability to connect with congregation and develop leaders.” Survey comments consistently affirmed that it’s best to have a campus pastor identified before the new location is opened. This enables the campus pastor to understand the leadership culture of the originating church and also to ensure that church’s DNA will be infused into the new location.

“Don’t even think about launching a satellite campus without this person in place,” this leader of a four-campus, 4,000-attendance multisite summarized.

“Leadership matters,” another pastor wrote. “Be sure to pick the right campus pastor.” And yet another noted, “Everything rises and falls on the right leader.”

- **The campus pastor is the mostly likely role to be hired.** We asked, “What paid roles were essential to be in place before you launched?” The top three options were campus pastor (91%), worship leader (62%) and children’s leader (46%), as Figure 1 depicts. The likelihood of hiring a campus pastor moves to almost 100% when overall attendance is 2,000 and higher.

What other roles are likely to be hired? The ranking follows the three listed above: administrative assistant to the campus pastor—and perhaps to others (28%), technical/production director (19%), youth leader (17%), musicians (11%), person assigned to logistics and/or connections between campuses(10%), operations director if a different person from above (8%), small group leader (6%), hospitality coordinator (6%), and outreach/missions leader (2%).

**Top Paid Roles in Place Before Multisite Launch Were Campus Pastor, Worship Leader and Children’s Leader**



91%



62%



46%

FIGURE 1

Actual question: What paid roles were essential to be in place before you launched?

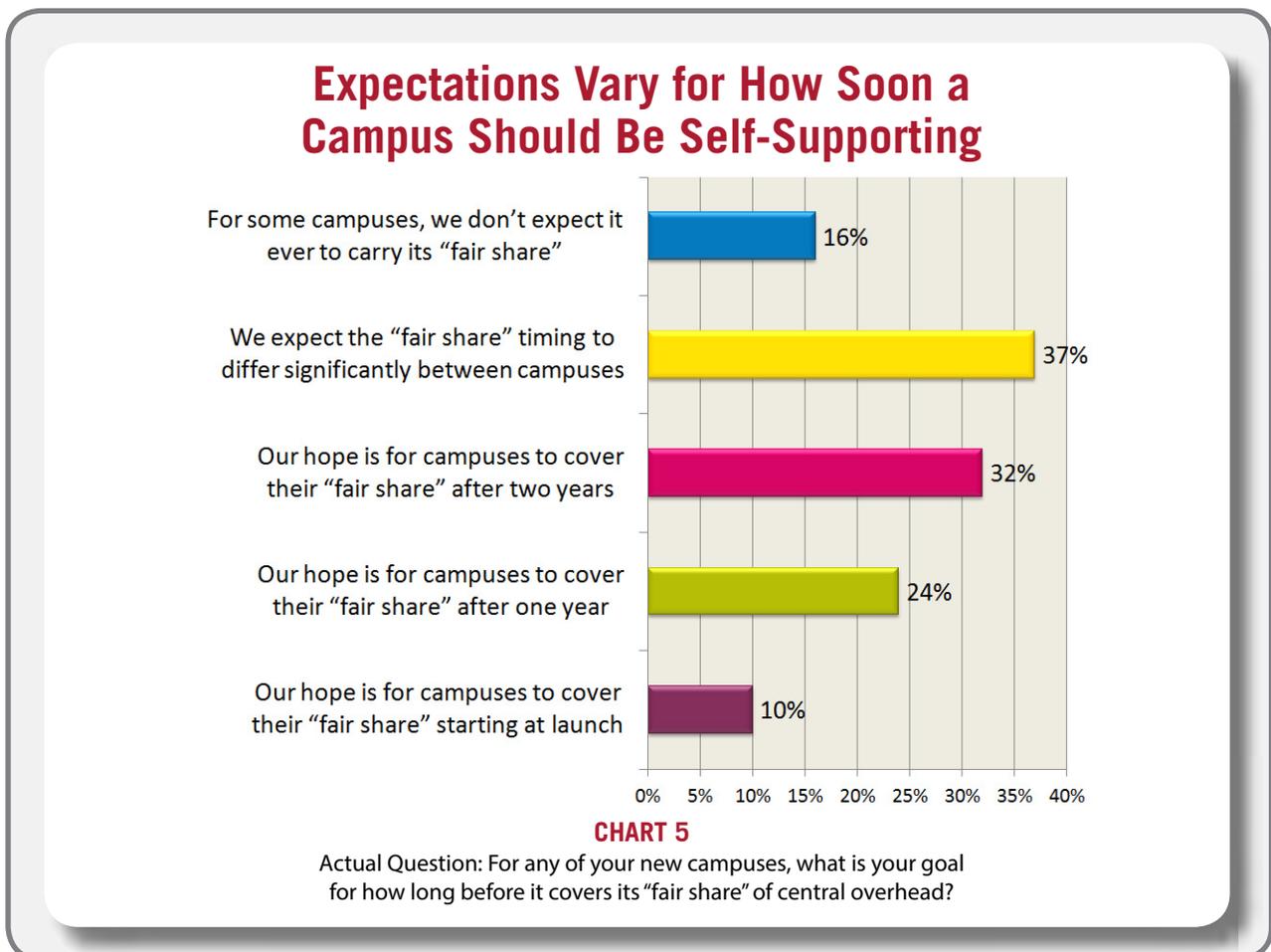
- **Most campus pastors are found internally.** When asked, “What’s your primary strategy for developing new campus pastors, the vast majority (87%) said “develop from within” (the remaining 13% selected “hire from outside”). There is a clear trend line that the larger the church’s overall attendance, the more likely to develop the campus pastor from within. As one leader put it in his survey response, “We’ve found it best to have the new campus pastor know the DNA of the lead congregation. Additionally, it was far easier to seed the new campus with a known leader.”

But it’s not always an either/or issue. Multisite churches seem to keep an open eye in both directions. “Historically we’ve developed leaders from within, but now we work to strike a balance between the two and have on-ramps for both,” one leader responded. In contrast, another leader said, “We have had very few successes of any high level leadership roles working when coming from the outside.” Another says, “We have run out of folks so now we have to look outside.”

## What Do Campuses Cost and How Soon Do They Pay for Themselves?

- **Expectations vary for how soon a campus should be self supporting.** When it comes to standing on their own financially, multisite churches have different expectations and have seen different results, as Chart 5 illustrates. The rankings in that tally did not change appreciably with church size. Nor did they differ for those with lots of campuses vs. those with just a few campuses.

“Some multisites can cover their fair share at launch, some after a year or two, and some never,” said one multisite veteran. One congregation has its multisite locations on a 5-year “on-ramping” plan toward self-sufficiency, but “most campuses get there before five years,” commented one survey taker.



One of the greatest determining factors for being self-sustaining is the area in which a multisite is located. “Some campuses are missional because they are in poorer communities, while others are stronger because they are located in more affluent communities,” said one multisite leader. Another reported that their church approaches multisite launches like they would overseas missions. “We don’t expect that missionaries would ever be self-sufficient.”

- **Costs vary according to where the church meets.** We asked churches to describe their newest campus based on three options: 52% said “we’re strictly renters (school, theater, etc.), 34% said “we’ve bought or constructed something, including a church merger,” and 14% said “we’re leasing something we can modify (leased commercial building, etc.)”.

We then asked the start-up costs for the entire first year of a church’s newest campus based on five categories. As an overall average (using medians), 48% goes to staffing costs (salaries, benefits), 28% to equipment including technology, 17% to facility purchase or rental, 4% to central services and 3% to marketing/advertising.

In dollar amounts, the median total cost of launching a new campus is \$145,000. This amount varies by church size as Table 5 illustrates.

### First-Year Multisite Costs Vary Significantly by Overall Size and Whether You Rent

Combined Attendance (all physical locations)	Averages (medians) for all churches	Renters* only (median)	Purchase or Lease** only (median)
15,000 and larger	\$400,500	\$363,500	\$438,500
10,000-14,999	\$1,295,000	\$355,000	\$1,465,000
5,000-9,999	\$435,000	\$284,500	\$425,886
3,000-4,999	\$519,000	\$223,500	\$349,000
2,000-2,999	\$233,750	\$163,500	\$216,545
1,000-1,999	\$155,000	\$162,500	\$122,045
500-999	\$154,000	\$113,229	\$114,000
Under 500	\$59,500	\$46,000	\$68,750

**TABLE 5**

Actual question: For the newest campus, please estimate start-up costs (in your local currency) for the entire first year.

\* Survey wording: we’re strictly renters (school, theater, etc.)

\*\* Survey wording: we’re leasing something we can modify (leased commercial building, etc.)

Source: Leadership Network’s fall 2013 survey of 535 multisite churches

## When Do Churches Develop “Central Support”—and How?

When a church has more than one campus, it soon notices that certain functions could be centralized rather than duplicated. Often the most obvious starting point is payroll management. But which issues are centralized, how widely, and how soon does “central support” start happening? Here is what we learned?

- **Multisite churches widely use a “central support” approach to manage matters that overlap between campuses.** When offered over 20 specific options, the most popular were: 94% human resources (defined as staffing, salaries, benefits, staff guidelines, information services, and/or information technology), 93% accounting (contributions, payables, donor management, etc.), 90% communications branding (banners, themes, etc.), 89% communications website, 82% communications marketing, 79% communications bulletins, 78% long-distance missions, 74% most preaching/teaching, 71% communications social media, 62% worship arts (stage, graphics, props, video, PowerPoint, etc.), 59% leadership development, 52% small group management, 48% program development, 44% new member orientation/assimilation, 43% youth ministries, 43% children’s ministries and 41% local missions.
- **A majority of churches (66%) begin a “central support” emphasis about their second campus.** The rest do so about the time they launch their third campus (13%), their fourth (6%) or their fifth (1%). Only 14% say they have not yet established central support, and those are churches who, on average, became multisite four years ago and have three campuses. Their average (median) attendance is 1,789. But in general, the larger the overall attendance, the more well-defined the central support system.

