

stuff you wish they taught in seminary



5 Reopening Phase Opportunities for Multisite Churches

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The multisite church movement is the most pervasive innovation in the local church in the last 20 years. Yes, even more impactful than the current shift to digital.

Across the country, this movement has generated tens of thousands of new connections between local churches and those living in the communities around them. Many multisite churches had already taken significant steps towards being online before the coronavirus crisis intensified in March 2020, so they were well-positioned to make the pivot into a purely digital season.

The reopening phase will be more complex and difficult than the digital phase we all experienced. **Multisite churches are uniquely positioned to navigate the transition to reopening well.** Multisite churches are filled with both innovative leaders and flexible structures that allow them to capitalize on new opportunities for church organization. Over the years, I've been astonished by the amazing quality of the many leaders at multisite churches across the country.

I am confident in the future of multisite churches. **I believe that this reopening phase may be the best time to be a multisite church.**

If your church is currently multisite, you are well-positioned to take advantage of the opportunities that are presenting themselves to you. If your church is considering going multisite, I would accelerate those plans now because this a unique time that could actually aid

your church in accomplishing its mission in the coming weeks, months, and years.

Here are five reopening phase opportunities that multisite churches are able to leverage in this season of transition.

Merger Potentials

COVID-19 and the ensuing financial crisis that is escalating across the country will be devastating for many churches. Although it's not primarily a financial decision, there is often some sort of financial incident that spurs a church's leadership to take steps towards a merger. **Often when a church decides to join another church, finances are a critical factor in seeing that transaction happen.** Finances are the proverbial "straw that broke the camel's back" that ultimately moves churches to decide to join another.

We've already begun to see an increase in church mergers in this season. If your church is a multisite church, now would be a good time for you to reach out to churches in your community who you've thought might want to join you or to those churches who have reached out in the past to ask about working with you.

The best way to position yourself as a lead church in a merger scenario is to help and care for other churches. We know that there are churches and church leaders hurting in this season. Position your team to help other churches as they make this transition back to reopening.

4 Actions to Take to Accelerate Merger Conversations in this Reopening Phase

- Buy a stack of copies of Jim Tomberlin and Warren Bird's book [Better Together: Making Church Mergers Work](#) and have them ready to hand out to leaders who might approach you during this season.
- Assign a couple team members to contact 25 churches within a 30 minute drive of your current location(s) to ask if they need any help.
- Comb through your emails from the last two years to look for churches who have reached out to you in the past to ask for help. Connect with them again.
- If you are a denominational church, contact your district leadership and ask them if there are churches in your region that might need extra support in this season.

Launch Multiple Campus Expressions

One of the advantages multisite churches have is they've already thought through how to replicate their ministry experience in different locations. That kind of innovation means that they've already thought through how to take the essence of their ministry and bring it to a new location. They know how to raise up teams in new locations and have developed creative ways to multiply their ministry.



In this reopening phase, many churches will be forced to think about different

expressions of the local church. We will see an explosion of innovation around a number of fronts including:

- **Home Churches** // This will likely include converting multiple small groups into a small home expression that may be driven around the digital video experience of your online campus.
- **Microsites** // This expression will allow a church to meet in a public space with a deliberately smaller attendance of 50 to 75 people.
- **New Retail Locations** // As we see [retail crumble across the country](#), we will have an opportunity to launch new campuses in locations that were unavailable to us in the past.
- **Traditional Campuses** // There will be opportunities in the future for launching more locations in both your immediate and surrounding communities.

3 Actions to Take to Position Your Church to Launch Multiple Expressions

- Drop your [current small groups onto a map](#) and look for a cluster of two to three groups. Contact those leaders and see if they would be willing to experiment meeting together for a season as a home church.
- Research smaller public spaces where you might be able to launch a microsite location. This could include condo party rooms, library meeting rooms, or local community centers.
- Contact a trusted real estate agent and ask them about creative retail solutions that may become available in the coming months.

Apply Campus Launch Lessons to Reopening

Most church leaders have never watched a church go from ZERO to EXISTENCE. Multisite churches, however, have experienced this with new campus launches many times over.

One of the advantages multisite churches have is they've intentionally thought through (and

then put into action) what it takes to launch a brand new campus. **The greatest success factor in a multisite church campus launch is the size and health of the volunteer core.** Prevailing multisite churches have worked through how to recruit volunteers and get them plugged into a team. In this season, the thing that is going to ensure the health of our campuses as they reopen is *still* the size and health of the volunteer core.

