

CHURCH MULTIPLICATION CENTERS

Best Practices from Churches that Do High-Yield Church Planting

by Andy Williams

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Multiplication Next Steps

How can your church move from dabbling in church planting to helping start four or more churches per year?

- From the top leader through all significant leadership teams, make the spiritual and philosophical shift from a church-growth mindset to a church-multiplication focus.
- Make a commitment and begin setting aside resources—time, people, money—for church planting.
- Get connected through a financial and logistical commitment to a group that has systematic processes and procedures and key people in place for rapid church multiplication—or begin developing your own processes if that group doesn't exist.

Those processes will include:

- Finding church-planting leaders
 - Evaluating their readiness through some form of assessment
 - Training church planters
 - Coaching, networking and strategic partnerships
- Put an internal mechanism in place to identify, develop and deploy leaders from within your congregation who are potential church planters.
 - Regularly and publicly send out teams or groups of people to start new congregations.
 - Identify other churches in your area that are involved in church planting, and begin partnering with them for the purpose of planting multiple churches.

Spawning another “Dolly” doesn't seem to be an issue for a new breed of churches that are setting the pace as high-impact church planting centers.

You remember Dolly, right? The first mammal cloned from adult DNA, Dolly the sheep was touted at the time as the pinnacle of a test-tube genetics revolution. But in case you missed it, Dolly is dead. The victim of lung cancer, crippling arthritis, premature aging and other ailments, Dolly was put down by lethal injection in 2003.

Cloning successful churches in the name of church multiplication could lead to the same fate, according to Wayne Cordeiro, senior pastor of **New Hope Christian Fellowship** in Honolulu, Hawaii (www.enuhope.org). But Cordeiro is thankful that today's high-capacity planters of new churches seem to have a healthy view of reproduction. “We want healthy, reproducing, life-giving churches with strong DNA, not sick clones that need to be put down,” says Cordeiro, who started New Hope from scratch in 1995.



New Hope Leeward was started in September 2002 in a shopping center.

New Hope's leadership training programs train high-capacity leaders to plant healthy, strong churches that are eager to reproduce themselves.

Cordeiro's New Hope, which grew to an attendance of 12,000 in 10 years, is among a swelling number of congregations whose leadership is thinking and acting beyond their walls to become “mother” churches with multiple offspring. New Hope alone, through its non-profit, church-planting arm **New Hope International** (www.enhi.org), has helped start 73 churches around the world since 2000.

For the past five years, Cordeiro has been part of a pilot group pulled together twice a year by Leadership Network to focus on high-capacity church multiplication—with astounding results. These 10 church-planting churches have honed their processes and practices to the tune of starting 1,093 churches collectively in the U.S., representing 171,601 attenders (an average of 157 people per church), and an equally amazing 566 international churches with 31,696 people

attending (average of 56). In 2004 alone, the 10 church multiplication centers (CMCs) currently participating in the Leadership Network project planted 466 new churches in the U.S. and 266 internationally. “We’ve all been stumbling along and learning together as we go,” says Matt Hannan, senior pastor of **New Heights Community Church** in Vancouver, Washington and founder of the **Northwest Church Planting Center** (www.churchplanter.com). “It’s been amazing to see what has developed and what we have learned from each other.”

How did these mega-multipliers get there? What factors have proven necessary for a congregation to move from planting one or two churches to successfully multiplying itself four, eight or 15 times a year? Leaders representing those CMCs from coast to coast convened in January 2005 in Las Vegas for a Leadership Network briefing of more than 250 participants from the U.S. and Canada. Those church-multiplication practitioners pulled back the curtain on the

best practices that have resulted in their high reproduction rates, intent on helping other church-starting zealots learn from their journeys.

This concept paper is an attempt to capture some of the key learnings, vital concepts and best practices in church multiplication that have been time-tested and sharpened over the past five years by this pilot group of high-yield CMCs. For those who already have a heart for church planting—

you need few pep talks on the value of church multiplication to see the Great Commission fulfilled—this is a great place to glean from some of the most effective church-based church multiplication centers in the U.S. For those who have dabbled in church planting—or even have some of your own horror stories to tell about this bungee-jumping-without-a-cord adventure—dipping into the compiled wisdom of this group could propel your church-multiplication initiatives to new heights. For all Kingdom-advancers, you will be encouraged,

challenged and motivated by the faith, courage and sacrifice of these leaders and their churches. Most in this group fall into the megachurch category. But their leadership has shed the desire to grow the biggest church on record in favor of “churching” their communities and multiplying to the ends of the earth.

i. Making a Shift—Heart, Mind and Bottom lines.

