

# A Multisite Church Model In The Rural Context

By

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# TABLE OF CONTENTS

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS AND DEDICATION PAGE.....	4
ABSTRACT.....	6
INTRODUCTION.....	7
AUTHOR BIAS.....	7
DEFINITIONS.....	7
SECTIONS.....	9
CHAPTER 1: MULTISITE CHURCH.....	9
1.1: INTRODUCTION TO MULTISITE CHURCH.....	9
1.1.1. SUBCATEGORIES.....	10
1.1.2. STRATEGIES.....	11
1.1.3. AGE AND SIZE.....	12
1.2: MOTIVATION FOR MULTISITE CHURCH.....	14
1.2.1. GREAT COMMISION.....	14
1.2.2. STEWARDING RESOURCES.....	16
1.3: BIBLICAL VIEW OF MULTISITE CHURCH.....	18
1.3.1. PASTORS AND THEIR PEOPLE.....	18
1.3.2. MULTISITE MAKES CHURCH A SPECTACLE.....	19
1.3.3. EXAMPLE OR SIN?.....	19
1.4: POTENTIAL PROBLEMS OF MULTISITE CHURCH.....	22
1.4.1. LEADERSHIP.....	23
1.4.2. DECISIONS AND STRUCTURE.....	24
1.4.3. COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT.....	25
1.4.4. VIDEO VENUE.....	26
IDOLATRY.....	26
DEVALUES THE PULPIT.....	27
PASTORAL CARE.....	28
THE GAP BETWEEN PASTOR AND CONGREGATION.....	29
1.5: MULTISITE CONCLUSION.....	30
CHAPTER 2: RURAL CONTEXT.....	31
2.1: INTRODUCTION TO RURAL.....	31
2.1.1: PICTURING THE RURAL CHURCH.....	32
POSITIVES AND NEGATIVES.....	33
SUMMARY OF RURAL CHURCH.....	37
2.2: PASTORING IN THE RURAL CONTEXT.....	38
2.2.1: AUTHORITY AND CHURCH GOVERNMENT.....	38
2.2.2: RURAL PASTOR BURNOUT.....	41
2.3: RURAL CONTEXT CONCLUSION.....	43

CHAPTER 3: THE GAP (MULTI-SITE IN A RURAL CONTEXT).....	45
3.1: INTRODUCTION TO THE GAP.....	45
3.2: SPIRITUAL CONDITION OF RURAL CONTEXT.....	45
3.3: MULTISITE HELP.....	46
3.4: LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT.....	48
3.5: MULTISITE PRACTICED IN THE RURAL CONTEXT.....	51
 CONCLUSION.....	 52
 APPENDIX.....	 55
 BIBLIOGRAPHY.....	 59

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS AND DEDICATION PAGE

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## ABSTRACT

Varying church models exist throughout the Christian church context. A multisite church model is one that has garnered attention over the past several years. There have been multiple pieces of literature written from both positive and negative perspectives. Within the framework of this thesis I examine multisite literature with particular attention given to the rural context.

This work highlights rural church practice within the community. This thesis evaluates the possibilities of a multisite church model and the possible solutions it may provide to a rural church community and those who minister within them. This work considers the declining health of some of the rural churches and their communities.

A multisite church model may provide solutions for a rural church and pastor. The literature review of a multisite church model and a rural ministry context provide insights into the consideration of a multisite church within a rural community that could be helpful to rural ministers.

The genre of literature is reflected in the bibliography and footnotes. The total word count of 15,668 (excluding footnotes and bibliography), does reflect the engagement of literature in both a multisite and rural ministry context.

## INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this thesis is to investigate the usefulness or otherwise of a multisite church model in a rural context. With the increased popularity of multisite churches; there have been books, dissertations, and theses written to examine and judge a multisite church model.<sup>1</sup> However, there is little material found for a multisite model within the rural context. It is to this point that I investigate the usefulness or otherwise of a multisite church model in a rural context.

### AUTHOR BIAS

I come to this writing as an insider; however, I strive to be objective and analytical as I approach this work. My ministry context is leading a multisite church with rural locations.<sup>2</sup> My ministry is further experimenting with the joining of additional rural settings and multisite ministry. I will highlight several of my own experiences as occasional reference points; however, they will not be the basis of my investigation within this thesis.

### DEFINITIONS

I will briefly define the various terms that will be used throughout this thesis. A *model* is a system or configuration used as an example to follow or imitate. Moreover, looking within the context of church and its various models I will define *church* by Doctor Ray S. Anderson's explanation of church. Doctor Anderson is the senior professor of theology and ministry at Fuller Theological Seminary. He states; "The church as community is more than a social entity; it is the corporate body of Jesus Christ. It is a presentation of his

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<sup>1</sup> Brad House and Gregg Allison, *Multichurch: Exploring the Future of Multisite* (Grand Rapids, MI: Harper Collins Publishers, 2017)., Geoff Surratt, Greg Ligon, and Warren Bird, *The Multi-Site Church Revolution: Being One Church...in Many Locations* (Grand Rapid, MI: Zondervan, 2006)., Geoff Surratt, Greg Ligon, and Warren Bird, *Multi-site Church Road Trip* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2009)., Brian Nathaniel Frye, "The Multi-Site Church Phenomenon In North America: 1950-2010," (PhD diss., The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2011)., *Barna Group*, "More Than Multisite: Inside Today's Methods and Models for Launching New Congregations" (The Barna Group, 2016)., J.D. Greear, "A Pastor Defends His Multi-Site Church," *9 Marks*, February 25, 2010, accessed December 28, 2018, <https://www.9marks.org/article/pastor-defends-his-multi-site-church/>.

<sup>2</sup> "Locations," *Bethel Church*, accessed December 28, 2018, <http://bethel.ag/locations/>.

own personhood, his own service as the Son of the Father in the power of the Spirit.”<sup>3</sup> This statement helps us see the church as more than an entity, but an extension of Jesus in His ministry through the work of the Holy Spirit, commissioned by the Father.

There are various models in which a church may function, one being multisite. For this thesis, I will define *multisite* as a “...church that shares a common vision, budget, leadership, and board.”<sup>4</sup> I would also add that a multisite church is one church that meets in various locations. Multisite is at times synonymous with megachurch,<sup>5</sup> moreover in urban settings; however, multisite is becoming a model that is used in various settings or church sizes.<sup>6</sup> Within the multisite church model, one area which has been overlooked is the rural context, yet one in five Americans live in rural areas.<sup>7</sup> Donnie Griggs discusses the oversight of rural America in the opening of his book. He summarizes an urban or city view of the culture and people who call rural America home. In this summarization, he quotes Princeton professor Robert Wuthnow, who stated:

Relatively little research has been devoted to small towns since the 1950’s...small towns were viewed as part of a declining sector populated by fewer people, and of interest more as the location of food production and tourism than as places where people lived. As a result, data has been available from census reports about the number, size, demographic composition, and economic characteristics of small towns, but little effort has been made to learn what residents of small towns think or believe.<sup>8</sup>

The opening of Griggs book, supported by Wuthnow, illustrates the oversight by the urban and city centers in regards to rural America. Therefore, I endeavor to highlight this gap.

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<sup>3</sup> Ray S. Anderson, *The Shape of Practical Theology: Empowering Ministry with Theological Praxis* (Downers Grove, IL: Inter Varsity Press, 2001), 122.

<sup>4</sup> Geoff Surratt, Greg Ligon, and Warren Bird, *The Multi-Site Church Revolution: Being One Church...in Many Locations* (Grand Rapid, MI: Zondervan, 2006), 18.

<sup>5</sup> A megachurch is a church with an unusually large congregation.

<sup>6</sup> Geoff Surratt, Greg Ligon, and Warren Bird, *Multi-site Church Road Trip* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2009), 14-15.

<sup>7</sup> *United States Census Bureau*. “Rural America.” <https://www.census.gov/library/stories/2017/08/rural-america.html>.

<sup>8</sup> Donnie Griggs, *Small Town Jesus: Taking the gospel mission seriously in seemingly unimportant places* (Damascus, MD: EverTruth, 2016), 18.

The United States Census Bureau provides the general definition of *rural* as areas that are “...sparsely populated, have low housing density, and are far from urban centers.”<sup>9</sup>

Rural may be defined in various ways, however, for this thesis we will work from the United States Census Bureau’s general definition.

## SECTIONS

This thesis is a literature review that will be divided into three sections. The first section will focus on the Multisite Church model. I will examine various materials that address the multisite movement. The second section will focus on the rural context with clergy and congregations. In the third section of this thesis, I will look at the gap found in the rural context with little to no multisite church model present and the possibility of considering this model within rural communities. This thesis will conclude with a recap of the findings and possible suggestions for further investigation and a more significant impact on the rural context.