When it comes to staffing, funding and supporting its multisite locations, Woodside Bible Church in Detroit ([www.woodsidebible.org/detroit-campus](http://www.woodsidebible.org/detroit-campus)) has found the formula that allows its nine locations to work in sync for the common goal of reaching its city.

“Our nine campuses work well together,” says staff member Beth McKenna. “We have been able to leverage funds, people and skills. Together we make a great team and each campus steps up to the plate when we start a new campus, or comes together to meet needs in one of the communities our campuses are trying to reach.”

Beth says all of the campuses focus on global, regional and local missions—with their city at the heart of it all. “All of our campuses join with our Detroit campus to share Christ and make a difference in the city,” she says.

The larger the overall attendance, the more well-defined the central support system.

## What Prompts a Church to Close a Multisite Campus?



Certainly not all churches that start the multisite journey continue it. Sometimes it’s fully positive, even part of a plan to launch as a multisite campus and then spin it off as a self-supporting, self-governing congregation. Sometimes it’s decided along the way. As one survey participant wrote, “We started out multisite. Then we decided to split after four years into two separate churches.”

However, sometimes the decision is to shut down and close. In our 2010 multisite study, only 10% of multisites had closed a congregation. In our 2013 survey, we asked, “If you have closed, or are thinking about closing a campus, what are your primary three reasons?”

- **Most closures (54%) are triggered in part by challenges toward becoming financially self-sustaining.** The next-most-cited issue was 41% stating “site not growing.” This was followed by 32% “not reaching people who wouldn’t/couldn’t be reached by another site or church,” 29% indicating “site declining in attendance,” 27% indicating “leadership problems with campus pastor or other key roles,” 22%, “location problem: couldn’t find viable location,” 16%, “not enough volunteers to sustain

it,” 13%, “loss of campus pastor,” 7%, “too much community or political opposition,” 6%, “major conflict issues,” and 4% “philosophy change: we’re no longer as committed to multisite.”

In analyzing the closure of some of their multisite locations, pastors and staff member cite a variety of reasons—leaders and location among the most prominent, with rented schools as multisite locations getting the nod as one of the toughest places to launch.

Regardless of the reason a multisite location is floundering, leaders with a multisite closure experience agreed on one thing in their explanatory comments: “When you know it is failing and you cannot fix it, close it quickly,” one pastor said. “We waited too long, allowing the site pastor to say the site would work when we knew it would not. Sometimes closing is the best thing to do!” Another pastor agreed, offering this advice: “Don’t be afraid to do it. The sooner, the better if it’s not working.”

The more that can be learned from the full cycle of multisite campuses, from launch and growth to reproduction to occasional closure, the more the next generation of will learn. As a result, the more likely their success and health will be.

# Balancing In-Person vs. Video Teaching



Ask multisite church leaders their preferred method of Bible teaching across their campuses—offering such options as in-person teaching, live streaming, or a playing pre-recorded video message—and you’re certain to invite a lively discussion.

Some champion in-person teaching only. “We started off video teaching but it failed quickly for us,” one leader states in our survey. “We started growing at our campuses when we shifted from video teaching to live teaching,” says another. One simply stated, “All live everything.”

But video teaching has its strong advocates as well. “We’re relying entirely on a video stream from our main location, and it makes it easy to establish a unified word throughout campuses,” one multisite pastor responded. Another wrote, “Video preaching is working the best. People respond extremely well to gifted leaders.”

A few multisite churches, such as Lutheran Church of Hope in West Des Moines, Iowa ([lutheranchurchofhope.org](http://lutheranchurchofhope.org)), a church with total weekly worship attendance over 10,000, are utilizing a hybrid approach to mixing in-person and video. Since launching its first multisite location in 2006, Lutheran Church of Hope has developed a model where preaching at the church’s four locations is live 60% of the time, with a campus pastor or another pastor delivering the message. The rest of the time, it’s a video message from the main site. All campuses are growing.

Other multisite churches are making the mixed approach work, as one pastor noted of the two-campus, 1,000-total attendance church he leads: “Doing 50% video and 50% live teaching is working well for us. The same messages are always shared on both campuses, but has helped to keep the campuses connected and give our second campus a personal and pastoral touch.”

Which of these approaches are the most fruitful? Multisite practitioners always want to know about, perhaps more than any other topics, how the teaching/preaching is handled, especially issues such as video vs. in person. Below is what we learned.

## Is video or in-person teaching more widespread?

LifeWay Research did a September 2013 poll and found that two thirds (65%) of American adults would prefer an in-person sermon over a video sermon. About a third (35%) say they will only visit churches with a live sermon. Three in 10 say either live or video sermons are fine. And the same number say a video sermon won’t keep them from a church, but they still prefer live preaching.<sup>12</sup>

Multisite pioneer Geoff Surratt was invited to offer a response, published in an article titled, “Of Course People Prefer Live Preaching, But Video Venues Work When You Work Them.”<sup>13</sup> He pointed out that many people who skeptically watch a video sermon end up finding it to be workable: “It’s not surprising that people who’ve never been to a video venue told LifeWay they wouldn’t go. People don’t know what they don’t know,” he said.

In-person teaching is practiced by about half of multisite churches

The Leadership Network survey then asked how multisite churches actually do their teaching. Our findings covered the following topics.

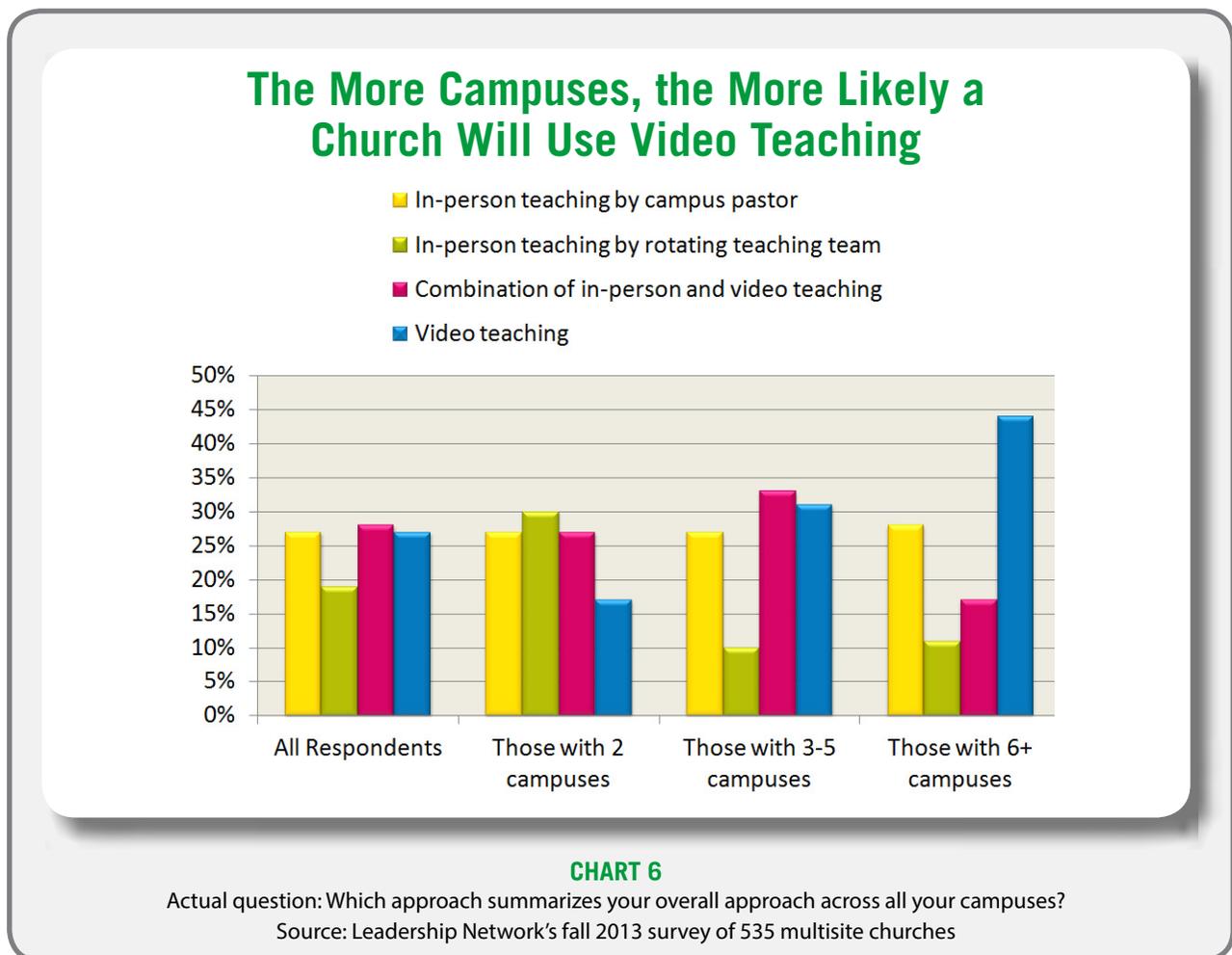
- **The likelihood of video teaching increases with both attendance and number of campuses.** Table 6 shows a clear progression of the role of video teaching as the number of campuses increase. Adding the various rows in the table demonstrates

that in-person teaching is practiced by about half of multisite churches until about six campuses when video dominates.

Our survey showed an increase in video usage since our 2010 survey. Back in 2010, 20% used video teaching almost entirely (which increased 27% in the 2013 survey), 46% used in-person teaching almost entirely (same percent as 2013 survey), 34% used a combination of in-person and video (which decreased to 28% in the 2013 survey).