“We died a long time ago to being the biggest church in the area”

While most of the CMC teams represented here started innocently enough—with one church plant at a time over a number of years—each church had to make significant philosophical and practical shifts in their ministries to fuel rapid multiplication. From heart changes to sizeable recommitments of resources that could have been used in-house, the CMC leaders began with a baseline passion to see lives transformed.

Almost all these leaders were church planters themselves, saw God move in miraculous ways to launch new faith communities in their locations, and wanted to see that process replicated. For them, multiplication of their local bodies and the planting of new ones came from a firm theological conviction: To follow Jesus’ mandate of making disciples means that healthy organisms grow and multiply.

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The Organic Church is relational, missional and reproductive. Through the organic church movement, disciples and leaders are produced and reproduced.

WHAT FACTORS MOVE A CONGREGATION FROM PLANTING 1 OR 2 CHURCHES TO SUCCESSFULLY MULTIPLYING ITSELF 4, 8 OR EVEN 15 TIMES A YEAR?

“Reproduction always begins on the microscopic level,” says Neil Cole, founder of the **Church Multiplication Associates** in Los Angeles (www.cmaresources.org), which is spawning “organic” church networks worldwide. “If you can’t reproduce disciples, you can’t reproduce leaders. If you can’t reproduce leaders, you can’t reproduce churches. And if you can’t reproduce churches, you can’t reproduce movements.”

Lead scouts like Neil Cole are quick to point out that somewhere along the path, a vital decision has to be made. For some, it was a line in the sand. For others, they “stumbled” into it and could never go back. For all of them, they exchanged the notoriety of becoming the biggest and fastest-growing churches in their region to give away their best and brightest leaders and invest hard-earned financial, logistical and intellectual resources in places they may never see.

“Don’t get me wrong,” says **NorthWood Church** senior pastor Bob Roberts, whose Church Planting Center in Keller, Texas has started 50 churches in the past five years and has grown a network that is starting 50 to 60 more per year (www.glocal.net). “We have 60 acres here and we want to fill it up to transform our community. But our church died a long time ago to being the biggest church in the area. We want to help church our area—and beyond. We aren’t starting churches for Keller or Denver or St. Louis. We are starting churches for the world. That’s our context.”

“If you don’t want the mess, don’t get involved in church planting.”

This shift to becoming a highly reproductive entity hasn’t happened short of calculated personal cost. “It was a defining moment for me when I had to do a self-examination and humble myself,” says Cordeiro, who commits several hours each week to help lead New Hope’s Pacific Rim Bible College and its two-year School of Church Planters. “You have to decide, ‘Am I going to build a big church or build big

people?’ If you have a heart to build big people, you don’t have trouble watching 1,500 people and \$1.2 million walk out the door to become a church plant.”

Hannan, who over the past 25 years has seen 150 churches emerge out of New Heights and now from the Northwest Church Planting Center, estimates he spends 25 percent of his time weekly on church-planting endeavors. Most of that time comes in connecting with leaders that Northwest has helped raise and has deployed to the field. “I meet with half a dozen pastors a week who are in some kind of crisis—even the ones who have been at it awhile,” Hannan says. “Sometimes you have to go with them and walk through what to do when a member is arrested for drunk driving. Or a mother-in-law of someone who commits suicide and they’ve never dealt with anything like that. If you don’t want the mess, don’t get involved in church planting.”

“There are a lot of ways we could spend that money.”

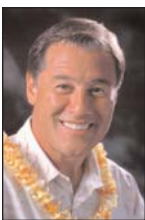
Becoming some of the most highly-reproductive churches in the U.S. also has dramatically impacted the bottom line of these church-planting entities. According to a study of the Leadership Network pilot group by Linda Stanley,¹ annual budget allocation for church multiplication ranges from 20 to 100 percent of the CMC’s annual budgets—depending on whether the allocation flows from the church budget to the CMC, or whether the CMC operates with a separate budget as a stand-alone non-profit organization. All the CMCs have raised outside funds for their efforts, typically through private-foundation grants, fundraisers, or soliciting personal

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BOB ROBERTS



WAYNE CORDEIRO

donors. “It is an investment of resources, talent and time, but it won’t happen any other way,” says Bill Wellons of **Fellowship Bible Church** in Little Rock, which started the non-profit **Fellowship Associates** (www.fellowshipassociates.com) to spear-

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head its Church Planting Leadership Residency Program and resulting church-multiplication initiatives. “You have to decide whether you believe planting new churches is a significant and valued priority. There are a lot of other ways our church could spend that money. But we believe it is the best way to share the Gospel and raise up new leaders.”

