



YOUR ROLE AS PASTOR

MULTI-CONGREGATIONAL RESOURCE SERIES

As the pastor, you have the unique opportunity to expand the ministry field of your church. Here are pastoral suggestions for making the multi-congregational ministry at your church a success.

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As the pastor, you have a unique opportunity to expand the ministry field of your local church. As with any ministry opportunity you will probably be the one to “make it fly” or “see it die”. If you are thinking of pursuing a Multi Congregational Ministry there are a few things I would suggest.

DO have a personal passion for it to happen.

DON'T surrender your conviction to a committee just yet.

DO pray and ask God to confirm that this is indeed a conviction and not just another “fad”.

DON'T move any further in the process until this is confirmed.

DO formulate a vision in your mind consistent with the community in which you minister.

DON'T try to duplicate what someone else has done in another part of the country.

DO shape and construct your vision into a plan that can be understood by your hearers.

DON'T be vague or uncertain about your plan.

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**DISTRICT
SUPERINTENDENT,
CANADA CENTRAL
DISTRICT,
CHURCH OF THE
NAZARENE**

DO make a Biblical, reasonable and visionary presentation of your plan to the Church Board.

DON'T ignore objections or concerns that members of your board might have.

DO pursue a positive response to the plan and involve key leaders in the implementation of it.

DON'T go it alone.

DO look for key lay people who can be instrumental in carving out a non-English speaking ministry group.

DON'T try to lead a non-English speaking group if your only language is English.

DO provide as much as you can to the group so that they can concentrate on “ministry” (free space, use of equipment, etc.).

DON'T inhibit the success of their reason to exist (to seek the lost) by imposing secondary rules and regulations that would seriously impede their efforts. (There will come a time when shared costs are appropriate but not yet.)

DO publicly promote the ministry of the new “congregation” in a very natural, this is what the Kingdom is all about, way.

DON'T make excuses for why we had to go in this direction, this is our calling!!!!!!

DO your best to promote a climate of equality from the very beginning.

DON'T try to establish equality when you are already way down the road, this will be interpreted as “tokenism”.

For Pastors and Boards who already have more than one congregation meeting in a shared space facility:

DO make it a priority to eliminate a Landlord/Tenant arrangement.

DON'T maintain or try to establish an “Authority” congregation.

DO meet with all pastors regularly.

DON'T assume that all is well simply because you haven't heard otherwise. You can only be in tune with what is happening if you are in regular consultation with your "peers".

DO create an atmosphere of equality not only among the congregations but also among the pastors.

DON'T abuse the privilege of your position as a catalyst.

Dr. Ron Benefiel, former pastor of L.A. First Church of the Nazarene comments, "At L.A. First we decided on a plan in which any one of the pastors is eligible for election to a two year term as chair of the multi – congregational board. Once elected, that person effectively/legally becomes the senior pastor for the church as a whole. In compliance with the Manual and to avoid confusion at the congregational level, we used the title "administrative pastor" rather than "senior pastor". One of the responsibilities of the administrative pastor/multi congregational board chair is to convene meetings of the pastoral council, a non-legislative coordinating group consisting of the pastors of all the congregations. In this setting, the "administrative pastor" is again not referred to as the senior pastor, but the "administrative pastor" and is the "first among equals". We found it advisable to keep the terminology of senior pastor for the pastors of each of the congregations to emphasize their authority with the people they pastor."

DO establish a contractual, working agreement.

DON'T assume that everyone involved will simply understand the system.

DO meet and pray with the entire pastoral/leadership team on a regular basis.

DON'T allow issues to go unresolved.

Dr. Tom Nees comments: "As helpful as the language of 'host/guest' may have been, it now seems inadequate to express the missional motivation of multi-congregational ministries.

The language of "Partnership" should define a covenant by which congregations agree to share space in a building. While the building may be owned by a congregation, when agreeing to "partner" with one or more additional congregations some new understanding of ownership and mutuality needs to be developed. For instance, requiring a "guest" congregation to pay "rent" to a host congregation is most likely a counterproductive way of sharing building expense.....

.....MISSIONAL PARTNERSHIP COVENANT

Missional implies that the purpose of multi-congregational ministries is to reach people for Christ and Church, not simply to make use of a building or pay expenses.

Partnership implies a level of equality. Some interactive structure is needed to guarantee that newly formed congregations sharing space are respected as full partners in all the decisions that affect the quality of life within the church building.

Covenant implies the spirituality of the relationship. Like marriage the relationship is to be entered into advisedly – for better or worse – after thoughtful reflection and prayer.

Multi-congregational pastors and District Superintendents should be strongly urged to implement a “Missional Partnership Covenant” in every multi-congregational site.

CONCLUSION

We have a tremendous opportunity to touch our world without leaving these shores. We believe that Church Planting is the most effective way to grow the Church. Traditionally planting a church has involved looking for a building, and paying high costs to maintain it. However, we have under-used buildings all over the U.S. A. and Canada; some of them remain idle from one Sunday to the next. Let's take a closer look at what God has provided for us, and then ask ourselves, “Are we using our properties to their maximum potential to reach people, all people for Christ?”

Let me remind you of John's vision again.....

“After I looked and there before me was a great multitude that no one could count, from every nation, tribe, people and language, standing before the Throne and in front of the Lamb. They were wearing white robes and were holding palm branches in their hands and they cried in a loud voice.....Salvation belongs to our God who sits on the Throne and the Lamb.” (Revelation 7 v 9-10).

Perhaps through your vision and creative energy, some of the people, who don't speak your language, and don't have the same colour of skin as you do, will be among that “great multitude” simply because you decided to establish a Multi – Congregational model right where God has planted you.

Ian Fitzpatrick.