If size is factored in, another progression becomes evident: for churches with two campuses, the average (median) combined worship attendance at all campuses is 1,900. For churches with three to five campuses it's 2,600. For churches with six or more campuses, it's 6,000. So the larger the overall church, the more likely it is to use video teaching.

It's interesting to note also in Chart 6 that the approach of a "rotating teaching team" peaks among churches with two campuses. This logically makes sense as that's probably the easiest size for shuttling teachers back and forth between campuses.



- Churches are still exploring ways that video teaching works best for their context. You might assume from the findings in the previous paragraph that new campuses are mostly video. Not so. In fact, newest campuses feature in-person teaching more often than video, as Table 6 shows.

Another variation: While live teaching is the preferred method for a majority of multisite leaders we surveyed, it's clear from various survey responses that some multisite churches used video teaching to get a multisite location off the ground, and then two to three years after launch switched to mostly live teaching

“We started out with a cookie-cutter type strategy using video teaching,” one leader noted. “We now have three unique sites with live teaching. This has been our best shift since going multisite.”

## Many Churches Are Exploring How to Use Video Well Beyond Their Original Campus

Location	mostly in-person	mostly video	combination
Original campus	91%	2%	6%
Newest campus	50%	39%	10%
Third, fourth or fifth campus (when one exists)	42%	47%	11%

**TABLE 6**

Actual question: How does that teaching ratio work for specific campuses?  
Source: Leadership Network's fall 2013 survey of 535 multisite churches

## If Video Is Used, Is It Live or Pre-recorded?



- **The majority of video teaching (69%) is pre-recorded rather than live.** The most popular approach (43%) is to record the message at an earlier service, and then play it in one or more locations the same weekend. Some churches (17%) record the message the weekend before or “at an off time” (9%) such as Thursday afternoon or Saturday morning.

However, almost one third (31%) of multisite churches still broadcast their messages “live or almost live” to their other campuses. “Our congregations feel very connected when he takes opportunities to go off script and speak directly into a specific campus,” one survey taker added, referring to the teaching pastor.

- **Video usage makes it possible to grow faster as a multisite.** Of those who are “virtually all video” for their off-sites, only 3% said they were probably too small to go multisite when they did. The average (median) size for “all video” churches is 1,800 when they first went multisite and 3,000 in total weekend worship attendance. Those that are “all video” have been multisite for an average of four years, the same as those that are not “all video.”

It did not follow, however, that being predominantly video enabled churches to become multisite sooner or to start smaller campuses. The “virtually all video” churches are consistently larger—their original campus, their largest campus (if different), their newest campus, and their smaller campus—than the rest of the churches surveyed.

## Are Internet Campuses Declining or on the Rise?

- **Internet campuses not as widespread as many people think.** An internet campus is one with no physical facility as a regular gathering point. Instead, most connections between people occur online. In our survey just over 1 in 4 (28%) have internet campus, and only 10% more plan to launch one soon. To confirm, 62% agreed with this parallel statement: “We do not have an internet campus, beyond access to sermons online, and no plans to launch one.”

- **Internet campuses provide much more than message, music and opportunities to give money.** Of those who do have an

internet campus, we asked what that included. Table 7 shows how people responded, with message/Bible teaching the top choice (90%), followed by opportunity for financial giving (88%), worship music (87%) and places to post a prayer (74%).

• **The most popular strategy is for the internet campus to be a bridge to connect people with a geographic campus.** Thus when given three choices for the best description of their internet campus strategy, 66% said “it’s a bridge to connect people with a geographic (physical) location,” 34% said “we’re trying to make it a ‘full campus’ like other physical campuses,” and 33% said “it’s primarily evangelistic.”

Much has been written on the wide variety of ministry that occurs online, from Bible studies to outreach.<sup>14</sup> To this researcher, the survey findings and the level of general discussion together affirm that the idea of internet campuses will be a point of experimentation for many years to come.

One matter seems certain: the architecture of how to do multisite, though still developing, has yielded enough fruitfulness that multisite seems here to stay—and to keep growing.

“The greatest asset we have as a multisite church is that we truly follow ‘one church, multiple locations,’ “one pastor wrote in the survey. “We share one vision and protect unity amongst each individual campus. That is a non-negotiable for us.”

Another leader backed the importance of shared DNA across locations when he responded, “We’ve worked very hard on alignment and DNA transfer. It is really paying off!”

## Internet Campuses Address Many Functions That Physical Campuses Do

Message/Bible teaching	90%
Financial giving	88%
Worship music	87%
Places to post a prayer	74%
Chat functions	65%
Social sharing tools	59%
Dedicated staff member to oversee it	58%
Invitations to worship in-person at a geographical campus	54%
Personal words from the same host/campus pastor on most weeks	48%
Invitations/opportunities to serve in person	38%
Invitations/opportunities to serve online	26%
Structured small groups outside of the worship service	24%
Personal counseling	21%
Baptism	19%
Lord’s Supper/ Communion	14%
Funerals	6%
Weddings	5%

**TABLE 7**

Actual question: What does your internet campus include?  
Source: Leadership Network’s fall 2013 survey of 535 multisite churches

# Growth Challenges for Multisite Leaders

In researching this report, I visited two different multisite churches one Sunday morning in metro Atlanta.

One church's approach goes against most of the advice that Leadership Network's survey identified. As I entered the primary building of the church's original campus, the many greeters assigned to the main sanctuary indicated that the room was full, and directed me and others down some steps where a muscular campus security staffer grouped us in rooms, each with a full-wall projection screen. His only words to us were "Go in here." As soon as the room filled, he closed the door and left us, doing likewise for other rooms.

There was no "face with the place" inside the room to give instructions or assistance or even to monitor how it's working. None of the upstairs greeters were assigned downstairs, so the hallways were likewise empty except for the security guy. We didn't get bulletins like the people in the main sanctuary. The video feed and sound worked fine, but the pastor never referenced us or even seemed to look intentionally toward the camera. There was no closure or call to response for us at the conclusion of the service. When it was over, we opened the doors ourselves and found our way out.

Though I definitely felt a bit punished for getting to church on time rather than early, especially as a guest who didn't know the drill, the fact remained that the place was packed. In fact, part of why I wasn't early was that I had to park far enough away to need the church shuttle, which was (after waiting for it) a delightful expectation-building experience of hearing the band and pre-church announcements played live over the shuttle's radio.

The "overflow" was not an isolated week. Something so good was happening in this church that people came back week after week, to this and the other campuses. Multisite worked here, even if hampered by a less-than-desired approach, at least from my perspective.

The other church I visited was such a positive experience that as I write this reflection, I'm having to think hard whether the teaching pastor was in-person at the campus I visited or if the teaching came via video. From the parking lot to the people who helped me find the restroom, warm faces greeted and guided me at every point. I found a seat in one of the church's two back-to-back sanctuaries. The campus pastor welcomed the congregation and spoke at different segues, a live band led us in spirited worship, and everything flowed smoothly. The teaching pastor was at another location, but I probably saw him better through the image magnification than if he had been there in person. At the conclusion of his teaching, his handoff back to the campus pastor and local band was seamless. I remember the message better than at my other stop, perhaps because I had far fewer hindrances and distractions. I also remember the call to response at the conclusion because I was one of the people who made the commitment the teaching pastor called for.

As I drove back to the airport, I imagined the ministry multiplication that was happening through these two churches—and from literally thousands of other multisite congregations that were meeting that same morning. I was reminded that multisite is not easy, and requires that many challenges be successfully addressed.

## What Are Multisite's Biggest Challenges?

- **Multisite makes ministry more complex.** Leadership Network has convened numerous groups since 2001 to help multisite churches learn from each other on issues like how to do central services, how to design staff accountabilities across campus-



es, how to train leaders at every level, how to start your first campus, how to go beyond four campuses, and even how to go beyond 10 campuses.

Both our clients and others recognize that multisite adds new challenges to church leadership. As Rick Bezet says, describing the year 2009 in which his Arkansas-based New Life Church, which went multisite in 2001, was named the fastest-growing congregation in America by Outreach magazine, “The hardest thing you can ever decide to do is make a church a multisite. You have to figure out a lot. It takes 10 times the energy to have multiple campuses, and that’s the negative ... but with a new campus, people can invite their family and friends to worship with them, and they don’t have to drive 30 or 45 minutes. So you have created an opportunity for them to now reach an entire city.”<sup>15</sup>

“The hardest thing you can ever decide to do is make a church a multisite.”

Complexity challenges are not limited to North America, either. At Elim Christian Centre in New Zealand,<sup>16</sup> church planter Luke Brough started in 1985 with the big dream that God might want to birth a nation-changing church large enough to influence the community for righteousness. On the church’s first Sunday, attendance was 85 and the offering \$410.

Today the church comprises four congregations in four different locations, impacting the lives of thousands of people every week. Each campus is different. The Elim East campus is a large multicultural congregation situated in a residential area within a two-minute drive of the country’s largest shopping center. The 50 different nationalities that make up the congregation reflect the sizable Asian population there. Korean and Mandarin translations are provided at two of the three Sunday morning services and a Tamil-speaking group meets on Sunday afternoons. By comparison, the Elim City Congregation is located in the heart of town, surrounded by high-rise apartments. It too is multicultural, but reflects that neighborhood in its worship and teaching style. The fastest growing is Elim South which ironically is in the former national headquarters of the Jehovah’s Witnesses. It too is multicultural.

Total combined attendance today at all campuses is 3,500. Leadership would have been easier, Luke affirms, had the church had just one campus—but then the outreach, diversity and growth opportunities would have been far fewer as well.