Wellons says bringing on Fellowship Associates Director Steve Snider—a former attorney who now is the full-time staff member dedicated to running the Residency Program—has been vital to Fellowship seeing 17 churches started through its Residency program in the past four years. “Hiring Steve was a key,” Wellons says. “He has been totally devoted to cultivating the relationships and the networks, and in finding key leaders.” Linda Stanley’s research also found that all the CMCs within Leadership Network’s pilot project have a minimum of one full-time director of church multiplication and at least a part-time administrative assistant. Most of them have added staff capacity to their church multiplication ministries over the past four years, enabling them to expand and accelerate their programs—in some cases, by tenfold. “Having someone devoted just to church planting has been huge,” says Billy Hornsby, who runs the church-planting efforts of the Mount Pleasant, South Carolina-based **Association of Related Churches** (www.relatedchurches.com). “I’m the church-planting pastor to the 90 churches connected

to us. If they have a question, or if one of the planters who is interning needs something, they can just give me a call.”

“It takes more than chatting over chicken wings to see a movement...”

Tim Keller, senior pastor of **Redeemer Presbyterian Church** in New York City, says he has learned to relax when it comes to the resources it takes to fuel church planting in Manhattan and beyond. Keller, a former denominational worker in Maryland and Virginia who moved to the Big Apple to plant a church, has led Redeemer to be involved with 118 church plants over the past 12 years—30 of those in a “major” way.



TIM KELLER

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“Church planting attracts money,” Keller says. “Don’t worry about not having the money for it; the money will come.” Keller, who believes that any church with attendance of more than 1,000 should be reproducing itself, recalls when Redeemer was preparing to launch its first daughter church. “We sat down with five couples and asked them how much they could give to the church plant,” he says. “They committed \$120,000 to it right on the spot. I know they weren’t giving that much to Redeemer. But they were going to be involved in church planting and they were excited, so they dug down deeper. Money tends to follow effective church planting.”

To move from an occasional church-planting church to become serial multipliers, all the CMCs have integrated, organized and systematic processes and procedures for finding church-planting leaders and evaluating their readiness for starting a church. These groups also have constructed a variety of training platforms, on-going coaching and movement-expanding networking and strategic partnerships. Some of the CMCs launched with those processes in place. For others, such as the long-standing **Acts 29 Network**, it was more of a process. “A

key was moving from informal to formal systems,” says Mark Driscoll, who started **Mars Hill Fellowship** in Seattle and helped start the Acts 29 Network of churches (www.acts29network.org). “It has to move from subjective, relationship-to-relationship



By changing their church-planting system, Acts 29 Network went from planting 5 churches a year in 2000 to planting 40 a year in 2005. Veritas Church is an Acts 29 church plant in Decatur, Georgia, started in 2004.

to objective assessment and systems, verbal to written. At first, it’s almost all intuition, and you go with your gut. That works for one or two church plants a year. But if you want to get beyond that, it takes more than chatting over chicken wings and hanging out to see a movement of church planting.”

Following is an overview of the some of the best practices discovered by

the pilot CMCs and other highly reproductive entities for the processes of recruiting and assessing, training, coaching and developing strategic partnerships:

2. Creating a Leader “Farm System” and Readiness Assessment.

“Without the right person, you’re not going anywhere...”

One glance at the sheer magnitude of what these churches have accomplished—more than 1,600 churches started worldwide in less than five years—elicits the most obvious question for anyone who is crafting a multiplication mentality: Where do that many fire-breathing, building-leaping leaders come from? Do these churches have a factory that cranks out spiritual entrepreneurs on command? Each CMC leader affirms that drawing a bead on the right person is perhaps the most crucial piece of the process. “Unless you get a capable leader, you can invest a million dollars in a group and they’ll never start a thing,” Hornsby says. “If a guy is not a leader, you are throwing your money in a black hole.” For that reason, CMC leaders have

focused massive time, energy and resources on making sure they are sending the right person to do the job—from week-long, mostly objective formal assessment processes to others going with their gut and the value of a long-term relationship.

For Hornsby and Seacoast senior pastor Greg Surratt—who have seen 18 churches with a combined attendance of 7,500 started in the past four years—the leadership development light came on when they were getting input from a Chick-Fil-A Corporation executive. Noting that the company reflects impeccable consistency of service throughout its locations nationwide, the exec says it’s all in the choosing of the franchise owners. “Thousands of people apply for a franchise,” Hornsby says, “but a very limited number are awarded new franchises every year.” The biggest shocker came, however, when they found out that Chick-Fil-A interviews franchise applicants 15-17 times before selecting new owners—no DiSC tests, no personality profiles, no objective measurements. In Hornsby and Surratt’s system, if a potential church planter is unknown in the circle of member churches, Hornsby recommends a six-month-minimum internship in a member church to size up the candidate. “Ministry flows out of relationship,” Surratt says. “If you don’t know them, there will usually be surprises. We want to build a front-end relationship to know who they are, and a back-end relationship for supporting who they are becoming.”