## CHAPTER 1: MULTISITE CHURCH

### 1.1: Introduction to Multisite Church

A church that chooses to offer more than one location, places itself within the multisite model. Brian Frye describes a churches movement from a single-site to multisite, by highlighting Bird’s description, explained in his dissertation, “*The Multi-Site Church Phenomenon In North America: 1950-2010*”:

A church becomes multi-site when it offers additional worship services in new locations, such as at another church, nursing home, prison, gym, a converted warehouse, or school. For many churches, the worship service is only the beginning of their multi-site expression. A new sight or venue may be nothing more than a worship team with guitar, plus a speaker (live or recorded) with a message from God's word. However, the additional site can also encompass an almost endless variety of supportive ministries—as varied as they are of different types of people to receive the ministry.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> United States Census Bureau. “Rural America.” <https://www.census.gov/library/stories/2017/08/rural-america.html>.

<sup>10</sup> Brian Nathaniel Frye, *The Multi-Site Church Phenomenon In North America: 1950-2010*, (PhD diss., The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2011), accessed December 28, 2018, 4.

In one sense I agree with this description, yet in another sense, it is oversimplified. Moving from a single-site to multisite is not a haphazard move. It is a deliberate action that was preceded by planning, vision casting, fundraising, and significant research. Seeking a greater understanding of this deliberate action of moving a church from single-site to multisite will shape the following content.

This chapter provides an overview of multisite church models and the varying perspectives of their function. Additionally, this chapter will look at motivations, biblical views, and potential problems of a multisite church model. From subcategories of structure, age and size, we will look at a broad overview of these materials. This thesis will consider an evangelistic perspective as well as examining the stewarding of resources. This work will further examine a biblical viewpoint of multisite or otherwise. Additionally, this work will look at potential problems with leadership, decisions and structure, community engagement, and a video venue style.

### 1.1.1. SUBCATEGORIES

There are emerging subcategories for the different functions of multisite. Brad House and Gregg Allison have defined five subcategories.<sup>11</sup> The following subcategories may be viewed in the appendix, table one. The Gallery model is one church expanded to multiple services. The Franchise model is one church cloned to multiple sites. The Federation model is one church contextualized in multiple locations. The Cooperative model is one church made up of multiple interdependent churches, and finally the Collective model, which is a collection of churches collaborating as one church.<sup>12</sup> Each of these models function differently yet fall into the multisite church model according to House and Allison. Examining House and Allison's subcategories, they are differentiated by the placement of power and control. House and Allison define this as the "locus of power."<sup>13</sup> This locus of power is the "authority and the responsibility to establish vision, make decisions, and spend

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<sup>11</sup> Brad House and Gregg Allison, *Multichurch: Exploring the Future of Multisite* (Grand Rapids, MI: Harper Collins Publishers, 2017), 50-51.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid*, 50-51.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid*, 47.

money.”<sup>14</sup> This power and control are centralized within the Gallery, Franchise, and Federation models, while power and control are more localized to each site in the Cooperative and Collective models. The power and control of vision, decisions, and money, when placed centrally, may be perceived positively or negatively, depending on the strategy. I would argue that power and control may be placed centrally and locally. In my ministry context we centralize budgets, yet leave the details as to how to spend that budget to the discretion of the campus pastor.<sup>15</sup> Additionally, vision may be centralized and repeated throughout locations, but flexibility is given to make decisions locally to best see vision executed within the localized context. The decision as to where power is placed rests upon the overall strategy of a multisite church, which is illustrated in the following section.

### 1.1.2. STRATEGIES

Beyond these five subcategories of operation, we also find different strategies, which are defined by Barna Group.<sup>16</sup> Barna Group stated in their study five separate strategies found within the behavior and operations of multisite models:

Multisite Beginners: a single church with two or three total locations or campuses. Planting Beginners: two or three semi-independent churches, where the “daughter” churches are considered church plants. Multisite Strategists: a single church with four or more total locations or campuses. Planting Strategists: four or more semi-independent churches, where the “daughter” churches are considered church plants. Location Partners: a separate congregation meeting at, and sharing resources with, another church (for example a ministry reaching a specific demographic group, such as a young adult congregation or an international group with services in a different language).<sup>17</sup>

In their study of 222 churches, Barna Group found 24% were multisite strategists, 20% were planting strategists, 17% were multisite beginners, 21% were planting beginners, and 18% were location partners. The research and distribution within this study can be viewed in the appendix, table two. I believe this research shows two things. First, a church labeled

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<sup>14</sup> Ibid, 47.

<sup>15</sup> “Career Opportunities,” *Bethel Church*, accessed January 10, 2019, <http://bethel.ag/career-opportunities/>. A campus pastor is the local leader of a Bethel church location. He/She provides pastoral care, discipleship, ministry training and execution, along with conducting weekly church services.

<sup>16</sup> *Barna Group*, “More Than Multisite: Inside Today’s Methods and Models for Launching New Congregations” (The Barna Group, 2016), 10.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid, 10.

“strategist” suggests the intentionality of vision, planning, and execution. While “beginner” should not necessarily imply a less purposeful approach, it may mean that they chose a strategy out of necessity rather than intentionality. Various necessities could emerge such as: unexpected growth, building issues, and leadership changes. However, power and control decisions appear to determine each church’s operational strategy. From multisite strategists to planting strategists, we see the power and control reflect the spectrum of dependence found between church sites. The strategy of which a church selects, is not only based on the number of locations or power and control but also several other factors. Barna Group highlighted several additional factors for consideration: attendance, timing, financial stability, and expectations. When attendance is studied, those with higher weekend attendance fell within the multisite strategists and planting strategists. Although Barna Group does not offer a reason for this data, I would suggest it is again reflective of the intentionality of vision, planning, and execution found in the “strategists” behavior. As to timing, older churches were more likely to move towards multisite due to hitting critical mass or leadership change. Finances only became stable within three to five years across each of the multisite strategies. Finally, it appears that the leader’s expectations of managing a multisite ministry are common among multisite churches. A multisite church leader was uncomfortable through the initial expansion. However, the leader became more comfortable as the network grew beyond five and six locations.<sup>18</sup> The multiple components listed will determine the strategy in which a church functions. These factors are shaped by power and control, attendance, timing, finances, and the intentions of the leader. Therefore, churches moving from a single-site to multisite must consider these variances to effectively become a church in multiple locations.

### 1.1.3. AGE, SIZE AND LOCATION

Barna Group also showed there is a spectrum of church types that choose to become multisite. There may be an assumption that most of the churches that enter into a multisite

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<sup>18</sup> Ibid, 11-15.

model are younger congregations in the sense of their existence as an organization; however, Barna Group found that one in four churches are over one hundred years old when they launch their first multisite campus or church plant.<sup>19</sup> Additionally, the number of adult attendees across multisite churches range from eighteen to twenty-five thousand, per weekend.<sup>20</sup> Surratt, Ligon, and Bird augment Barna Group research by stating, “The multisite phenomenon is growing dramatically among churches of all sizes, bringing it soon enough to every city, every denomination, and every style of ministry.”<sup>21</sup> I believe multisite is becoming an accepted model in rural locations. Proof of such a strong statement may be found in leaders like Jon Sanders and Cody Cochran; Sanders, who pastors Rescue Church,<sup>22</sup> a rural multisite of three locations in eastern South Dakota and Cochran, who pastors Bethel Assembly,<sup>23</sup> a rural multisite in Texas. However, they are a minority. Even with the consideration of Rescue Church and Bethel Assembly, there is little indication the multisite church model is being utilized or documented in a rural context. Considering that one-fifth of Americans live within rural communities,<sup>24</sup> there is a gap found that is not highlighted by multisite church authors or experts. Barna Group, addresses “Ten Trends of the Multisite Movement” by Dave Travis.<sup>25</sup> He stated:

We’re also seeing expansion from suburban to rural areas, something documented in the 2013 Leadership Network Generis Multisite Church Scorecard: 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 larger cities within a three-hour drive. A North Carolina multisite leader notes: ‘We are reaching people in small markets and rural areas outside large cities.’<sup>26</sup>

Through this research, Travis discovered that out of 535 churches, 47% have campuses in

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<sup>19</sup> Ibid, 9.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid, 9.

<sup>21</sup> Surratt, Ligon and Bird, 15.

<sup>22</sup> John Sanders, *Rural Church Rescue: A Call To Restore Healthy Churches To Rural North America*, (San Bernardino, CA, 2018).

<sup>23</sup> “Staff,” *Bethel Assembly*, accessed January 10, 2019, <http://www.bethel-anson.com/staff/>.