• **Multisites, as all other churches, are always looking for more volunteers and lay leaders.** Earlier this report cited the amazingly high increase in lay involvement that accompanies the typical multisite. Yet when we asked survey participants, “where are your greatest current struggles?” offering a dozen choices for them to rank, the value at the top of the list was “finding/developing enough volunteer leaders,” followed by “finding/developing enough lay volunteers.” Those were the only two choices with the word volunteer in them. So while multisites may excel in drawing high participation levels, the need is still present to engage even more of the congregation.

The other choices dealt with serious issues as well. Third-ranked was “helping existing campuses grow,” followed by “finding/developing future campus pastors,” then “communication across campuses (staff and/or member),” then “connecting new members to community (small groups),” and then “maintaining unity and DNA across multiple campuses.”

## Do Church Plants or Multisite Campuses Experience Greater Growth?

Multisite campuses grow faster and have more conversions than church plants.

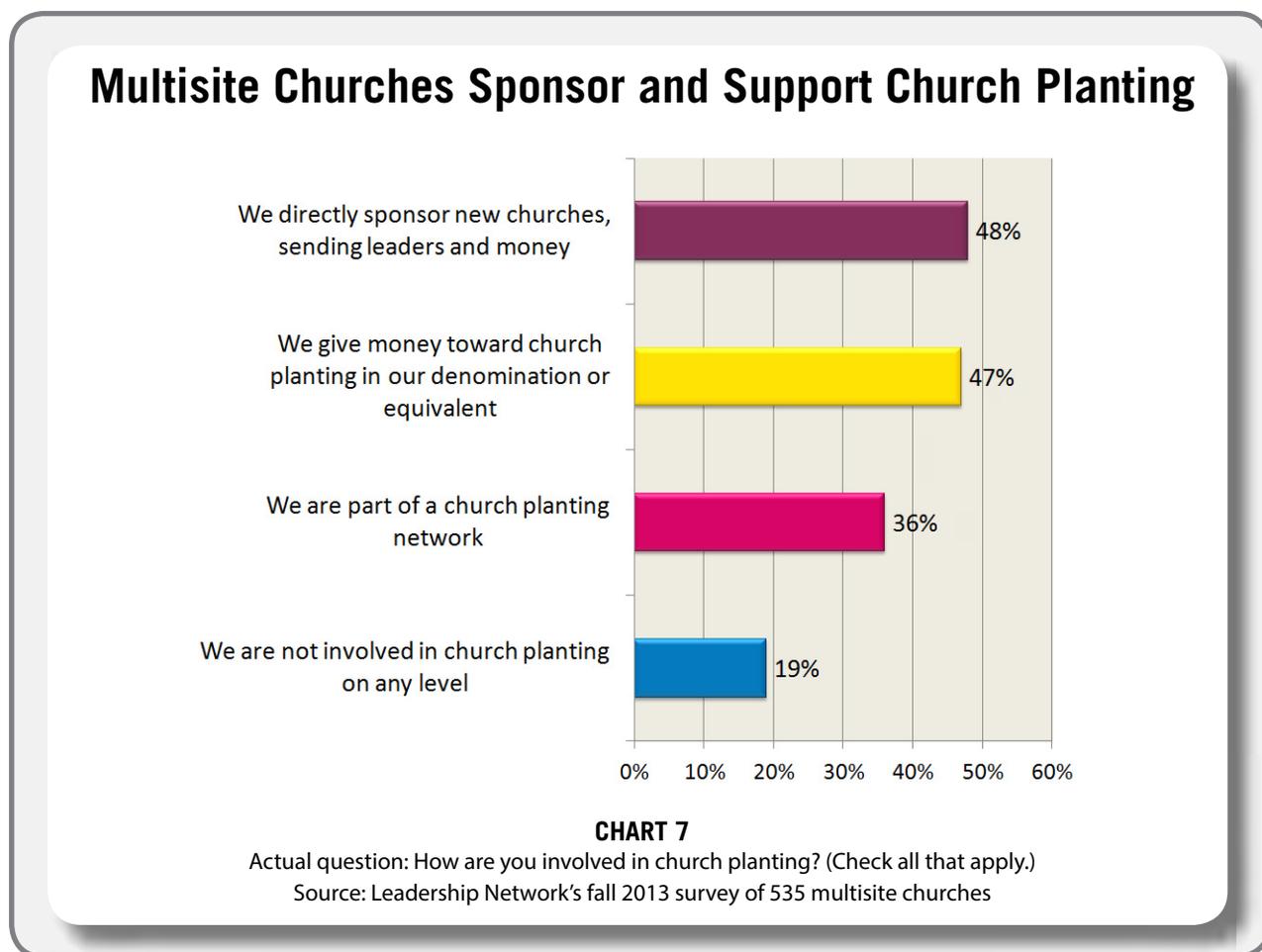
- **Multisite campuses grow far more than church plants.** When asked “which has the greater numerical growth?” exactly half (50%) chose “our multisite campuses” over the 14% that said “our church plants.” Among the remainder, 18% said “about the same” and 18% said “hard to answer, don’t know.”
- **Likewise multisite campuses have a greater evangelistic impact than church plants.** When asked “which has had the greater evangelistic impact?” the larger response by far was 42% saying “our multisite campuses” compared to 11% saying “our church plants.” Among the remainder, 28% said “about the same” and 19% said “hard to answer, don’t know.”

This is very significant news. In essence, campuses grow faster and have more conversions than church plants—at least from the perspective of multisite church leaders.

## Does Being Multisite Hurt or Help Church Planting Efforts?

- Nearly half (48%) of multisite churches directly sponsor new churches. In fact, multisite churches are involved in church planting on several levels, as Chart 7 outlines. Only 1 in 5 (19%) have no involvement in church planting at any level.

When asked, “how has being a multisite church affected your role in church planting,” almost 3 in 10 (29%) said that because of multisite, they are church planting more. A larger group (40%) said their support is about the same, 20% said yes, and 11% said “hard to answer / don’t know.”



Did church planting or multisite come first? Almost half (46%) said they began planting churches before they became multisite, another 6% said they began planting other churches about the same time as they became multisite, and another 6% said they began planting other churches after becoming multisite. The remainder (41%) has “not directly planted another church at this point.”

## Are campuses and church planting exclusive of the other?

- **Church planting and multisite fuel each other, rather than compete with each other.** In fact, from survey comments, it seems many multisite churches got their feet wet with church planting before moving into multisite ministry.

One multisite group that starts churches on college campuses uses its various multisite locations as church planting development centers. A church planter and team utilizes the site and equipment for 12-24 months, and then takes all of it to start a church on a different college campus. “Since we are planting on college campuses the turnover in leadership mimics the turnover in the congregation and leaves no leadership gaps,” one of the church’s leaders wrote in the survey.

Another church reported a multisite/church plant hybrid model where a group is considered a multisite campus until it is fully functioning. The group then has the opportunity to launch as a fully autonomous church plant, a connected/network church or a multisite location.

The future is certain to be full of experimentation. As one survey participant wrote, “We are currently looking at replacing the idea of traditional college ministry with multisiting. It’s a premise built over the idea that students need to be the church and not just have their youth ministry extended into college years.” Another wrote, “I am currently planning the first multisite location for a contemporary, millennial focused semi-liturgical church.” And yet another wrote, “We are a new church plant, but we want to go multi-site as soon as God grows us to that point.”

A go-with-God comment came from a long-established Baptist church in Mississippi: “We are growing and trying to figure it out.”

Most importantly, as churches mobilize a multisite model into new areas, the focus on reaching new people changes the mindset of churches, according to one leader. “One of my favorite things about multisite is the fact that it helps keep people from becoming consumers of the church,” the leader notes. “It forces them to get out and reach others, because it always keeps the idea that God wants to multiply his church not just add to it. When you start a new campus it communicates that the church is not about the building or becoming a megacampus. But it is about the kingdom and giving away what God has already given us,”

- **Being multisite often increases a church’s support of overseas missions.** When asked how being a multisite church has affected their role in support of overseas missions, 30% said yes, they now support overseas missions more. Only 3% said less, while 58% said about the same, and 8% said “hard to answer / don’t know.”
- **To date 1 in 10 (10%) of multisite churches have released one or more campuses to become independent plants/churches, and another 1 in 10 (12%) say “no but we’re likely to.”** That number also changes with time: for churches that have been multisite for 5 or more years, 17% of campuses have released one or more campuses to become independent plants/churches, and 9% say “no but we’re likely to.” For churches that have been multisite for 10 or more years, 21% of campuses have released one or more campuses to become independent plants/churches, and 14% say “no but we’re likely to.”
- **Similarly, 1 in 10 (13%) multisite campuses have given birth to other another multisite campus.** As stated earlier, the average (median) multisite became multisite only four years ago, and the big unknown is how many of those campuses will reproduce as the years unfold. However, for churches that have been multisite for five or more years, 24% of campuses have birthed another campus. For churches that have been multisite for 10 or more years, 37% of campuses have birthed another campus.