BILLY HORNSBY



GREG SURRATT

“Church planters find church planters...”

For Driscoll and Acts 29—which planted 23 churches in 2004 and has a current “applicant pool” of over 100 potential planters who are interested in joining the network—attraction of

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capable leaders hasn't been a problem. Acts 29 church leaders around the country are always on the lookout for more of their kind—and they also seem to draw them. “Church planters find church planters,” says Driscoll, who hosts regular “fishing pool” events at Mars Hill and the other more prominent Acts 29 churches scattered around the country for potential church-plant leaders who have called his office with questions. “It’s like when you’re looking for a guitar player,” he says. “You get one and all of a sudden you have 47. It’s like they come to church together in a bus. Like attracts like. Planters look for potential church planters and are surfaced by planters.”

Others, such as Northwest Church Planting in Washington, NorthWood Church in Fort Worth and Fellowship Bible Church in Little Rock, also rely on church-planting alumni to keep the farm system stocked with hot prospects. But they maintain ties with seminaries or graduate schools that surface good candidates. “Most guys right out of seminary aren’t ready to plant a church right away,” says Bob Roberts, whose church is in the same city as Southwestern Theological Seminary, one of the largest seminaries in the world. “We have had a good relationship with the seminary and work with a lot of interns from there.” New Hope in Hawaii focuses on keeping its leader “pipe-

line” flowing from within. It emphasizes a “shadowing” process at all ministry levels, its own undergraduate Pacific Rim Bible College, graduate programs through Bethel Seminary and a two-year School of Church Planters.



Pacific Rim Bible College students gather at Hookele (Hawaiian for wayfinder) for worship, fellowship, vision and prayer. New Hope’s relationship with the college helps form innovative, well-grounded, high-capacity leaders ready to plant new churches.

At the **Vineyard Leadership Institute** (www.vineyardcolumbus.org/ministries), an outgrowth of the ministry of **Vineyard Church Columbus** (Ohio), many of the leaders who are being trained for church planting are coming from the harvest. As more than 100 students began to go through two to three years of theological training at the Institute and become immersed in the sending culture of the church, multiplication has become a natural step. “We don’t have very many people who are seminary trained or recycled from other ministries,” says Eric Pickerill, who has overseen 21 church plants since 1994 for the Institute. “A lot of the folks we are sending out are homegrown—they came to Christ here, they get trained here and we send them out.”

“We want to send them out understanding who they are as leaders...”

Regardless of where these potential church-multiplication leaders come from, most of the CMCs have developed formal assessment processes that are typically a mix of objective measurement tools on a variety of personality and leadership traits, and subjective interviews. “We call it ‘Assessment’ because that’s a better term than ‘hitting them for two days with a rubber hose,’ but the idea is the same if you do assessment properly,” Hannan says. “Assessment is the backbone of successful plants. It focuses primarily on their history—things they’ve actually done, and the kind of people they’ve done it with.”



MATT HANNAN

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One common tool, used in various forms by some of the CMCs, is a behavioral interview based on the research of former Fuller Theological

Seminary professor Charles Ridley. By studying hundreds of successful church planters worldwide, Ridley fine-tuned a list of 13 behavioral “indicators”—characteristic traits or skills levels that are critical to the church-planting process and can be evaluated based on what a potential candidate has done in the past. Covering such areas as spousal cooperation, visioning capacity, responsiveness to the community and resilience, Ridley developed behavioral questions and a rating system to help evaluate the readiness of potential candidates. A quick Google search for “church planter assessment” surfaces countless church-plant coaches, independent organizations and denominational agencies that perform assessments for a fee (www.newchurches.com is one source).



NorthWood’s GlocalNet church-starting network focuses on initiatives of community transformation, church multiplication and nation building. Above, Bob Roberts meets with Egypt’s Grand Imam for nation-building discussions in 2004.

Most of the CMCs in Leadership Network’s project take candidates through a version of Ridley’s behavioral interview, and have added other tools to their assessment process. NorthWood, through its **GlocalNet Church-Starting Network**, offers three levels of assessment for potential church-planting couples. A tool that soon will be offered on-line includes a self-

evaluation, a spouse evaluation, three to five “other” evaluations and a brief coaching plan for \$100. A second, more in-depth assessment offered in a one-day format is conducted by an assessment team. It includes multiple instruments such as the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator, the Strength Deployment Inventory, the L.E.A.D. Instrument and the Marital ENRICH inventory. The potential planter receives a multi-page report of strengths, growth areas, and a coaching plan for \$650. NorthWood’s GlocalNet Center also conducts a 1 ½-hour assessment for prospective Core or Launch Team members for \$200.