<sup>24</sup> United States Census Bureau. Rural America. <https://www.census.gov/library/stories/2017/08/rural-america.html>.

<sup>25</sup> *Barna Group*, “More Than Multisite: Inside Today’s Methods and Models for Launching New Congregations” (The Barna Group, 2016), 40-41.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid, 41.

rural communities.<sup>27</sup> Although Surratt, Ligon, and Bird enhance Barna Group’s research, I disagree with their statement of “every style of ministry,”<sup>28</sup> due to two of the following reasons. First, according to the survey, there are 251 multisite churches, that have a campus within a rural context. The survey also stated there are 8000 multisite churches within the United States.<sup>29</sup> Considering the number of multisite churches with rural campuses, compared to the total number of multisite churches in the United States, only 3% of current multisite churches have a rural footprint. Second, this survey clearly shows there are multisite churches in the rural context, yet the gap of information, writings, and validity of the rural context is significantly lacking. Therefore, with a small imprint of multisite being only 3% within the rural context, coupled with the lack of information, writings, and research, this illustrates that rural ministry has not yet become a significant focus for a multisite church model. This information further clarifies the gap I will address in chapter three. This thesis will now consider the motivation behind multisite church.

## 1.2: Motivation for Multisite Church

### 1.2.1. GREAT COMMISSION

Many churches may ask, “Why do multisite?” So it is important to give some thought to the motivation behind multisite church versus other models.<sup>30</sup> Defining function, operation, and visionary future seem necessary, yet do these categories and strategies justify the validity of multisite existence? Scott McConnel poses this question in his book when he asks, “As we interviewed a variety of multi-site churches, we started by asking them to share

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<sup>27</sup> Warren Bird, *Leadership Network/Generis Multisite Church Scorecard: Faster Growth, More New Believers and Greater Lay Participation* (Leadership Network, 2014), 9, accessed January 10, 2019, [https://www.beboldacademy.org/images/uploads/Multisite\\_Church\\_Scorecard\\_Report\\_v2.pdf](https://www.beboldacademy.org/images/uploads/Multisite_Church_Scorecard_Report_v2.pdf).

<sup>28</sup> Surratt, Ligon and Bird, 15.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid*, 3.

<sup>30</sup> “Structure: Sovereignty of Local Assemblies,” *ag.org*, accessed November 10, 2018, <https://ag.org/About/About-the-AG/Structure>. “Within the fellowship of the Assemblies of God, there are two classifications of churches - General Council affiliated churches and district affiliated churches. General Council affiliated churches enjoy full autonomy, having developed to the point of where they are self-governing and self-supporting. District affiliated churches are those who have not yet developed to the point where they qualify for full autonomy.”

their story. What was their motivation for becoming multi-site?”<sup>31</sup> As we seek to discover the motivation, McConnell gives some insight into this question. One of the most significant elements was a focus on the Great Commission.<sup>32</sup> McConnell stated, “Multi-site churches are evangelistic. They have experienced growth and are growth oriented.”<sup>33</sup> Multisite churches have a Great Commission mindset that produces an evangelistic behavior.<sup>34</sup> McConnell highlighted a Life Way Research survey of twenty-five hundred adults where it indicated “...only 46% agree that they have a personal responsibility to share their religious beliefs about Jesus Christ with non-Christians.”<sup>35</sup> I agree with McConnell and Life Way Research in that an increased number of Christians do not take responsibility to share their faith. Therefore, the church must move people towards engagement. A multisite church model is one way to create engagement amongst believers. This engagement has been supported by a first-generation multisite pastor, Chuck Carter. He stated, “Among the churches I know where it (a multisite church model) is successful, it is because the Great Commission is driving it.”<sup>36</sup> I believe Carter and McConnell support each other and they collectively reveal a cyclical pattern, where a Great Commission mindset drives towards the consideration of a multisite church model. And it is a multisite church model that propels people towards a Great Commission lifestyle. Additionally, I would argue this behavior produces the need for a larger venue or additional geographical locations due to the increase of converts through this behavior. This behavior will also create a desire to reach adjacent communities. These motivations, which create behavioral outcomes, can also be supported by House and Allison. They state, “These Churches (multisite), grasping the missional identity of the church, are designed with the specific missional purpose to reach their city with the gospel as a

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<sup>31</sup> Scott McConnell, *Multi-Site Churches: Guidance for the Movement's Next Generation* (Nashville, TN: B&H Publishing Group, 2009), 5.

<sup>32</sup> Matt. 28:19-20 (ESV), “Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you.”

<sup>33</sup> McConnell, 6.

<sup>34</sup> Evangelistic behavior is based upon the spreading of the Christian gospel by public or personal witness.

<sup>35</sup> McConnell, 7.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid*, 8.

community.”<sup>37</sup> The mission of the church is a Great Commission mindset that drives Christians to share their faith, which in turn creates converts. With an increase in followers, a missional plan of reproducing church locations will be needed due to simple addition.

### 1.2.2. STEWARDING RESOURCES

Resources within a church are critical and can be harder to come by due to the voluntary nature of the organization.<sup>38</sup> When resources are voluntarily offered, there is a need to steward those resources well. House and Allison suggest additional justification for multisite is found in “stewarding resources (multiplying locations or congregations’ costs less than church planting).”<sup>39</sup> In this statement, House and Allison are summarizing Brian Frye.<sup>40</sup> Their summarization of a portion of Frye’s dissertation, at first glance, seems to carry some contradictions when looking at the totality of House and Allison’s book. The contradictory statement is later found with House and Allison in the following: “Often a church considers multisite or multichurch<sup>41</sup> because it imagines that the efficiency found in these models will save it money, this is perhaps the greatest myth of multisite/multichurch, and it has lured many leadership teams into great expectations for their new model.”<sup>42</sup> House and Allison suggest at the beginning of their book that there are benefits to resources when multisite is ventured. However, they later state that efficiency of resources is simply a myth. To House and Allison’s credit, they expand their statement, ever so slightly, by pointing out with greater complexity comes greater expenses. They continue to point out that money can be saved in certain areas, but expenses will increase in other categories, which will increase the overall cost.<sup>43</sup>

Looking deeper into Frye’s dissertation, we find that he highlighted a more delicate

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<sup>37</sup> House and Allison, 41.

<sup>38</sup> Jun, Sung Pyo, and Gordon M. Armstrong. “The Bases of Power in Churches: An Analysis from a Resource Dependence Perspective.” *Social Science Journal* 34, no. 2 (April 1997): 105.

<sup>39</sup> House and Allison, 43.

<sup>40</sup> Frye, 265-274.

<sup>41</sup> House and Allison, 14. “Multichurch is one church made up of multiple interdependent churches.”

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid*, 175.

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid*, 176.

point in stewarding resources. Frye quotes J.D. Greear's<sup>44</sup> remedy to growth and the need for increased space:

The multi-site strategy is a more financially responsible response to growth than building a huge building. Buildings are expensive. Large buildings are enormously expensive. They are also inefficient uses of space. Large auditoriums (that seat several thousand people) are difficult to use for any other purpose than one weekly assembly of the entire church body.<sup>45</sup>

I agree with Frye's point in becoming a better steward of resources, especially within J.D. Greear's concern of physical building needs.

Another aspect of stewarding resources may be found in ways that are not as tangible.

Frye highlights this as well, through the statement made by Surratt, Ligon, and Bird:

The advantages of being multisite include greater accountability, sharing of resources (stewardship), the infusion of trained workers, shared DNA (mission and core values), greater prayer support, a pre-established network for problem-solving, not needing to reinvent the wheel, in connection with others doing the same thing.<sup>46</sup>

I believe Frye, Surratt, Ligon, and Bird are accurate in that each of these points are critical resources for a church. These shared resources of not only finances, but also trained workers, mission, core values, prayer support, and problem solving are intangible resources that a church needs to be a successful organization of God's people. It is the intangibles that can become strong motivating factors in considering a multisite model of ministry.

Finally, I would suggest an additional resource is found within the overall focus of a congregation. A congregation which is focused on mission rather than only inward pastoral care will naturally multiply by living out the mission in conjunction with the gospel. Ed Stetzer and Daniel IM stated it this way:

Those within a missional church movement view themselves as "sent ones" (or apostolic). The central focus of the community is sharing the common mission. Evangelism and mission are synonymous in that both occur regularly across cultural barriers even within the same city. Success is measured in multiplication of churches and quality of disciples.<sup>47</sup>

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<sup>44</sup> J.D. Greear, "A Pastor Defends His Multi-Site Church," *9 Marks*, February 25, 2010, accessed December 28, 2018, <https://www.9marks.org/article/pastor-defends-his-multi-site-church/>.