## How Close Should Campuses Be to Each Other?

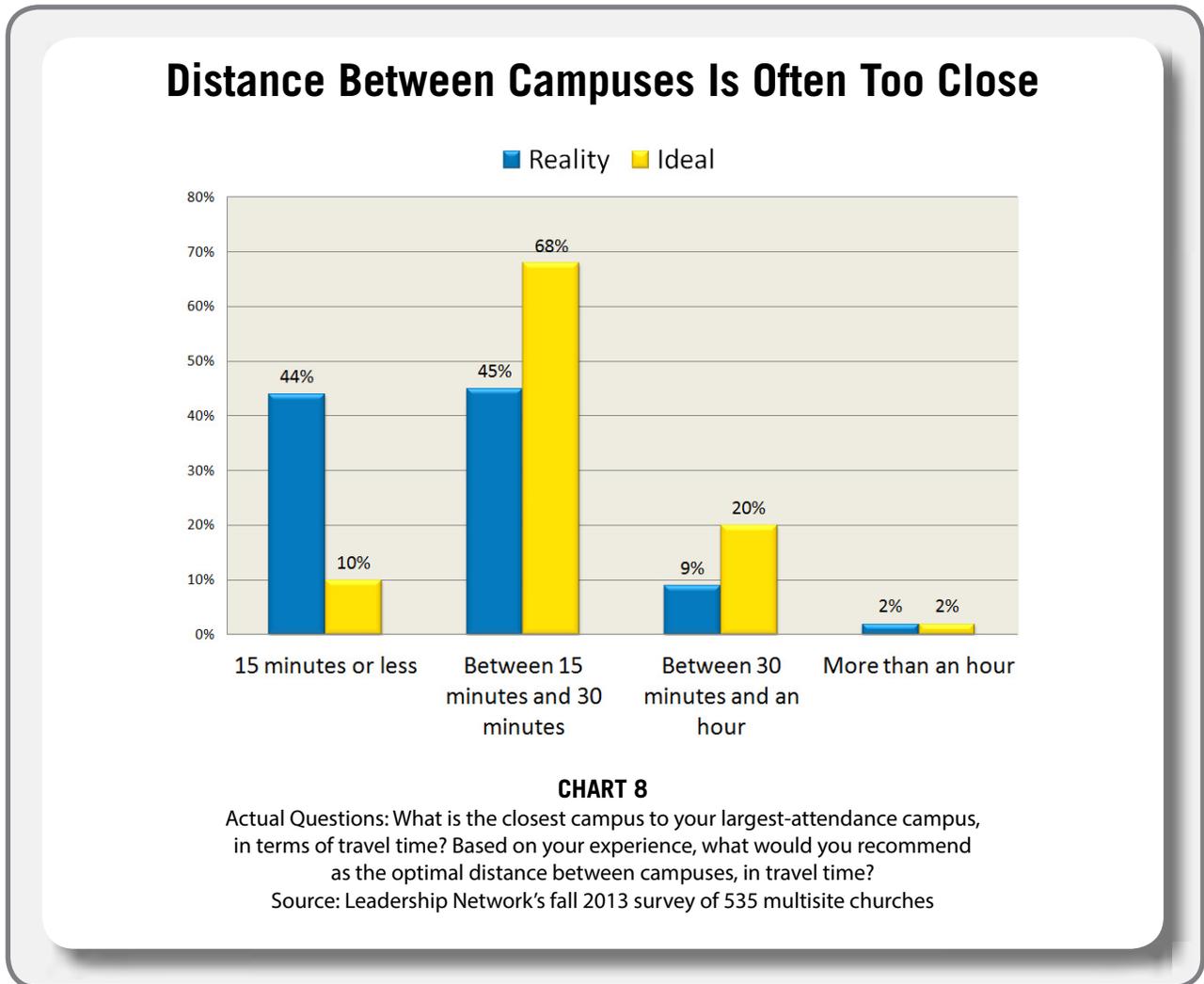
As mentioned earlier, most multisites are growing, and rapidly at that. Churches that went multisite at an average (median) size of 1,200, typically 4 years ago, are today 1,900 in average (median) attendance. Many of these churches have gone multisite and added more campuses as a way of supporting and continuing the growth that’s already happening. As stated above, 57% of survey respondents say they are likely to launch a new site in the next 12 months. As a result, a frequent question involves where to plant the next campus.

The recommended distance between campuses is a travel time of 15-30 minutes.

- **One danger is starting too close to another campus.** The current landscape for multisite churches is that their campuses are close to each other: 44% are 15 minutes or less in terms of travel time, 45% are between 15 and 30 minutes, 9% between 30 minutes and an hour, and 2% more than an hour.

The big learning is that many leaders with campuses within 15 minute of each other feel their campuses are too close, and that 15-30 minutes would be better. When asked what church leaders “recommend as the optimal distance between campuses, in travel time,” the responses were markedly different: only 10% said 15 minutes or less, while 68% said between 15 and 30 minutes, 20% said between 30 minutes and an hour, and 2% said more than an hour. Thus in most cases the recommended distance between campuses is a travel time of 15-30 minutes, as Chart 8 depicts.

One leader described how his church’s first multisite location has grown to five services and also launched a second campus only two miles away—with plans to start another multisite congregation six miles away in a different direction. “That will be two ‘grandchild’ locations launched by our first multisite in only seven years,” the pastor wrote. Their experience is unusual compared to others, especially the proximity to the original campus, but it illustrates the wide variety of ways people are experimenting with multisite.



• **But too far away creates added challenges.** However, several leaders expressed the importance of being close enough in proximity so that the multisite can be adequately supported with resources and people—and more importantly, for the original church to infuse the new multisite location with its DNA.

“Don’t start too far from the original campus, so folks with DNA of the original campus can seed the new one,” one leader commented. Another added similar words: “The closer you are to the original campus the more you have to be like the original campus.”

One pastor noted that his church’s first multisite location was about one hour away from the original congregation, and more resembled a remote church plant, since none of the original church’s people could be sent to help with the multisite launch. When the church opened its second multisite location, it was within a 30-minute drive, and “we were able to send over 400 folks. We plan on launching three or four more within a 30-minute drive” because of the success of the second launch, the pastor said.

## How to Keep People from Feeling Second-Class at the Smaller Campuses?

- **Attendance is anything but uniform across campuses.** Total weekly worship attendance at multisites, children through adults, covers a wide range. The highest-attendance campus is 74% of total attendance. The original campus is 68% of total attendance. (In many cases the highest-attendance campus is the same as the original campus.) The most recently launched campus is 9% of total attendance, and the lowest-attendance campus (which sometimes is also the most recently launched) is 8% of total attendance. These percentages don't add up to 100% because of overlap for some and because not all campuses are covered for others.

Translated into numbers, if median attendance for all physical (geographical) campuses combined is 1,900, then the highest-attendance campus is 1,400, the original campus is 1,300, the most recently launched campus is 180, and the lowest-attendance campus is 150.

- **The original campus serves also as the largest attendance campus for over 3 in 4 (77%) multisite churches.** The original campus, by definition, is the longest-standing campus. For most it is also the largest campus in size. By contrast, only 3% report their newest (most recent) campus is the largest.

Attendance typically goes hand in hand with size of facilities and amount of programming available. The challenge is to help people feel part of their campus, from home groups to weekend worship, while realizing that certain niche activities are likely to happen only at the bigger campuses—such as perhaps a support group for parents whose children have ADHD.

- **The original campus continues to grow, but not always the fastest.** We asked churches to rank the numerical growth of their various campuses. They said the newest campus is growing just slightly faster than the original campus. For those with three or more campuses, both the “newest” and “original” are growing faster than the others.

## How Do Multisites Handle Youth?

- **The largest campus is not the only place that hosts youth ministries.** Youth consist of junior and senior high students, ages 13-18. In 73% of the cases, youth ministry is at all campuses.

For youth ministries that meet at a multisite campus, 47% began doing so when that campus launched, and another 41% within the first 12 months of that campus's life. Another 12% did so within the first 24 months of that campus's life.

Some multisite churches are finding that “pooling” youth ministries—versus each site maintaining its own separate youth groups—is working best. “We are able to get large groups of teens together (75-100 teens) and generate a sense of excitement,” one pastor wrote. “Our group becomes a place that it safe and cool to invite friends.”

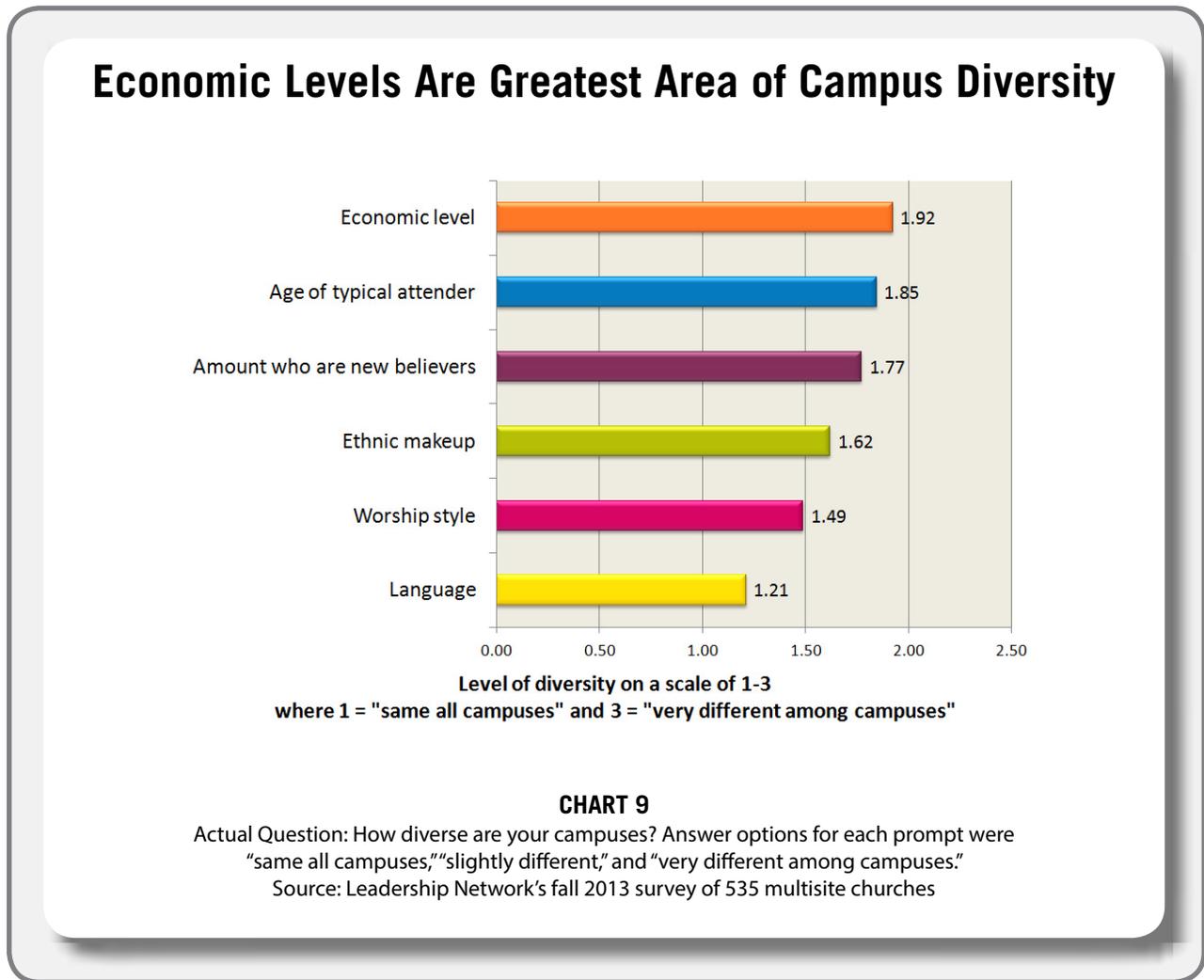
## Are New Sites Better at Spiritual Growth Issues?