Figuring out signage and personal protective equipment is just one (small) part of reopening your church. Reengaging your volunteer core to serve in the mission is a way more important focus because **you'll need to re-recruit and re-train 100% of your volunteer team to serve in this next normal.**

Taking the lessons that you've learned from your launch process and applying them to the reopening phase will help your church be a leg up for those churches that have never started "fresh" before. Lean on that experience and apply those lessons to your church.

3 Actions to Take to Apply Lessons from Your Campus Launches to Reopening

- Pull out your campus launch plan and ask, "If we did all of this to launch a new campus, why aren't we doing this for the relaunch of our campuses?"
- If you don't have a launch plan written out, consider purchasing the online course [Launch a Healthy Multisite Church Campus](#). It's a total, step-by-step system for launching your first or next multisite campus and will help you work through what it'll take to rebuild your teams.
- Gather key leaders from your campus launches for a day and have them examine your reopening plans from the perspective of the lessons you've learned during campus launches in the past.

Reposition Campus Location Mix

This is a good season for you to step back and think about your current locations.

Are you overextended in some communities?

Are you underrepresented in a place where you would like to be present in this next season?

Do you have too many campuses clustered in one part of your community?

Are there multiple campuses that you think might be better served by merging them together?



This would be a great season for you to look at addressing some of the struggles that you had around your campus locations before COVID. You've been given a unique opportunity as a church leader to rediscover with what it means to be at the campus in this season and to find new or merged locations across your broader community.

2 Actions to Take to Think Through Your Campus Mix

- Start fresh. Pull together these three lists of your people and [drop them onto a map](#). What does this location tell you? If you were to start fresh today, would you put your locations in a new place?
 - Volunteers // Where do the people who volunteer in your church live?
 - Donors // Is your donor community spread through your locations?
 - Small Groups // What does your network of small groups tell you about your current campus footprint?
- Gather your teams and brainstorm around the following "what if" questions to get them thinking about the campus location mix:
 - If we had to double the number of our

campuses in the next year, where would we go?

- o If we had to compress the number of campuses we had, what campuses would we merge together?

Rapid Campus Launch and Experimentation

This is a perfect time for you to launch a new campus. (Really, I mean it!)

There's great uncertainty in the air. People are wondering what role God has in their lives. They're asking a lot of questions about what the future will look like.

In times of great adversity, the local church thrives.

Maybe now is the time for you to push a rapid campus launch in the coming months or to consider some sort of new experimentation by looking at campuses differently. Maybe your church should consider a new community that you haven't thought about before, or maybe this would be the perfect season for you to experiment with a different size launch.

Maybe you should think about a more narrowly defined campus, such as in a retirement community or a prison. This season is a perfect time for you to try new locations and the perfect opportunity to experiment.

We live in an age of innovation and now's the time for you to try something you haven't tried before.

3 Actions to Take to Increase Experimentation in This Season

- Unplug for a day of listening to God. Be silent. Ask him to give you wisdom for the next step. What ideas percolated during that time?
- Pull your leadership team together and brainstorm. Many churches figured out how to launch a digital campus in a few days. What if you took this season to figure out how to launch a new in-person campus in a few months or maybe even a few weeks?

- Connect with five other multisite churches. Ask them to talk you through their launch process. Is there something they have done that has enabled them to launch faster than your current campus launch strategy?

Get the FREE three-part video series designed to help your church launch more multisite campuses.

Is your church thinking about launching new multisite campuses? **Have you already launched a campus or two but are stuck getting the next locations launched?** Are you ready to take the next steps in your multisite expansion but aren't sure where to start? I'm releasing a FREE three-part video series designed to help your church reach more people through multisite church expansion. **The lessons in this series come from my practical experience of being in the driver's seat for 13 launches and from helping many other churches just like yours!** Here is what we'll be covering in this free video series.

- **Video #1: The Biggest Mistake Churches Make When Launching Campuses** // Build an approach to launching locations that avoids this mistake and your church will scale up to reach more people!
- **Video #2: Keys to Picking a Great Location for Your Next Campus** // Apply the lessons in this video and you'll find effective locations that will aid your church's growth for years to come!
- **Video #3: 5 Dirty Secrets of the Multisite Church Movement** // Finally, get an insider's look at the underbelly of this movement to better inform your leadership as you move forward!

[\[Click here to sign up for the free three-part video series today.\]](#)

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