<sup>45</sup> Frye, 268.

<sup>46</sup> Surratt, Ligon, and Bird, 40.

<sup>47</sup> Ed Stetzer and Daniel IM, *Planting Missional Churches: Your Guide To Starting Churches That Multiply* (Nashville, TN: B&H Academic, 2016), 86.

It is the focus of a congregation which shapes and directs the flow of traditional resources, such as finances, but it is the intangibles of a unified congregation's mission that create the specifications to where and how resources flow. This thesis will now consider the legitimacy or otherwise of multisite through a Biblical view.

### 1.3: Biblical View of Multisite Church

There are different perspectives on the validity of a multisite church model, regardless of its location. There are some who affirm the multisite model, while there are others who oppose it. The opposition to the multisite church model poses a question. That question reflects the intent of this section. The question can be found with Warren Bird, which he states in a chapter titled; "Are you sure this isn't a sin?"<sup>48</sup> In the following sections, we will look at the various concerns raised against multisite in regards to a possible biblical view or otherwise.

#### 1.3.1. PASTORS AND THEIR PEOPLE

Some people believe that a pastor should personally know each person who sits under their ministry. One of the concerns Bird points out is that preachers do not know their people in a personal way.<sup>49</sup> This concern partly stems from some multisite operations using video technology to replace clergy physically preaching at each location. I will address the video venue later in section 1.4.4. However, I would argue that successful preaching is not solely based upon knowing a specific individual personally, but based upon sound biblical delivery.<sup>50</sup> To support this argument, Bird highlights the Gospel being received in other ways beyond in-person delivery. Bird states, "I believe that these Bible teachers (Bird's childhood pastor and guest pastors) all could have taught via video if the technology had existed, just as people have come to faith by watching a Billy Graham telecast or listening to a recording from one of yesteryear's great gospel communicators."<sup>51</sup> It is this reference that

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<sup>48</sup> Surratt, Ligon and Bird, 198.

<sup>49</sup> Ibid, 203.

<sup>50</sup> Ibid, 204.

<sup>51</sup> Ibid, 203-204.

suggests the effectiveness of a sound biblical delivery to those who are not personally known by the pastor. Additionally, in the multisite model, there are pastors who shepherd each location with ongoing discipleship and pastoral care, which reaches beyond the weekend preaching and services.<sup>52</sup>

### 1.3.2. MULTISITE MAKES CHURCH A SPECTACLE

Bird states there is an opinion that multisite makes the church into a spectacle.<sup>53</sup> This opinion may be found in the objection to multisite stated by Bird: “The focus in multi-sites is often on the event more than the community, and people come for the show without connecting to the community.”<sup>54</sup> I do not believe there is credible evidence that would suggest that the focus is more on the event instead of the community. Without community, I would argue that a church of any size or style would not exist long and Bird would agree as he also states, “In our observations and conversations, we’ve learned that multi-site must build community or they die.”<sup>55</sup> Leadership Network<sup>56</sup> surveys show that multisite churches are producing great evangelistic impact and those impacts may only happen through a healthy community that reaches beyond the weekend experience.

### 1.3.3. EXAMPLE OR SIN?

An article written by Jonathan Leeman raises yet another concern with multisite, where he states, “There is no clear example of a multi-site church in the New Testament, only supposition.”<sup>57</sup> Leeman’s thinking suggests that those in favor of multisite are merely grasping for something that is not there. House and Allison argue that the first church was a multisite church.<sup>58</sup> They continue to describe the Christian church in the book of Acts and their primary day to day function:

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<sup>52</sup> Ibid, 149-151. Josh (campus pastor at LifeChurch.tv), as the campus pastor, personalizes the church (campus) and shepherds the flock. He spends most of his week training leaders, building relationships, and helping the Albany congregation reach out to new people while care for one another.

<sup>53</sup> Ibid, 204.

<sup>54</sup> Ibid, 204.

<sup>55</sup> Ibid, 205.

<sup>56</sup> Leadership Network. 2019. “How We Help Multisite.” Accessed January 18, 2019. <http://leadnet.org/how-we-help/multisite/>.

<sup>57</sup> Jonathan Leeman, “*Twenty-Two Problems with Multi-site Churches*.” 9Marks, October 1, 2014, <https://www.9marks.org/article/twenty-two-problems-with-multi-site-churches/>.

<sup>58</sup> House and Allison, 31.

The church in Jerusalem met day-to-day in a central location and the disciples' homes. In the large gathering place of the temple, the apostles preached and performed signs and wonders, and the believers enjoyed fellowship, gave sacrificially, worshiped, and prayed. Likewise, in the smaller gatherings in homes, the apostles taught and did miracles, and the disciples lived in the community, helped other disciples and the poor, worshiped, and prayed. This dual-structured gathering occurred regularly.<sup>59</sup>

House and Allison argue that the book of Acts points to the church of Jerusalem meeting both in the temple and in homes. Their interpretation is of the larger Christian church of Jerusalem meeting in various locations, yet still functioning as one body; thus, the church may be interpreted as an early version of a multisite model. Perhaps Leeman and House and Allison are both, right? Leeman suggests that the people were gathered together in one place by referencing Acts 2:46; 5:12; 6:2.<sup>60</sup> and it is his understanding of these passages that motivates his thinking. On the other hand, House and Allison make their argument with the very same verse of Acts 2:46, with additional passages from the books of Acts and Romans. I believe my previously stated question in regards to Leeman, House and Allison may be answered with John Piper's opinion highlighted by Bird. John Piper has been the lead pastor of Bethlehem Baptist, a church originally organized in 1871. Bethlehem Baptist went multisite in 2002 after John Piper came to the conclusion that the "Bible neither forbids nor mandates" multisite ministry.<sup>61</sup> Forbidding something would imply a banning of such an activity, which would be comparable to the concept of sin. Therefore, returning to the original title of this section and Bird's chapter titled, "Are you sure this isn't a sin?",<sup>62</sup> I would argue that a multisite church model is neither a sin nor a mandate. I believe the early church in Acts functioned much like a multisite church; however, I do agree with Piper in that there are no mandates for this model. In my view, multisite is not a sin, and the description found in the book of Acts depicts the necessity of meeting in various places due

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<sup>59</sup> House and Allison, 32.

<sup>60</sup> Acts 2:46 (ESV), And day by day, attending the temple together and breaking bread in their homes, they received their food with glad and generous hearts. Acts 5:12 (ESV), Now many signs and wonders were regularly done among the people by the hands of the apostles. And they were all together in Solomon's Portico. Acts 6:2 (ESV), And the twelve summoned the full number of the disciples and said, "It is not right that we should give up preaching the word of God to serve tables."

<sup>61</sup> Surratt, Ligon and Bird, 201.

<sup>62</sup> Ibid, 198.

to logistics, growth, and needs. Consider Acts 2:46 which reads: "And day by day, attending the temple together and breaking bread in their homes, they received their food with glad and generous hearts."<sup>63</sup> If the early church moved into multiple locations to meet the needs of the people, then how can it be a sin to do the same today? House and Allison support this perspective by addressing the multiple locations found in the early church through both Jerusalem and Rome.<sup>64</sup> They reference Acts 12:12, which states, "...he went to the house of Mary, the mother of John whose other name was Mark, where many were gathered together and were praying."<sup>65</sup> This text suggests ministry taking place in a home. Additionally, in support of this, Darrell Gaines argued the various locations of meeting in his dissertation:

The Jerusalem church met "in the temple and...from house to house" (Acts 2:46, NASB). Paul refers to "the church in the house" of someone four times (Rom 16:5; 1 Cor 16:19; Col 4:15; Phlm 2). Paul taught "publicly and from house to house" (Acts 20:20)...Part of the purpose for this section is to demonstrate the kind of argument multi-site proponents could be referencing to bolster their position.<sup>66</sup>

From the church's operation in Jerusalem found in the book of Acts we see a similar pattern in the book of Romans. Romans 16:5 states, "Greet also the church in their house. Greet my beloved Epaenetus, who was the first convert to Christ in Asia."<sup>67</sup> Additionally, there are various other passages of scripture that may be cited to support a multisite perspective.<sup>68</sup> Gaines examines various scholars<sup>69</sup> which point towards early Christians meeting in homes. He also highlighted that larger assemblies of people would have met in wealthier member's homes due to the size.<sup>70</sup> Gaines stated, "If church meetings normally took place in homes in

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<sup>63</sup> Acts 2:46 (ESV).

<sup>64</sup> House and Allison, 32-33.

<sup>65</sup> Acts 12:12 (ESV).