- **In rating what campuses do well, spiritual growth and volunteering are near the top.** How does spiritual health and vitality compare between the largest and the newest campuses? Of nine options offered, survey takers rated their largest campus as strongest in people volunteering and growing spiritually (tied for first place), and next came giving



financially. They rated their newest campus strongest in people growing spiritually followed closely by volunteering. The third-ranked strength at the newest campus was people inviting friends (which was fifth place at the largest campus). Giving financially was in seventh place at the newest campus.

- **Newer campuses do better at reaching the unchurched.** The percentage of people who come from unchurched backgrounds was estimated to be higher at the newest campus than at the original campus.
- **At both types of campuses, leading a ministry comes last.** While volunteering was near the top at both the largest campus and the newest campus, in last place (ninth) at both campuses was the next step of volunteering: leading a ministry.



## What Kinds of Diversities Exist Between Campuses?

- **When asked about the diversity between campuses, and offered six different measures, people gave the highest score to economic diversity.** As Chart 9 shows, the lowest level of diversity was in language, with 1 in 5 campuses having some form of language diversity. This is actually a slight increase over the 2010 survey which found that 1 in 5 multisites (17%) have a campus in another language.

## What's Ahead—More Changed Lives?

Behind all the survey statistics that highlight the continued growth of the multisite model are more stories than could be told in this space about lives transformed and communities impacted. These two from a tornado-ravaged section of Alabama and a highly secular area of northern Virginia serve as good representatives.

When tornadoes struck a nearby town in Alabama a few years ago, Huntsville-based Rock Family Worship Center did what came naturally for a church: they immediately reached out to serve their community. Little did church leaders know that one of its most successful multisite locations would launch in that community a few years later.

The multisite campus there has grown to 1,200 in five years and has a paid staff of nine. “Many have come to Christ as first-time conversions,” wrote executive pastor Wayne Henson. “It’s interesting that this target area was the focus of our love during the tragic tornados that destroyed entire subdivisions in the area. It became a situation of reaping what we had sowed!”

“Many have come to Christ as first-time conversions.”

Leaders at McLean Bible Church in northern Virginia could say much the same. After growing the church’s original location to more than 5,000 with three Sunday morning services, a Saturday night service and Sunday night young adult service, McLean launched its “community campus” multisite strategy.

“The campus has become known in the community as a place and a people who will step up on a moment’s notice.”

Associate senior pastor Denny Harris reports that the church’s Loudoun campus that meets in a leased space “has become so well known for serving and ministering to families in crisis that the schools practically ignore church/state issues and call us first when they have kids or families in crisis. The campus has become known in the community as a place and a people who will step up on a moment’s notice.”

That type of report is becoming a benchmark as multisite churches continue to flourish—new communities and pockets of unreached people are touched, and more volunteers are mobilized to reach their neighbors: “We are passionate about our people being missionaries where they work, live, and play,” one multisite leader summarized. “We want to go to where lost and hurting people are—instead of asking them to drive to us. And it’s working.”

If that spirit continues to motivate a church’s multisite impulses, then it is safe to predict that the multisite movement will be a major player in the world of healthy, growing and evangelistic churches for many years to come.

*Generis has been a long-time collaborator with Leadership Network. As we sought to release the new survey results, they joined us as a distribution partner. The Leadership Network/Generis Multisite Church Scorecard is a result of our collaboration.*

*Generis has had long experience working with multisite churches and we wanted to ask them to share their thoughts about this latest research.*

## Interview: How Generis Helps Multisite Churches

### How has multisite changed your approach over the last decade?

Multisite changes the generosity conversation in the church. It is a growing trend and is rapidly becoming the new normal for church growth.

Some of what we do is the same regardless of the church model, but a number of things have to be adapted for the multisite church. Here are a few of the things we think are more important:

- We coach campus pastors in leading the generosity conversation at their campus. Leveraging technology in the giving process, especially smart phones and mobile devices, is very important to multisite churches—we emphasize that to them. This includes communicating the multisite vision to givers at every location.
- Because campus pastors typically have the relationships with givers at their site, we help them understand how to communicate the multisite vision to higher capacity people. In many cases, this might also involve the senior leader of the church, so we coach them on how to do this together.
- Many times, we help facilitate a unified voice on giving throughout all locations. This might include a coordinated set of talking points each week for the time before the offering.

One of the things we have noted among multisites is a tendency to drift to an “us versus them” perspective. Keeping vision and buy in consistent among all locations is essential for a healthy church and we coach churches on how to avoid that drift.

The lead pastor has to cast a vision that speaks to attenders on all campuses, not just one site.

- We help churches understand the financial dynamic in implementing multisite strategy, whether it is the first new campus or an additional new campus. Generally, there is a period of investment and a time for the location to become self-sustaining. It is important for a church to understand those factors if they are to be successful in planning for multisite.

### How has the development of multisite changed the generosity conversation?

Generis ([www.generis.com](http://www.generis.com)) is a team of experienced guides who walk with churches and ministries of all shapes, sizes and personalities to develop generosity—a generosity that permeates the culture. Since 1989, we have acted as guides for churches and Kingdom-focused nonprofits in matters of stewardship and generosity.

We believe churches can see generosity and stewardship flourish in lean times and abundant times. The essence of our mission, accelerating generosity toward God-inspired vision, is captured in this verse from Scripture:

*“But blessed is the man who trusts in the LORD, whose confidence is in him. He will be like a tree planted by the water that sends out its roots by the stream. It does not fear when heat comes; its leaves are always green. It has no worries in a year of drought and never fails to bear fruit.” Jeremiah 17:7-8*

The generosity conversation for churches that are multisite is different than for those with just one site. The lead pastor has to cast a vision that speaks to attenders on all campuses, not just one site. The leader has to continually reinforce “we are one church in multiple locations.”

Campus pastors become a key part of the vision casting and ownership process. They must be 100% bought in and must bring that buy in to their campus leadership regarding vision and funding.

Often, major giving initiatives in multisite churches will mainly benefit just one campus, which causes a challenge to engage attenders on other campuses. The leadership of the campus pastors is critical to this process. Additionally, on a week-to-week basis, even when a major giving initiative is not underway, it is important for all of the campuses to be involved in supporting the overall mission and vision of the church. This is more complex when there are multiple locations.

## When did you start working in this arena and how many multisite churches have you served?

We began working with multisite churches in 2006. Since then, we have worked with more than 100. We are students of what is happening in the American church. We train as a team often, read frequently, and interact with leaders in multisite, multivenue and mergers. Additionally, several of our team have served on staff of multisite churches and a number of our team are involved as members in churches that are multisite.

We began working with multisite churches in 2006. Since then, we have worked with more than 100.

Not only do we rely on our own experience, we keep our skills sharp by networking with others who are intimately familiar with the multisite movement, including Leadership Network, Jim Tomberlin (MultiSite Solutions) and others who are closely involved in the multisite movement.

We have a really good understanding of multisite and how the giving and generosity conversation fits into it.

For those starting their first additional site, what are the concerns you have to address from a financial standpoint? From a practical point of view, we have seen a lot of churches do it right and we have seen some who have “stubbed their toe,” so to speak. Here are some key learnings from those churches.

- Watch your language—this is critically important. Make sure members and attenders are constantly reminded that, though multiple locations, you are one church and you have one vision.
- Selecting a campus pastor is a crucial decision in the success of a new site. If generosity and giving is to be a core value, the campus pastor must buy in to that.
- Select the campus launch team carefully. They should be passionate about the new location and should be “all in.” This includes giving. Be sure to include a giving requirement for those involved in the launch team.
- Quality expectations are often higher at a multisite campus than they would be in a church plant, and that affects the amount of money that will be required to be successful. If you are beginning in a non-permanent location, as so many do, don’t underestimate the amount needed for quality environments including sound, storage, set-up and tear-down. The weekly worship experience is probably the single most important factor in launching a new campus successfully. First impressions matter!

Assume that funding needs will take longer than you expect.

- If your initial location is a public school, don’t over estimate the relationship. People can change, politics can get involved and you might be forced out sooner than expected. Make sure you have a good, sound contract with any temporary location.
- Churches successful in launching other initiatives tend to be overly optimistic in evaluating the funding required for longer term operational giving and self-sufficien-

cy. Give it time. Don't overestimate growth. Assume that funding needs will take longer than you expect. If it takes less, you will be pleasantly surprised.

- If this is your first offsite campus, be careful not to move on the multisite vision before you have your givers behind the concept. Like any new initiative that does not have buy in from the church, multisite can be disruptive if done too soon. Take the time to get buy in and know your people—especially your key leaders and influencers—are behind it.