Vineyard Leadership Institute, along with using objective tools, pairs students with a primary and secondary coach who give continual feedback throughout the training process. The Institute has nearly 600 students nationwide including 130 locally at Vineyard Columbus, where it is based. “We’ve overseen the planting of 21 churches for Vineyard Columbus, which utilizes Vineyard Leadership Institute as its training instrument,” Eric Pickerill says. Many other churches around the U.S. and the U.K. are utilizing Vineyard Leadership Institute to send out their own church plants.

Fellowship Associates provides for its residents to go through the “Servants by Design” Inventory and Profile Report (www.youruniquedesign.com). A process initially used as part of the selection process for NASA astronauts and later adapted for spiritual leadership, Fellowship’s report is based on an intensive weekend retreat with extensive follow-up. “If we had to send them out with one thing,” says Wellons, “we want to help them understand who they are as leaders – and who they’re not.”

Cordeiro and the New Hope International team have adopted a unique perspective when it comes to assessing the readiness of leaders and sending them out of the chute: New Hope doesn’t commission leaders to plant a church until they have hit their 30th birthdays. “Jesus could have started his ministry when he was 12,” Cordeiro says. “But he didn’t. He was 30 years old. We think if it’s in the Bible and it’s Jesus, it’s good enough for us and we’ll go with it. Young men who are extremely gifted at 24 or 25 may not be mature enough to handle it. You have to be cautious or you produce prima donnas.”



New Hope’s “DNA” calls for a spirit of creativity in worship. New Hope includes traditional Hawaiian hula dancing, drama, videos and music in its services.

“It’s not about the money...”

Whatever process a church or church-planting organization employs for finding church-multiplication leaders and assessing their readiness, these CMC leaders are adamant about one category that is an automatic knock out: “If a potential church planter is overly-concerned about what kind

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– John Reeves

of salary and benefits package await his arrival as a spiritual entrepreneur, run!” according to John Reeves, founder of **Xpansion Ministries** (www.xpansion.org).

Xpansion, a group of mostly young, up-and-coming church-plant leaders who started on college campuses and have begun to penetrate other communities, says their leaders learned that lesson the hard way. “You can’t fund all the church plants you want

to do,” says Reeves, whose network consists of 30 churches and is planting at least four churches per year. “We tried to fund the planters and it undermined us. Unless a church has some sugar-daddy who is going to give a boatload of money, you can’t plant multiple churches that way.”

Other CMC leaders have noted the same phenomenon as they deploy church planters worldwide. Overfunding is not productive and almost always produces meager results. Underfunding is irresponsible and puts church planters and their families in precarious situations. But most church-planting leaders lean on the lighter side of the wallet. “Put \$200,000 in a plant if you want to kill it,” Hannan says. “If you give them \$2,500, a pat on the back and a kick in the butt, it’s much more likely to happen. Money is never the determining factor. If a church planter can’t gain his own funds, he’s not going to be able to start a church. When you start a church, you are asking people to give

up their life. You can’t do that if you can’t ask for their money.”

The CMCs allot a varied amount of support for each church plant—from Cole’s lean network of organic church planters who mostly work full-time jobs and start churches in their off hours, to \$250/month for one year from NorthWood Church for its church planters, to the Association of Related Churches’ plan of \$55,000 support for the average church plant. The Acts 29 network has mostly adhered to a policy that no funding comes until the church planter has proven he can produce with a core group that already is supporting the budding ministry.

The Vineyard Leadership Institute encourages its church planters to make geographical moves away from the mother church by providing moving-expense funds. “It seems if they plant nearby, they become dependent on us for people and they don’t do the hard work of pursuing opportunities to reach a new community,” Pickerill says. “We want them to concentrate on looking for new opportunities the first thing when they hit the ground.” Living out a preference and value on bi-vocational church planters, the Vineyard Institute also will provide three months of “job transition” funding while a church planter gets settled into a new



Vineyard Leadership Institute is sending out leaders, many of which are “homegrown” - they began their Christian journey in a Vineyard church and then go through the Vineyard Leadership Institute to plant Vineyard churches.



ERIC PICKERILL

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– Eric Pickerill

position in a new community. It also provides health insurance for one year. "Sometimes it's easier to get a job without having to wait for the kind of job that will provide those kinds of benefits," Pickerill says.