<sup>66</sup> Darrel Grant Gaines, "One Church In One Location: Questioning the Biblical, Theological, and Historical Claims Of The Multi-site Church Movement," (PhD diss., Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2012), accessed January 18, 2019, 98.

<sup>67</sup> Romans 16:5 (ESV).

<sup>68</sup> Additional passages may be referenced to support a multisite narrative. For example; Acts 5:42, Acts 18:7-8, Romans 16:14-15, Colossians 4:15, 1 Corinthians 14:23, and 1 Corinthians 16:15 (ESV).

<sup>69</sup> Gaines, 99-101. Vinicent Branick, *The House Church in the Writings of Paul*, *Zacchaeus Studies: New Testament* (Wilmington, DE: Michael Glazier, 1989)., Stanley Kent Stowers, "Social Status, Public Speaking and Private Teaching: The Circumstances of Paul's Preaching Activity," *Novum Testamentum* 26, no. 1(1984): 65., Jerome Murphy-O'Connor, *St. Paul's Corinth: Texts and Archaeology*, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical, 2002)., L. Michael White, *Building God's House in the Roman World: Architectural Adaptation among Pagans, Jews, and Christians*, 1990.

<sup>70</sup> Gaines, 101-102.

the New Testament era, and if these homes could only hold a relatively small number of people (as is often argued), then we can expect that citywide churches consisted of multiple house groups. One could see why this might be viewed as precedent for multi-site.”<sup>71</sup> Therefore, it is my opinion that this supporting narrative found in the book of Acts and Romans affirms that multisite is not a sin. This thesis will now look at potential problems of a multisite church model.

#### 1.4: Potential Problems of Multisite Church

Beyond the theological debate of multisite, there are potentially various problems with a multisite model. As previously stated, a model is a system used as an example to follow or imitate. Therefore, deficiencies may be found in the replication of the original product. If the original model of ministry has flaws, they will be replicated and magnified. David D'Angelo and Ryan Stigile argue this thought when they state, “Multisite will multiply exactly who you are today. Nothing more. Nothing less.”<sup>72</sup> D'Angelo and Stigile go on to say that when a multisite grows, it is not only the good that grows. Through my personal ministry experience, I would agree.<sup>73</sup> With each location added, it multiplies everything. For example, with each added location, there are additional church budgets to be managed, children's ministries to be resourced, additional equipment for technology and social media platforms to be operated. Any church has good and bad qualities; thus, it is not only the good qualities that multiply. For example: If communication or dissemination of information is not clear, accurate and consistent, then each additional church location will magnify this bad quality. I have experienced this deficit in my church<sup>74</sup> when we added the second location. I and the church staff were accustomed to communication within the same office and building complex, yet when an additional office and building complex was added with a traveling distance of 80 miles, it magnified a weakness in our communication skills.

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<sup>71</sup> Ibid, 102.

<sup>72</sup> David D'Angelo and Ryan Stigile, *Multisite Church Pitfalls: 7 Dangers You Cannot Afford to Ignore* (Middletown: DE, 2018) 1.

<sup>73</sup> “Locations,” *Bethel Church*, accessed December 21, 2018, <http://bethel.ag/locations/>.

<sup>74</sup> “Home Page,” *Bethel Church*, accessed January 19, 2019, <http://bethel.ag>.

### 1.4.1. LEADERSHIP

A key area for potential problems may be found in the leadership. The leadership of any organization is vital; however, even more so within the church. Carol Alexander states, "The Church needs well-equipped leaders that realize the importance and extent of this mission, and understand the enterprise to which they are committed."<sup>75</sup> It is the mission of the church to reach people with the revelation and love of Jesus Christ through quality leadership that is adequately equipped. The unpreparedness of leadership can be magnified within a multisite church model. D'Angelo and Stigile highlighted this when they state:

They (leaders) spend more time planning and dreaming about the campus launch than they do preparing for the entire ministry season (daily ministry to follow the launch). Before long, they find themselves short on staff, stretched for time, and lacking the systems they need to lead people to next steps.<sup>76</sup>

I would agree with D'Angelo and Stigile's observation. My church experienced such a failure due to the unpreparedness following the launch of a campus in Kadoka, South Dakota.<sup>77</sup> The campus pastor was not properly vetted or equipped to handle the day to day operation and stress of the ministry that followed the launch of the new church campus. House and Allison state, "Multisite has the unfortunate advantage of helping churches to expand faster than the leadership can grow to lead them."<sup>78</sup> Additionally, Alexander went on to say that "...the Church in the West is in decline, and ill-equipped Christian leaders who have not been strategic in spiritual, intellectual and creative leadership have left a vacuous gap that must now be filled."<sup>79</sup> Within the context of multisite, I would agree. It takes strategic leadership to pursue multisite, yet it also takes a strategically intellectual leader who prepares for the multiplication that accompanies multisite. Ill-equipped leadership can be a potential problem for any church model; however, a multisite model will magnify an ill-

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<sup>75</sup> Carol Anne Alexander, "Missional Leadership: A Christian Response To Cultural Shifts, Authority Structures And Moral Ambiguities In Contemporary Western Society," (PhD diss., Bangor University, 2010), accessed December 21, 2018, 52.

<sup>76</sup> D'Angelo and Stigile, 2.

<sup>77</sup> "Vision Sunday – 1.7.2018," *YouTube*, accessed January 19, 2019, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nVCsPI8YxRs>., "Bethel Church – Kadoka," Facebook, accessed January 19, 2019, [https://www.facebook.com/search/top/?q=bethel%20church%20-%20kadoka&epa=SEARCH\\_BOX](https://www.facebook.com/search/top/?q=bethel%20church%20-%20kadoka&epa=SEARCH_BOX).

<sup>78</sup> House and Allison, 25.

<sup>79</sup> Alexander, 52-53.

equipped leader. This point is illustrated by my previously stated experience in Kadoka and is further supported by D'Angelo and Stigile:

One of the most significant pitfalls lies within the Campus Pastor. Leadership sets the tone and pace for any organization. You can have the best strategy, the most precise plan, and the most excellent resources, but if you do not identify and invest in the right leaders for each campus, you are setting yourself up for frustration and failure.<sup>80</sup>

D'Angelo, Stigile and Alexander's observations are similar in that Christian leadership within the church, and especially a multisite church must be adequately equipped to handle the expanding needs and mission. I will look further into leadership development in Chapter three.

#### 1.4.2. DECISIONS AND STRUCTURE

A multisite church model is predicated upon replication within multiple campuses. Within that replication, another problem that can arise is the servicing of each campus. The servicing of each campus is leadership related, yet clarity of who leads various areas becomes critical in the structure. D'Angelo and Sigile addressed this concern, "When a church goes multisite without clearly defining a central leader for each ministry area, it is a setup to experience a number of challenges."<sup>81</sup> Each leader that resides over a specific area of ministry for the whole organization, for example, children's ministry, must organize, clarify, and manage expectations of ministry at each campus. I would argue that a multisite church model most often should operate through a central services model. A central services model may be defined as "making and enforcing decisions of brand, vision, finances, staff, and programs."<sup>82</sup> Without this centralized leadership, challenges develop: critical meetings and growth objectives are not met, feedback from campuses is not processed for improvement, key talking points are not replicated, and mission and vision dissipates over time.<sup>83</sup> Without accountability from a leader who is responsible, the goals, objectives, feedback, talking points and mission and vision are not properly executed and maintained. Therefore, within

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<sup>80</sup> D'Angelo and Stigile, 18.

<sup>81</sup> Ibid, 27.

<sup>82</sup> House and Allison, 59.

<sup>83</sup> D'Angelo and Stigile, 27.

the structure of replication, without proper servicing and responsibility, problems develop.

When a multisite church prepares to launch beyond three campuses, it needs to consider the validity of a centralized leadership structure. D'Angelo and Stigile state:

It is important to be establishing a centralized leadership team. These ministry leaders no longer work for a specific campus but instead take responsibility for resourcing all campuses with strategies and ministry plans. They also continue coaching campus leaders in their areas. This sets you up with a structure that can truly scale as the organization continues to grow.<sup>84</sup>

As a church intentionally becomes a multisite strategist<sup>85</sup> with four or more campuses, it may only be able to properly address challenges through a centralized services model.

Beyond the servicing of multisite campuses, there is the concern of a decision-making framework.<sup>86</sup> As the complexity of a multisite church model grows, so does the complexity of decision making. Without proper delegation of decision making, varying levels of leadership may not develop properly. D'Angelo and Sigile state, "Decision-making is a part of developing as a leader. When only a select few make decisions of consequence, only a select few are fully developing."<sup>87</sup> In looking at the greater care and development of a multisite church model, House and Allison's perspective aligns with D'Angelo and Sigile's when they state: "Good leadership relinquishes control in order to foster collective ownership, thereby spreading out the care for the organization among several people."<sup>88</sup> Spreading out the decision-making process produces a higher level of leadership development and care for each congregation. Without a decision-making framework, the structure can become a problem for a multisite church model.