## What do you say to a leader who says, “We know we need a new campus, now how do we convince the people that won’t worship at the new campus to help pay for it?”

Asking “What’s in it for me?” is okay. It is a reasonable question. However, the more important question is to get all givers to the place where their first impulse is think vision, larger impact and reach, and to do so wisely and economically. The senior leader must keep the macro vision fresh and the passion for reaching lost people white hot so that multisite is a natural extension of what they already love. Givers can then say without hesitation and apology that “We are a church that gives ourselves away. We understand that money follows vision.”

The more important question is to get all givers to the place where their first impulse is think vision, larger impact and reach.

We know how to frame the giver conversation for the in “What’s in it for me?” question. From worshiping closer to home to higher likelihood to bring your neighbors to releasing those more gifted in entrepreneurial skills to join in, there are many inspiring reasons to move into multisite.

Remind people that:

- “No one attends a church that someone else didn’t help to fund.”
- “Someone else helped to fund the campus you attend, and we are asking you to help fund this one.”
- “We are one church.”

Launching a new campus is about outreach, missions and evangelism. That’s why we need to do it successfully.

Attendance at a new location tends to grow rapidly while giving grows incrementally.

## In your view, what needs to be in place on one campus before launching another?

Churches that are successful at launching new campuses value the overall financial health of the church. As a result, they will generally evaluate whether the existing campuses are self-sustaining or getting close. Starting too many campuses that are not financially viable can be a drain on cash flow and, even more importantly, can interrupt the momentum of the church.

Many churches experience unexpected growth at the new campus. While this is good for momentum, attendance at a new location tends to grow rapidly while giving grows incrementally. The church must have the cash flow to be able to handle the rapid growth if it occurs.

If a church is new to multisite, it is important to understand the financial model, define success targets and have income/expense numbers that are realistic. There are many sources for this information, so a church doesn’t need to make unrealistic estimates.

If the new campus is in a temporary location, be aware that people become restless in a temporary site sooner than you expect. Many churches overestimate the time they can stay in a leased facility, especially for a weekend venue only. They end up wanting a 24/7 facility faster than they think. This puts pressure on capital needs and the church should be prepared for that.

## What's the biggest challenge when it comes to generosity and multisite?

There is not really one big killer challenge, as long as the church is healthy overall. It's really a series of possible challenges, any one of which, if not dealt with, can cause issues in the execution of the multisite strategy. Here are some of the common ones we have seen.

- “Us versus them” mentality. This mentality is preventable from the launch. You can inoculate yourself from this with intentional communication from day one of considering the new site.
- Keeping the vision of the church clear and the passion of the people white hot for reaching people far from God. Multisite extends the reach of the church and, as the survey shows, it is one of the most effective evangelism strategies.
- Related to vision, framing the giver communication to guide the overall church vision and partnership with givers. “We are one church, one vision, multiple locations” cannot be stated too often.
- Weak or ineffective leadership at the campus level is hard to overcome. That's why selection of an effective campus pastor is so crucial.

Churches use a number of different methods to fund new sites.

## What are the models for financing new sites?

Churches use a number of different methods to fund new sites. There is not a single answer to this question.

- Many choose to fund new sites from general cash flow. If a church chooses to do this, it should make sure it has the margin to be able to carry the new site until it is financially self-sustaining.
- Some churches conduct a congregation-wide giving initiative with designated funds given over a one to two year period. Other churches choose to ask a specific group of higher capacity givers to fund a new campus.
- Borrowing can be part of the answer but a church should be extremely careful in this regard. Borrow only what you can afford to repay in a relatively short period of time without compromising other ministries.
- Pay it forward—this is a method where each existing campus contributes a percentage to be used for further launches. A number of the churches in the Exponential movement do it this way.

## What are the approaches you have seen for capital campaigns with multisite churches?

Most multisite churches have one giving initiative for the entire church and all the campuses participate in it. On occasion, a church might have a reason to do a giving initiative for a specific campus, but generally they have one main initiative for the entire church.

The success of any giving initiative, and especially one for a multisite church, depends on giver communication. In a multisite environment, this will take place at the macro level from the senior leader and at the micro level from the campus pastor. Givers follow the vision and authority of the senior leader, but the primary relationship with the church rests with the campus pastor. Therefore, it is important to have both voices integrated into the giver communication.

Early in the process, surface and leverage leaders who have a passion for and will champion the multisite cause. This would include 100% board or elder support for the project. There must be an unwavering belief that the multisite strategy is the core of how we make impact as a church.

## While you work with churches of all sizes, what are smaller churches asking about this issue?

Multisite is a strategy that can be employed by a church of any size. It is an excellent way to extend the reach of the church. The main limitation for smaller churches is the affordability of the new site, whether temporary or permanent. But there are options for smaller churches who want to be creative. They will have to think outside the box.

Some smaller churches conclude, “This option is not for us.” For those churches, they should be secure in their identity and know that multisite is not for every church. It is okay to continue a single campus strategy.

## Are there differences between sites in generosity tactics?

Different campuses tend to take on a personality of their own, even while fully embracing the mission and vision of the church. However, a church should not allow freelancing in how a campus communicates giving and generosity. Each campus must be consistent in theology, approach, language and vision while at the same time allowing flexibility in the implementation at each campus. For example, one campus of a multisite church might have a much higher than normal number of young marrieds and single adults. In that case, the conversation should be modified to include the perspectives of Millennials in responding to giving and generosity. Additionally, the discipling of higher capacity givers will be correlated by campus. The relationship to the campus pastor will be extremely important.

The discipling of higher capacity givers will be correlated by campus. The relationship to the campus pastor will be extremely important.

## What has been some of the big positive stories for multisite churches in relation to generosity?

The biggest victories tend to be related to the successful launching of a new campus where people who will not be attending there provide all of the investment needed for the new campus. A church that accomplishes this knows it has people with a Kingdom investor mindset.

## In your view, what is the future potential of multisite churches?

From what we are seeing, multisite is the new normal for churches. Churches that would have said 5-7 years ago, “Should we be multisite?” are now seeing multisite as the default and are instead asking “Is there a reason we should not be multisite?” This is a big shift in perspective and it is occurring at churches of all sizes—large, medium and small. From that point of view, we see the potential as huge. Many people would prefer to attend a good church near where they live and this is an excellent strategy for a church to extend its reach to a place different from the main campus.

The only limit we see is the resource ceilings that might occur from not engaging givers. This is why we believe generosity and giving are an important part of the multisite conversation.



# Multisite Resource Toolkit

Instant access to over 30 multisite resources including videos, slides, stories, research and more.

## Follow-Up Resource: Multisite Resource Toolkit

This unique release contains roughly 30 different resources organized by five broad categories: (1) those related to the Leadership Network/Generis Multisite Church Scorecard Report, (2) interviews on various topics with a wide assortment of multisite practitioners, (3) short video conversations between Dave Travis and Jim Sheppard on a variety of topics, (4) excerpts from the two most popular books on multisite, (5) and additional readings.

*The materials were selected by Warren Bird, Ph.D., Research Director at Leadership Network, to expose you to the latest ideas, practices, and research. You will find much insight and help, whether you're on your first offsite campus or your tenth. Examples include:*

### Video Interviews with Multisite Practitioners

#### **Roundtable: Multisite Pacesetters Predict Where the Movement Is Going**

A roundtable of updates and predictions from Dave and Jon Ferguson, Community Christian Church, Naperville, IL (12 campuses across Chicagoland); Kadi Cole, Christ Fellowship, Palm Beach Gardens, FL (7 campuses across south Florida); and Andy Addis of CrossPoint Church, Hutchinson, KS (11 campuses in rural area).

#### **Craig Groschel: America's Largest Multisite Church: Advice from Pastor Craig Groeschel of LifeChurch.tv**

Craig Groeschel, senior pastor of America's largest-attendance multisite church, offers frank, practical and passionate advice from their model. Topics include maximizing your current building, focusing on leadership more than preaching, and being very careful before doing a merger.

#### **Larry Osborne and Chris Brown: After 15 Years of Multisite: What North Coast Has Learned**

"One size fits all" doesn't work for multisite efforts at North Coast Church, Vista, CA, according to its two senior pastors, Larry Osborne and Chris Brown. They look back on the church's fifteen-plus year history with multisite and identify some of the most important lessons learned.

#### **Geoff Surratt: If Healthy, a Church of 500-1000 Can Go Multisite**

Geoff Surratt draws from his extensive consulting experience with multisite churches to ask some tough questions about the Leadership Network/Generis Multisite Scorecard, starting with what size of church can go multisite, and then the implications for church planting, and more. Geoff is lead author of the two leading multisite books: *Multisite Church Revolution* and *Multisite Church Roadtrip*, and runs the popular blog, [geoffsurratt.com](http://geoffsurratt.com).

#### **Jim Tomberlin: Why 1 in 3 Multisite Campuses Comes as the Result of a Merger**

The numbers are both true and increasing: today just better than 1 in 3 multisite campuses come as a result of a merger. Jim Tomberlin, former multisite pastor, does almost half of his consulting with church mergers, most of which become campuses of multisite churches. This interview explores the hows and whys of the multisite-merger phenomenon. Jim is founder and chief strategist of [MultiSiteSolutions.com](http://MultiSiteSolutions.com) and lead author of *Better Together: Making Healthy Church Mergers Work*, co-written with Warren Bird.

**PLUS MUCH MORE!**

The entire kit is available for only \$99. For more information, go to <http://leadnet.org/multisitetoolkit/>

## About This Project

Our sponsor is Generis ([www.generis.com](http://www.generis.com)), a consulting firm specializing in churches and Christian ministry organizations, with the goal to accelerate generosity and stewardship. For more about them see page 29.