But most seem to side with Reeves and Xpansion, which has steadily reduced the amount it gives each individual planter from the group's early days of church multiplication. "We decided we wanted it to be more natural, and if someone was not willing to work to do this, we probably don't want them," Reeves says. "We want people who are hungry, not just hired hands—the kind of people who will do it whether you pay them or not."

3. Training up Church Planters in the Way They Should Go.

"It doesn't do the Kingdom any favors if we rush a planter..."

The pilot CMCs do the hard work on the front end to create a leader-producing farm system and put assessment processes in place to evaluate their ministry thoroughbreds. All of them are committed to putting unique church-planting tools in the hands of their leaders-in-process. From their experiences as church planters themselves, all the CMC leaders are developing training models that take into account the nuances of spiritual entrepreneurship that differentiate it from pastoring an established congregation.



March 6, 2005 marked the ground-breaking ceremony for Northwest Church Planting Center's Woodhaven Community Church. This church was started specifically to reach the unchurched, and so the couple asked to perform the ground-breaking had been Christians for only 5 days.

For some, such as Northwest Church Planting and New Hope, the training is formalized and has been developed with a long view. At New Hope's two-year School of Church Planters, participants often are given the chance to start Wednesday night services on other parts of the island that often turn into church plants. New Hope also has begun deploying some of its graduates to lead satellite locations.

With funding from Vineyard Church of Columbus, Vineyard Leadership Institute has developed a hands-on, five-quarter training/mentoring process that includes assessment, mentoring with a recent church planter in the field, a preaching mentorship and training in organizational issues related to church planting. The Institute doesn't provide any financial support for plants. Local churches use Vineyard Leadership Institute as their training center and send out leaders to plant who have completed training through the school.

Northwest Church Planting has adopted a "Draw, Develop and Deploy" model that could entail several years of preparation for a potential planter. Northwest develops church multipliers in partnership with local seminaries, churches and denominations through a two-to-three-year process that involves looking at healthy ministries, learning ministry skills, leading a ministry in one of its network church plants and launching a new ministry. "Seminary is a good training site, but not a good coaching site," Hannan says. "We want to put our planters with experienced planters. That way they can be coached and make a mistake on somebody else's ticket."

"We don't have them making photocopies ..."

Many of the CMCs have training programs of two years or less. NorthWood's CMC has a one-to-two-year internship that combines classroom instruction on the "Seven Processors" for designing a church plant with practical ministry, such as servant evangelism projects and starting and leading small groups. "We don't focus on particular models

of planting or tell people they have to do it a certain way," Roberts says. "We want them to learn how to think and design. That way, they can start a ministry anywhere in the world for any type of people and they aren't confined to one particular model." Redeemer Presbyterian has a two-year training module and works with leaders of denominations from Southern Baptist to charismatic to mainline. During the first year of the urban-centric training, Redeemer's trainees meet on a monthly basis for four hours, and then bi-monthly for two hours during the second year of classes. Fellowship Associates' 10-month Leadership Residency includes hands-on skills training and one-on-one mentoring from the church's pastoral staff. "They are here to get ready to plant a church-period," says Snider of Fellowship's training process. "We don't have our church-planting Residents making photocopies. They are very focused. They are in the incubator."

"The world cannot compete with a changed life..."

Other CMCs have less formal or event-based training. Xpansion hosts an annual "Advance" (versus a "retreat" – "retreats take you backwards," Reeves says) for its network of church planters, as well as regional training events on various aspects of launching or developing a new faith community. The Association of Related Churches conducts a Church Planter's Roundtable four times a year, two conferences each year, and plans to institute 12-15 regional seminars in 2005. Acts 29

substance of what their ministry is built on, and theology is becoming more important to them than methods," says Darrin Patrick, senior pastor of The Journey in St. Louis and one of Acts 29's regional leaders. "Young pastors are tired of a '25 steps to grow your church' approach. They crave right ecclesiology which will lead them to proper contextualization."

Cole's Church Multiplication Associates network focuses its training on simple, reproducible systems that move "unschooled, ordinary" people toward life transformation and turn them into catalysts for furthering a movement that now numbers in the hundreds of simple churches worldwide. CMA's Organic Church Planters' Greenhouse training events are conducted for leaders



NEIL COLE

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– Neil Cole

in a city or region over two weekends followed by regular monthly gatherings. According to Linda Stanley's article, "The M2M System consists of tools to assist mentors in establishing on-going mentoring relationships with emerging leaders. TruthQuest is a system for training emerging leaders in systematic theology. Students meet one Saturday a month for a year to be prepared to think theologically and also to pass that education on to others in their networks." Neil Cole says, "We want to lower the bar on what it takes to do church, and raise the bar on what it means to be a follower of Jesus. The world will always be able to compete with our preaching and drama and music. It cannot compete with a changed life."