### 1.4.3. COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Establishing a church campus in a community without engaging in the community through the investment of time and relationship can be a potential problem. When a multisite

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<sup>84</sup> D'Angelo and Stigile, 29.

<sup>85</sup> *Barna Group*, "More Than Multisite: Inside Today's Methods and Models for Launching New Congregations" (The Barna Group, 2016), 10. Multisite Strategists: a single church with four or more total locations or campuses.

<sup>86</sup> D'Angelo and Stigile, 32.

<sup>87</sup> *Ibid*, 33.

<sup>88</sup> House and Allison, 130.

church launches a new location, it must not only engage the team who will execute ministry but also engage the people the church intends to reach. D’Angelo and Stigile state; “While you are in the process of building a team you must also be building relationships with the people you are working to reach.”<sup>89</sup> A multisite church cannot rely on name brand, facilities, or technology to impact a community. It must, however, invest in relationships within the community it intends to reach.

#### 1.4.4. VIDEO VENUE

Although this thesis is not examining a specific operational style within multisite, I must address one operational style due to the amount of criticism directed at it within potential multisite problems.<sup>90</sup> This style of operation garners a high level of criticism, much like what was briefly presented in section 1.3.1 of this thesis. Although there are many critical viewpoints of this specific style of multisite, I will look at four common objections to video venue.

#### IDOLATRY

The first objection to this type of multisite model is that video venue creates idolatry.

House and Allison state:

Digitizing one preaching pastor and beaming his sermon-bearing image into multiple locations—throughout the city, the extended metropolitan area, the country, or even the entire world—fosters a cult of personality.<sup>91</sup>

Idolatry is a potential problem in any setting. In this argument, the real issue is a matter of the heart and not so much the church model.<sup>92</sup> One way to resolve the problem is by ensuring that those who preach are people of integrity and skill. Therefore, it becomes an issue of consistent integral behavior that has been proven over time. Detailed guidelines for those

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<sup>89</sup> Ibid, 46.

<sup>90</sup> Thabiti, Anyabwile, “Multi-Site Churches Are from the Devil,” *The Gospel Coalition*, September 27, 2011, <https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/blogs/thabiti-anyabwile/multi-site-churches-are-from-the-devil/>, Johnathan Leeman, “Twenty-Two Problems with Multi-site Churches,” *9 Marks*, October 1, 2014, <https://www.9marks.org/article/twenty-two-problems-with-multi-site-churches/>.

<sup>91</sup> House and Allison, 78.

<sup>92</sup> Ibid, 78.

who preach may be found in the Pastoral Epistles.<sup>93</sup> The Pastoral Epistles create a guide for those who would serve in the church.<sup>94</sup> More specifically, these requirements may be found in 1 Timothy 3:1-7<sup>95</sup> and Titus 1:5-9.<sup>96</sup> These guidelines direct the church towards a healthy leader and should be the primary standards for those who lead and preach within the church.

#### DEVALUES THE PULPIT

The second objection to video venue is the belief that it devalues the pulpit.<sup>97</sup> House and Allison state that "...the preaching is done by a disembodied man on a screen, which some critics consider an illegitimate means of preaching."<sup>98</sup> This objection rests in God sending His Son, Jesus Christ in the flesh to save humanity, whereas Jesus Christ spoke and performed His ministry face to face with those He encountered. This sentiment is echoed in the examination of the Apostle Paul's words to Titus, found in Titus 2:1, 7. "1 But as for you, teach what accords with sound doctrine...7 Show yourself in all respects to be a model of good works, and in your teaching show integrity, dignity."<sup>99</sup> In regards to this passage, House and Allison state, "These and other biblical passages are taken to signify that sermons are to be delivered by pastors who are present physically as they preach."<sup>100</sup> I would suggest, the rebuttal to this objection can be found in the letters written by the Apostle Paul to the various churches and their leaders. In Frye's dissertation, he addresses this criticism with

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<sup>93</sup> The Pastoral Epistles are three books of the canonical New Testament: 1 Timothy, 2 Timothy, and Titus.

<sup>94</sup> House and Allison, 79.

<sup>95</sup> 1 Ti 3:1-7 (ESV) "1 The saying is trustworthy: If anyone aspires to the office of overseer, he desires a noble task. 2 Therefore an overseer must be above reproach, the husband of one wife, sober-minded, self-controlled, respectable, hospitable, able to teach, 3 not a drunkard, not violent but gentle, not quarrelsome, not a lover of money. 4 He must manage his own household well, with all dignity keeping his children submissive, 5 for if someone does not know how to manage his own household, how will he care for God's church? 6 He must not be a recent convert, or he may become puffed up with conceit and fall into the condemnation of the devil. 7 Moreover, he must be well thought of by outsiders, so that he may not fall into disgrace, into a snare of the devil."

<sup>96</sup> Tit 1:5-9 (ESV) "5 This is why I left you in Crete, so that you might put what remained into order, and appoint elders in every town as I directed you-- 6 if anyone is above reproach, the husband of one wife, and his children are believers and not open to the charge of debauchery or insubordination. 7 For an overseer, as God's steward, must be above reproach. He must not be arrogant or quick-tempered or a drunkard or violent or greedy for gain, 8 but hospitable, a lover of good, self-controlled, upright, holy, and disciplined. 9 He must hold firm to the trustworthy word as taught, so that he may be able to give instruction in sound doctrine and also to rebuke those who contradict it."

<sup>97</sup> A pulpit is a raised platform in which a preacher delivers a sermon. It may also be an expression to identify religious teachings or sermons.

<sup>98</sup> House and Allison, 81.

<sup>99</sup> Tit 2:1,7 (ESV).

<sup>100</sup> House and Allison, 81.

the words of Sydney Greidanus, who states:

Paul's letters may also be characterized as long-distance preaching. They were like preaching not only because they addressed the specific needs in early churches but also because they were primarily oral communications. Except for brief conclusions (2 Thess 3:17; Gal 6:11; 1 Cor 16:21; Col 4:18), Paul did not write letters but dictated them to secretaries (amanuenses; cf. Rom 16:22) for the purpose of public reading in the churches. Like preaching, therefore, these letters were a form of oral communication. Moreover, in the Greek letter writing tradition, a letter was a stand-in for the presence (parausia) of its author. Since Paul was "unable to be present in person, his letters were a direct substitute, and were to be accorded weight equal to Paul's physical presence" (Doty, 36: cf. 1 Cor 5:3-4; 2 Cor 10:11). Listening to Paul's letters being read, therefore, was the same as hearing Paul himself speak—except that the speaking was long-distance and was committed to writing.<sup>101</sup>

I would assume the preferred method of communication would be face to face. However, it is to this point, Frye and Greidanus articulate that the Apostle Paul utilized the medium of letters to address those who he had been charged to lead.

#### PASTORAL CARE

The third objection is found through the lack of pastoral care within a video multisite. This potential problem is founded upon an assumption of the campus pastor's role or lack thereof. A response to this objection comes from House and Allison:

The responsibilities of the campus pastor expose the weakness of a critique commonly made of video multisite churches: they suffer from an inability to provide pastoral care, prayer, loving community, and discipline. In our study of multisite churches, virtually all of them address the concern and are committed to providing the full range of pastoral oversight and church ministry at all their campuses. The fact that the campus pastors do not regularly preach on Sundays does not mean they are inactive or unable to provide pastoral care and support in other ways. On the contrary, the campus pastors of whom we are aware frequently work with a team of staff and volunteers to exercise leadership in counseling, community group development, children's ministries, youth ministries, outreach, prayer, mercy ministries, church discipline, and other ministries of the church. Also, the resources available at each campus are potentially available for other campuses to use if needed. This sharing of resources reflects the strong collaboration desired and envisioned by multisite churches.<sup>102</sup>

This response to the criticism of a campus pastor highlights the broader scope of the role and duties this position plays in a multisite church model. Through my pastoral experience, I have discovered much of a pastor's duties are fulfilled outside the pulpit. So, it is within

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<sup>101</sup> Frye, 237.

<sup>102</sup> House and Allison, 84.

specific contexts pastors have experienced burnout from the expectation to perform within the pulpit, daily ministry, pastoral care, and family life. To take this point further, the collaboration between campuses can be effective in ensuring each community receives pastoral care even when a campus pastor may be absent due to vacation or sickness. Additional resources may be shifted from one location to another to fill the absence, which can alleviate pastoral burnout or the temporary absence of resources.