Note: Leadership Network conducted this research without any input from Generis. Upon seeing the work, Generis agreed it should be shared widely and joined the project to help see that happen. All opinions expressed are from Leadership Network and its team, not the sponsor. Our research has its own biases but were not influenced by Generis. Having said that, we have worked with this sponsor organization for many years and find them to be persons of high integrity and love for God's Kingdom work. Jim Sheppard and Brad Leeper are the principals at Generis and their team includes more than twenty experienced consultants across the country.



**Jim Sheppard** is CEO of Generis. He is an avid student of generosity and has devoted his life to helping church people become more generous. He is a frequent writer on generosity and ministry funding, both in magazines and in a co-authored book *Contagious Generosity: Creating a Culture of Giving in Your Church*. He is also an inspirational speaker. Atlanta-based, Jim is actively involved in his church where he serves as an officer and provides leadership to the Generosity Ministry Team there. Follow him through Twitter [@Jim\\_Sheppard](https://twitter.com/Jim_Sheppard) and his blog [www.jimsheppard.net](http://www.jimsheppard.net), or email him at [jim@generis.com](mailto:jim@generis.com).



**Brad Leeper**, President of Generis, serves larger and growing churches with significant funding requirements, helping them expand in the area of generosity both practically and spiritually. Brad has a strong understanding of multisite church strategy and of other pioneering church movements. A 23-year member of Perimeter Church in greater Atlanta, Brad serves on the elder team. A graduate of Dallas Seminary, he has professional certifications in church risk management and human resources—with diverse experience in financial analysis, adult education, cross-cultural missions and strategic planning.



**Warren Bird, Ph.D.**, primary survey designer and author of this report, is Research Director for Leadership Network. Warren has also written 26 books, including two directly on the topic of multisite, both co-authored with Geoff Surratt and Greg Ligon: *Multi-Site Church Revolution and Multi-Site Church Roadtrip*. He is also a contributing author to a third book, *Multi-Site Churches*, by Scott McConnell. He has also co-authored two books with major examples from multisite contexts: *Better Together: Making Healthy Church Mergers Work* and *Next: Pastoral Successions that Work*. Warren is based just outside New York City. Contact Warren at [research@leadnet.org](mailto:research@leadnet.org).

**Stephanie Jackson**, Publications Manager for Leadership Network, gave project and communications management to the survey, oversaw the initial tallying of the data, and supervised the design and distribution of this report. Stephanie is also the project manager for the Leadership Network Large Church Salary, Benefits and Staffing surveys and editor for our weekly newsletter, Leadership Network *Advance*.

**Andy Williams** assisted with the writing of this report. A freelance writer in Omaha, NE, Andy has contributed to a number of Leadership Network's published reports as well as its newsletter, Leadership Network *Advance*.

Special thanks to the following who suggested questions, critiqued a draft of the survey, publicized the survey, and/or reviewed a draft of this report: **Dave Travis, Greg Ligon, Tim Nations, Josh Whitehead, Justin Lathrop, Todd Rhoades, Jim Tomberlin, D.J. Chuang, Geoff Surratt, Mac Lake, Tony Morgan, Rich Birch, and Ed Stetzer.**

Statistical consultation from **Marc Glassman, Ph.D.**

## About Leadership Network

Our role is to foster innovation movements that activate the Church to greater impact for the Glory of God's name.

What began in 1984 with 20 leaders now serves over 200,000 leaders all over the world.

We primarily conduct programs with innovative churches in the U.S., Canada and Europe at the present time. You can go to [leadnet.org/programs/](http://leadnet.org/programs/) to see the more public ones.

Our programs work with entrepreneurial innovators—leaders starting and doing new things. We focus on the practical parts of ministry action. We use what we call a “peer protocol” which means that our approach is to put leaders with leaders and let them learn from one another.

We work with multiple innovations, multiple leaders using multiple models and approaches. We help the church teams move from ideas to implementation to impact.

This is done in our programs that help them generate new ideas and then works to craft those into workable, realistic plans based on their contexts. But we continue to work to see these plans through to a measurable impact.

We then take what is being learned and use our story sharing tools—our weekly email newsletter, our blog posts, books, concept papers, online global conferences and other tools to inform, inspire and encourage others to greater effectiveness.

Leadership Network is a Christian non-profit 501c3 donor supported ministry organized in the United States. We have an administrative hub in Dallas, Texas but our team is deployed all over the world.

## Contact Us

Leadership Network welcomes your response. The primary writer is Warren Bird, Ph.D. Director of Research and Intellectual Capital Support for Leadership Network. [research@leadnet.org](mailto:research@leadnet.org)

To learn more about Leadership Network go to [www.leadnet.org](http://www.leadnet.org)

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## Additional Resources

Want to find more resources like this one? For the most current listing of free and purchasable resources, including books, papers, videos, and podcasts, go to [leadnet.org/downloads/](http://leadnet.org/downloads/)

For resources specifically related to multisite churches go to [http://leadnet.org/resources/page/multisite\\_resources](http://leadnet.org/resources/page/multisite_resources)

Leadership Network *Advance* E-newsletter: Our free, indispensable, twice-monthly email newsletter featuring the best in innovative church strategies, trends, including news of upcoming Leadership Network events. Sign up at <http://leadnet.org/advance>

## Endnotes

<sup>1</sup>National Congregations Study is hosted at [www.soc.duke.edu/natcong/](http://www.soc.duke.edu/natcong/). Their exact numbers for Protestants: 2.8% of congregations containing 8.8% of attenders were multisite in 2012.

<sup>2</sup>Exact question was: Does your church have worship services that take place every week at more than one location, but all locations are considered part of the same congregation?

<sup>3</sup>Leadership Network has record of one or more multisite churches based in these states: AL, AR, AZ, CA, CO, DC, FL, GA, HI, IA, ID, IL, IN, KS, KY, LA, MA, MD, MI, MN, MO, MS, MT, NC, NE, NH, NJ, NM, NV, NY, OH, OK, OR, PA, SC, TN, TX, VA, WA, WI. These states are the location of the church's original campus. So a Massachusetts-based church may have sites in Maine, but only Massachusetts would be cited in the list above. Canada's nine largest provinces, which all have one or more multisite churches, are (most populous first): ON, QC, BC, AB, MB, SK, NS, NB, NF.

<sup>4</sup>See Leadership Network's list of global megachurches compiled by Warren Bird, which has a column for each church to indicate whether it is multisite. [leadnet.org/world](http://leadnet.org/world).

<sup>5</sup>Some percentages do not tally to 100 due to rounding issues. In some tallies, extreme outliers were excluded.

<sup>6</sup>The survey was fielded 8/15/2013 to 10/10/2013, sent to 1,565 emails in Leadership Network's database, and then publicized broadly on various blogs and Twitter feeds, both from Leadership Network and from thought leaders we recruited. It was then picked up and mentioned on other people's social networks as well. The survey concluded by asking the survey taker to please send the survey link to ministry colleagues in other multisite churches. Survey responses were then cleaned to remove any duplicate church listings, where two people had reported on the same church.

Screening questions ensured that only Protestants replied. We received 798 attempts to complete the survey (266 responses from the 1,565 emails sent and 532 from other web links), 535 of them usable. In terms of multisite location, 91% of the 535 usable responses came from the United States, and 11 other countries—Canada (19), United Kingdom (15), Australia (7), South Africa (6), other countries (7). As my online list of global megachurches and recent Advance article about them affirm, multisite is clearly a worldwide phenomenon.

<sup>7</sup>Surratt, Geoff, Greg Ligon and Warren Bird, *The Multisite Church Revolution*, Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2009, page 217.

<sup>8</sup>See [www.leadnet.org/world](http://www.leadnet.org/world).

<sup>9</sup>We calculated "growth" by taking current total worship attendance minus total worship attendance when they became multisite divided by number of years as a multisite.

<sup>10</sup>Question was, "What year did you become multisite?" Survey was fielded in fall 2013, and so all calculations for how long a church has been multisite are based on 2013, rather than the early 2014 publication date of this report.

<sup>11</sup>Jim Tomberlin and Warren Bird, *Better Together: Making Church Mergers Work*, San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, 2012.

<sup>12</sup>LifeWay Research, "American Views on Video and In-Person Sermons: Survey of 1,001 American Adults," a poll conducted September 6-10, 2013 by LifeWay Research, Nashville, TN, <http://www.lifewayresearch.com/files/2013/12/American-Views-on-Video-Venues.pdf>

<sup>13</sup>Geoff Surratt, "Of Course People Prefer Live Preaching, But Video Venues Work When You Work Them," The Exchange: A Blog by Ed Stetzer, Christianity Today online, December 17, 2013, <http://www.christianitytoday.com/edstetzer/2013/december/some-thoughts-on-video-venues-part-1of-course-people-prefer.html>

<sup>14</sup>See *Outreach* magazine's list of "online church" topics at <http://www.outreachmagazine.com/topics/online>. See also Phil Cooke's profile of World Outreach Church's online ministry, with his recommendations of why it works and how other churches can improve their online ministry, [http://philcooke.com/people-dont-get-online-church-heres-fix/?utm\\_source=rss&utm\\_medium=rss&utm\\_campaign=people-dont-get-online-church-heres-fix](http://philcooke.com/people-dont-get-online-church-heres-fix/?utm_source=rss&utm_medium=rss&utm_campaign=people-dont-get-online-church-heres-fix).

<sup>15</sup>"Small Talk with Rick Bezet: An Interview by Steve Strang," Ministry Today, Summer 2010, pages 23 and 25.

<sup>16</sup>Details taken from the church's website and also the book, *A Future and a Hope: The Story of Elim Christian Centre*, published 2013 by Elim Christian Centre Auckland, [www.elimchristiancentre.org.nz](http://www.elimchristiancentre.org.nz), pages 8, 10, 18 and 26.