"If you're not freaks, nut jobs, heretics or disgruntled people...get outta here..."

Whatever training methods they employ, the CMCs are laser-focused on training up some



"Ordinary" people can change each other's lives through organic house churches. In 2004, Church Multiplication Associates planted more than 300 churches involving approximately 4,800 "ordinary," life-transforming people.

of the best and brightest leaders for one aim: They want them to fly the coop. Driscoll would even say that church leaders have failed if they don't see a regular exodus of emerging leaders and groups of people who want to follow them. "We love to tell guys, 'Here's a check and some pills—you're going to need them—now go, get out of here and plant a church.'"

Driscoll and the other CMC leaders have seen that scenario played out numerous times, as young leaders develop a healthy discontent for what is being produced in their incubator church and they strike out to cut their own leadership path. These multiplication heavy hitters aren't offended by that. They applaud it. "You know you probably have a good #1 planter on your hands if he's a good leader and he doesn't want to go to your church anymore," Driscoll says. "He wants to create his own church. He doesn't want your backup singers and band. He doesn't want your people. He wants his own. You might have a high birth rate if you crank out lots of churches that look like yours and copy you. But franchises are not incarnational expressions."

4. Coaching Ties that Bind—the Right Kind *"Church planters almost always need more support than they get..."*

Now that the nest is empty, your job is done, right? Similar to a parent who never completely cuts the strings, CMC leaders work diligently—in healthy ways—to maintain a coaching connection to their offspring. Many of them have placed so many church planters in the field, they have had to move past a personal, nurturing connection in favor of regional networks and strategic partnerships to keep the Kingdom advancing. All of them have experienced first hand and affirm with great certainty that a Lone-Ranger church planter is in grave danger. "Church planters almost always need a lot more support than they receive," says Keller, who would set up multiple support systems of mentors and coaches if he could turn back the clock and

start over in his church-multiplication efforts. "Almost everybody who is planting a church is very lonely. It's a horrible feeling when you're planting a church sometimes. It seems like everything is resting on your shoulders—and in many cases, it is. In many ways, what they are attempting is nuts, so they need lots of love and support."

Most of the CMCs represented have devised some type of coaching system, with the directors of the centers usually serving as the go-to coach for questions and concerns. Those leaders also try to maintain at least monthly contact with planters, or put them in connection with other church planters within regional networks. "The last thing you want is for a guy to feel like he's out there alone, with no one to talk to or help him work through what's happening," Hannan says.

Stand by your man—and woman

Acts 29, which only supports men as lead church planters, and other CMCs are making sure the church-planting spouse doesn't get neglected in the process. According to Driscoll, that is a common mistake among church-multiplication movements and one of the biggest reasons church-planting efforts crash and burn. "We pay close attention to the wife," Driscoll says. "The barometer of the health of the man is not his church, but his wife. You don't just want to coach the man, but coach his wife." In the Acts 29 system, coaching happens on a regional basis with

**"CHURCH PLANTERS
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– Tim Keller



Some of the more prominent Acts 29 churches host "fishing pool" events to gather potential church planters. They find that church planters are drawn to each other.

lead-planting couples acting as coaches. “We want the wife to be able to speak freely about what’s really going on,” Driscoll says. “The average planter gains 15 or 20 pounds, funds aren’t coming in, he’s not sleeping at night, he’s stressed out. The wife is the only one who is keeping an eye on him, and she worries about him. We want to know that.”

“We don’t want to just pat each other on the back...”

As the CMC networks have grown, most have shifted to a regional strategy for coaching and expansion. Acts 29 has moved from a centralized, “home office” approach to regional decentralization. With regional outposts in the Northwest (Seattle/Portland), (St. Louis) and Northeast (Albany, NY). Acts 29 hopes to develop regions this year in Orlando, Dallas and Denver. While a central office staff maintains a web site and does some centralized training, National Director Steve Tompkins filters applications for the network and refers them to regional planters for follow up. “If you want to do 4 or 5 church plants a year, you can relate to one guy and a small board,” Tompkins says. “If you want it to get bigger than that, you have to move it into regions and shift from a board-driven church-planting organization to churches planting churches.”