### THE GAP BETWEEN PASTOR AND CONGREGATION

The fourth potential problem within video venue is the gap of connection between the pastor and congregation. Bird highlights that this gap is perceived to be a personal one. In other words, the preacher does not know each congregant in a personal way, thus creating a gap.<sup>103</sup> I would argue there is an assumption of knowledge that would rest upon every pastor of any size congregation. This criticism is predicated upon a pastor knowing every congregant and their family in an intimate way. This may be possible for a pastor of a small congregation or a pastor with high relational and organizational abilities.<sup>104</sup> However, the sustainability of such a ministry may become unhealthy. I will look more at unhealthy outcomes in chapter two. The gap between the pastor communicating through video venue and congregant also assumes there is little to no engagement from the campus pastor who is typically appointed to shepherd the location receiving the sermon. House and Allison address this issue by noting that "...the concerns are really broader concerns about how to effectively care for and discipline members in large churches."<sup>105</sup> If the multisite church is not healthy and is not perpetuating good habits of care and discipline, it will not survive; however, if there are quality practices of pastoral care and discipline, then a healthy church campus may emerge. This potential problem of the gap also suggests there can be little to no impact through a video venue. Bird responded to this problem when he states: "What matters, it seems, is not so much that the preacher knows me personally as that the teacher's

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<sup>103</sup> Surratt, Ligon and Bird, 203.

<sup>104</sup> House and Alison, 86.

<sup>105</sup> Ibid, 86.

message is biblically sound, applied in a way I can understand."<sup>106</sup> Within this same context, Bird augments this thought by using the example of Billy Graham and his telecast's impact on many people who found faith while watching.<sup>107</sup> From Billy Graham's telecast to a multisite video venue, it seems plausible to have an impact if the message is biblically sound and understood.

### 1.5: MULTISITE CONCLUSION

A multisite church model is a fluid topic, which is ever changing. Brian Frye's dissertation written over four years and submitted in 2011 supports the idea that this is a fluid movement.:

Had I completed the dissertation within the first year, many of the citations and resources included within this work would have been missed. Many events, publications, and projects had not yet taken place. Ideas and trends critical to formulating the arguments and validation for multi-site churches were still in incubation only three years ago...It is clear in retrospect, that when Lyle Schaller said in 2006, "we are just in the first day of the first week of the multi-site church movement," he was entirely correct.<sup>108</sup>

It is this evolutionary process that has provided an examination of the success and failures of a multisite church model. Seven years later I am writing this thesis, highlighting works as fresh as 2016 and 2017.<sup>109</sup>

Advantages may be found within the structures and subcategories of a multisite church model. Through my observation, I believe you can find the right multisite model that structurally fits the leadership and vision operationally required for each context. The diverse spectrum of multisite, from the Gallery Model to the Collective Model<sup>110</sup> provide the flexibility to meet the needs of the context and congregation.

The strategy of multisite also allows for a greater spectrum of leaders to arise. In the 9 *Marks* article written by J.D. Greear, he observes:

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<sup>106</sup> Surratt, Ligon, Bird, 204.

<sup>107</sup> Ibid, 203.

<sup>108</sup> Frye, 295.

<sup>109</sup> Brad House and Gregg Allison, *Multichurch: Exploring the Future of Multisite* (Grand Rapids, MI: Harper Collins Publishers, 2017)., *Barna Group*, "More Than Multisite: Inside Today's Methods and Models for Launching New Congregations" (The Barna Group, 2016).,

<sup>110</sup> House and Allison, 48-49.

Finding the people willing to leave their church to plant a new one as well as the leader who can do it are both difficult! Yes, they should be willing to leave. But there is a gap between what people should do and what they will do, especially in churches that are growing rapidly and filled with young and immature believers.<sup>111</sup>

The connectivity of a multisite church model provides for a higher level of security for people to be a part of a new church location. However, the challenge for multisite is in the premature launch of unprepared leaders. Leaders at the campus level and senior level must be people of 1 Timothy and Titus qualifications to ensure a healthy church arises.

The New Testament narrative reveals the growth of the church and that expansion continues to the present day. Each context is unique which means that different churches will use different models and methods. Within any church model problems may be found. These problems range from leadership and structure to communication and the development of people. The Bible is not normative when it comes to models of leadership and church. However, every leader should strive to be biblically sound and upright in character. It is my opinion that there can be fruit when the structures provide for quality pastoral care and congregational discipline.

## CHAPTER 2: RURAL CONTEXT

### 2.1: Introduction to Rural

The sparsely populated countryside litters the majority of the American landscape. See Appendix three. It is this population<sup>112</sup> that may cause the rural areas to be overlooked. With twenty percent of Americans living in rural areas, there is an increased need to consider the rural context.<sup>113</sup>

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<sup>111</sup> J.D. Greear, "A Pastor Defends His Multi-Site Church," *9 Marks*, February 25, 2010, accessed December 28, 2018, <https://www.9marks.org/article/pastor-defends-his-multi-site-church/>,

<sup>112</sup> *United States Census Bureau*. "Rural America." <https://www.census.gov/library/stories/2017/08/rural-america.html>. "...rural areas are sparsely populated, have low housing density, and are far from urban centers."

<sup>113</sup> *United States Census Bureau*. "Rural America." <https://www.census.gov/library/stories/2017/08/rural-america.html>.

### 2.1.1 PICTURING THE RURAL CHURCH

In an article written by John Koessler, he addresses the difference between rural or small town ministry and large church ministry, typically found in more urban settings. In one portion of the article Koessler highlights the difference between the pastors and their skill-sets. These differences address the variance between the contexts of urban and rural. He points out that the larger church pastor tends to run the church more like an institution and has stronger administrative and business abilities.<sup>114</sup> Koessler went on to state:

In contrast to this "corporation" mentality, a small church is more likely to see itself as a family. Relational skills are valued more highly than business skills. In these churches, the pastor is normally a "father" figure rather than a CEO. This kind of image can pose problems for pastors whose training has primarily emphasized skills applicable in an office setting such as management and administration. This is especially true of pastors who serve in small towns and rural communities where the relational dynamic is a community as well as a congregational trait.<sup>115</sup>

These differing dynamics help create a greater understanding of the rural church context.

These dynamics identify not only the behavior of a rural congregation but also the possible clergy needs within a rural context. I agree with Koessler's view of a rural congregation's expectation for a pastor's skill set, in that, pastoring a rural church without the proper relational dynamics will produce adverse outcomes in smaller settings. Size will dictate the congregation's needs from its pastor. Pastors who struggle to properly navigate their environment will most likely experience strain between themselves and the congregation.

When a small church views itself as a family or community more than a business or corporation, there is incredible value added to the relationships of the church. However, there may be resistance to congregational improvements due to relational structures and loyalties. This thesis will now look at several positives and negatives to aid in the contextual understanding of the rural church setting.

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<sup>114</sup> John M. Koessler, "The Dynamics of Small Church Ministry," *The Master's Seminary Journal* 3.2 (1992): 177, accessed January 1, 2019.

<sup>115</sup> Ibid, 177.

## POSITIVES AND NEGATIVES

There are positive and negative aspects of any organization, including the rural church. These positive and negative aspects aid in the overall understanding of the rural church context. Mary Neitz wrote in a journal article about the observance of members who are committed to rural churches says that "...the 'Faithful Remnant' congregations, where members who remained faithful to their denominations and each other, despite declining numbers."<sup>116</sup> It is this faithful attribute that positively speaks to the committed character of those within a rural congregation. This attribute can be interpreted as stubborn behavior; however, it is a characteristic that is lacking in many church contexts. The Barna Group notes that "the majority of unchurched individuals (76%) have firsthand experience with one or more Christian churches and, based on that sampling, have decided they can better use their time in other ways."<sup>117</sup> This research highlights two points. First, the faithful commitment of those in a rural church is to be commended and reproduced if possible. Second, the experience of the individuals who felt they could use their time better, possibly speaks to the irrelevance of the church and the need to examine needed changes.

From Koessler's comments, we can also see the positive components of a rural context, providing a level of intimacy that is hard to acquire within a larger church setting. The committed characteristics, identified by Neitz, and the intimacy highlighted by Koessler shape a positive picture of the average rural congregation. Additionally, small churches will more often find a higher level of ownership among its members.<sup>118</sup> The ownership of rural churches members may be found in the efforts towards the building used for worship and even the care of fellow congregants. Neitz states:

Rural life is grounded in the experience of place. Understanding the significance of place is imperative for understanding why the three Methodist churches in

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<sup>116</sup> Mary Jo. Neitz, "Reflections on Religion and Place: Rural Churches and American Religion," *Journal For The Scientific Study of Religion* 44.3, (2005): 244, accessed January 1, 2019.