NorthWood’s CMC has seen its GlocalNet church-starting network grow with regional “clusters” that are formed by a lead church in a major U.S. city. Those churches—now in nearly 20 different North American cities such as Dallas, Fort Worth, Atlanta, Tucson and Columbia, S.C.—meet monthly around the initiatives of community transformation, church multiplication and nation building. Some of the clusters are “adopting” unreached people groups internationally, and are beginning to do humanitarian work in



A NorthWood CMC, the Atlanta GlocalNet network, is adopting Egypt as their humanitarian aid project.

those areas—such as the Fort Worth cluster in India, Toronto group in Iraq and Atlanta network in Egypt. “We don’t want to just pat each other on the back and talk about how great everything is going, or cry about how hard it is,” says Roberts, who has networked with several world ambassadors to facilitate cluster work around the globe. “We want them to band together to transform their communities, start churches in their area and adopt an area of the world to work in. We haven’t done our job until our church planters are in a cluster that is doing that.”

“I wanted pastors who were willing to put their money where their visions were...”

Instead of forming a network out of its own church plants, Surratt built a collaborative group the other way around by pursuing established churches which from Day One were focused on church multiplication through strategic partnerships. With an initial core of seven foundational churches

that made a significant financial and “relational” commitment to becoming a church-planting group, there are now 40 churches that contribute financially to the group’s church-planting efforts and 90 affiliated churches who have been involved in at least one church-multiplication initiative. “I worked on selling a vision for church-planting and relationship,” Surratt says. “Most pastors are hungry for relationship and they don’t have the resources to do church planting alone. The emphasis was on relationship and banding together to make something happen. I wanted pastors from the very beginning who were passionate about church planting and were willing to put their money where their visions were. This was not going to be another ministry of Seacoast.”



Brad Larson is the Lead Pastor at The Life at Scottsdale, AZ, planted through the Association of Related Churches. In 3-4 years, the association has planted 18 churches involving approximately 7,500 people.

The key, Hornsby says, is that all the cooperating church leaders were church planters at heart who remember jumping off the ministry cliff. “Every one of them are church planters who did it the hard way,” Hornsby says. “They knew the pain, and they wanted to take some of the pain out of it for other guys coming up. They knew how to help because they had been there.” Surratt says the results of churches banding together to multiply has been dynamic on many fronts. “The value back to the local church is to be able to stand up and say, ‘Because of this portion of our missions money we committed to church planting, there have been 18 churches planted in 3 or 4 years, and 7500 people in church.’ It has multiplied the effectiveness of the local church.”

Baby Steps?

“It’s kind of like having babies...you want the first one to be cute.”

All of this world-shaking activity brings to mind the early church and its mind-boggling sweep of the globe, and begs the question: How do you get in on this new wave of church multiplication? “Set goals for it,” Cordeiro says. “But not weird, audacious goals. If you do that, you might throw any Mickey Mouse out there to plant a church just to make your goal. It’s OK to start with goals that are smaller and slower.”

Driscoll recommends hooking up with another congregation, church-planting organization or denomination with a strong track record. Don’t feel the need to recreate the church-planting wheel. “A lot of people have too much ambition, and they want to create everything and venture out on their own,” Driscoll says. “You don’t need to do that. Do one thing and do it well. Find someone in your area who is doing it well and do it with them first.” Whatever initial steps a church takes to multiply itself, Driscoll says, get some early notches on your belt. “Start with a winner-win first thing out of the box,” he adds. “Wait for an ‘A’ guy and don’t settle on a sub-par potential church planter just to throw something out there. It’s kind of like having babies...you want the first one to be cute.”

“What would it take to plant 10 churches? What would it take to plant 40?”

For all the CMCs that have seen their church-planting efforts explode over the past five years, the journey began with a penetrating inquiry from a Leadership Network scout team formed by founder Bob Buford. “We were challenged,” Hannan says, “with questions we couldn’t shake: ‘You’ve planted one or two churches. Now what would it take to plant 10? And after you plant 10 churches, what would it take to plant 40?’”



BOB BUFORD

According to Hannan, “A church that plants one or two others is rare enough, even heroic. If what you need is the praise from other Christians, one or two new churches is all you will probably launch. But if you’re after the praise of God, what will it take? We decided to no longer accept the status quo.”



ANDY WILLIAMS

Andy Williams leads his own communications firm, has started a community development effort to work with local Sudanese refugees and rebuild the war-torn country of Sudan and is helping launch a network of organic churches in the Midwest.



LINDA STANLEY

Leadership Network welcomes your response. The primary writer is **Andy Williams**. Editorial advisors were **Linda Stanley**, Leadership Communities Director for Leadership Network; **Warren Bird**, Director of Intellectual Capital Support for Leadership Network; and **Dave Travis**, Senior Vice President for Leadership Network.

Contact them via cindi.haworth@leadnet.org

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Leadership Network’s mission is to identify, connect and help high-capacity Christian leaders multiply their impact.

¹ From a forthcoming online article by Linda Stanley in On Track, available through EBA Community membership, www.easumbandy.com/join.html