<sup>117</sup> Barna Group, "10 Facts About America's Churchless," December 10, 2014, accessed January 29, 2019, <https://www.barna.com/research/10-facts-about-americas-churchless/>.

<sup>118</sup> Koessler, 178.

Benton Township<sup>119</sup> have not merged. For us as researchers, the call to attend to place also calls us to the local and particular. But the danger of looking at the place-basedness of rural churches is that of lapsing into nostalgia.<sup>120</sup>

Neitz's statement is transitional and may be viewed as a negative highlight or warning for the rural church context. The significance of location and the identity that accompanies such a belief system greatly shapes the rural countryside. As stated within the Benton Township account, place carries significance, yet it can negatively become nostalgic. This is the beauty and plight of the rural setting. I am in agreement with Neitz. It is this type of behavior that endears the people to each other in one sense; however, it is this type of behavior that does not allow for needed change to reach an area or the communities upcoming generation. I believe the rural church nostalgia is rooted in a desire to oppose change. The world is ever-changing, and it is that rate of change that builds a desire for the past to remain in the present. Sanders states the hopes of his older rural congregants that "...the church is the one institution in our crazy culture that they can rely on not to change."<sup>121</sup> The perception of a changing world and culture creates a desire to hold onto the past. It is this behavior that may affect a rural congregation's ability to reach the next generation within its community.

Koessler highlights the components of small churches by pointing out that small size creates an inferiority complex for the pastor and the congregation.<sup>122</sup> Additionally, Dennis Bickers wrote a journal article titled, "Distinctives of Rural Ministry,"<sup>123</sup> where he highlights

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<sup>119</sup> Neitz, 244. In one of our research sites a single, half-time student pastor served three small Methodist congregations all within five miles of each other. In the northwest corner of the state, agriculture predominates in Benton Township, with corn and soybean fields a part of the landscape. But it is also a part of the state that has had a population decline of nearly 50 percent since 1960. This reflects the decline in independent family farming, with young people leaving the area to make their livings elsewhere. Of the 400 people who live in town, 40 percent commute outside for work. We placed this township in the decline/decline cell on our matrix—declining population in both the community and the congregations we were studying. But when we visited the congregations, the decline was uneven, and experienced in different ways in each place. In two of the three congregations, it was accompanied by strengths that reflected the particular circumstances of the congregation and its environment.

One of the churches in the pastor's three-point charge is the only building left of what was once a functioning rural community with its own grocery store, hardware store, gas station, and homes. The classic white building, with its curved wooden pews that could seat 200, hosts a service with an average attendance of six people. Even so, the members of the congregation are dead set against combining their church with one of the others in the area, where they say they would feel like outsiders.

<sup>120</sup> Neitz, 145.

<sup>121</sup> Sanders, 104.

<sup>122</sup> Koessler, 178.

<sup>123</sup> Dennis Bickers, "Distinctives of Rural Ministry," *Small Church Leadership Network*, <http://www.smallchurchleaders.org/the-small-church-shepherd/distinctives-of-rural-minis.html>.

points about rural ministry. Bickers agrees with Koessler in the perception of inferiority. Bicker labels it "poor self-esteem." He goes on to state, "Many rural, smaller churches struggle with esteem issues. This is especially true if they once were much larger churches." This mindset creates a greater focus on failures, rather than victories. I would suggest that a focus on failure reproduces more failure and an increased inferiority complex. This behavior will inevitably create a downward trend in attendance and participation due to a focus on failures. Highlighting failures magnifies poor self-esteem and poor self-esteem within a church context may repel people instead of attract people. Ed Stetzer mentions that "...what a denomination celebrates, it becomes."<sup>124</sup> When an organization celebrates the right things, it will eventually become what it has celebrated. Additionally, I would argue a multisite church within a rural context may help reverse failure by celebrating the Great Commission and the role of the church through its mission.<sup>125</sup> As Stetzer highlights the benefits of celebration, it is also possible to presume that a focus on failures will reproduce failed outcomes, such as poor self-esteem and declining attendance.

An additional negative component may be found in the assimilation of new church members. This assimilation may be difficult as many small churches are tightly connected with several key families as the main body of the church.<sup>126</sup> Koessler suggested that when congregations negatively affect assimilation, they believe they are operating in the church's best interest. He writes:

When these newcomers, one of who is often the pastor, fail to respect the past and the authority of the patriarchal families, the "old timers" perceive a threat to the very essence of the church. In a sense, this is a threat to "family" solidarity. They conclude, perhaps with good reason, that before long the church as they have known it will cease to exist.<sup>127</sup>

Within this quote we find descriptive words like "newcomers" and "old timers," which become categories for not only people, but also ministries. Donnie Griggs, pastor of One

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<sup>124</sup> Ed Stetzer, "What You Celebrate, You Become," *The Exchange with Ed Stetzer*, June 2, 2015, accessed January 25, 2019, <https://www.christianitytoday.com/edstetzer/2015/june/what-you-celebrate-you-become.html>.

<sup>125</sup> McConnel, 6

<sup>126</sup> Koessler, 178.

<sup>127</sup> Ibid, 180.

Harbor Church, said that the mindset is often apparent in small towns, which states: "Old is good and new is bad."<sup>128</sup> Additionally, Griggs mentions that "this cannot be overlooked, and this mindset has huge ramifications on how we do ministry."<sup>129</sup> Agreeing with both Griggs and Koessler, I would also suggest that without the recognition of the "old" in any church setting, especially a rural church, the "new" will not be accepted. Without the acknowledgment of past experiences, sacrifices, and leadership, there will not be a bridge built to the future and the inevitable adjustments that may accompany changes when newcomers arrive.

Bickers augments the argument by highlighting the 'revolving door' analogy in rural churches. He points out Patricia Chang's research where they found it is challenging to find pastors who will serve in rural communities' due to community size and pastoral salary.<sup>130</sup> Limited resources create a challenge in rural churches and I would suggest there may be provisional assets through the work and partnership of a multisite church. However, it is this ongoing issue that forces rural congregations to spend their time looking for pastors to fill the pulpit instead of creating long-range plans and performing ministry within the community. Bickers goes on to articulate the limited resources within the rural church. However, he seems to imply it was only a perception when he stated; "It always amazes me how a church that can barely pay its bills each month can suddenly find \$5,000.00 to replace a furnace that goes out in January."<sup>131</sup> Perhaps it is the lack of long-range planning or the revolving door of pastors that keep a church from having abundant resources? My experience has highlighted that resources will follow a vision. John Sanders, lead pastor of Rescue Church, stated in his book, "God often gives the vision before He gives the resources to accomplish it. Money usually follows vision. It rarely happens the other way around. In most cases, God

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<sup>128</sup> Donnie Griggs, *Small Town Jesus: Taking the gospel mission seriously in seemingly unimportant places* (Damascus, MD: EverTruth, 2016), 133.

<sup>129</sup> Griggs, 133.

<sup>130</sup> Bickers, accessed January 2, 2019.

<sup>131</sup> Bickers, accessed January 4, 2019.

gives us the vision before we realize the resources to see that vision become a reality." <sup>132</sup> In my own church, I have found this to be true. I believe this is what Bicker was addressing within the example of the 'church furnace'. A clear objective drives people to meet a need and the need of the furnace was merely a clear goal.

## SUMMARY OF RURAL CHURCH

Rural communities are often built upon families that have staked a claim for generations, whether it is through farming, ranching, or other local business practices.<sup>133</sup> The family engagement within the local church creates strengths many urban and large churches hope to obtain.<sup>134</sup> Within the tight relational engagement of families, over generations, assimilation of new people into a rural church may become difficult. This difficulty arises as the congregation believes they are protecting the intimacy and integrity of the church by keeping outsiders at a distance. Additionally, the ownership that is established over a congregation's lifetime produces care and concern for each other and their resources. The ownership a rural congregation feels is one to be valued and perhaps reproduced within a healthy measure. Additionally, this ownership is rooted at times in the identity of a place, meaning location. This identity weaves through not only the land but also the structure in which a congregation worships. The strength of this attribute can also become the weakness by creating a resistance to change. Changing not only location but also the look of a building that is outdated may prove difficult for those who have been a part of the rural church congregation for many years. With limited resources or lack of focus for resources to be directed, there can become a scarcity mentality. This mindset may create outdated environments, reduced outreach, insufficient support of a pastor, and end in a loyal contingent only to be labeled as the "Faithful Remnant."<sup>135</sup> With one in five Americans

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<sup>132</sup> Sanders, 38.

<sup>133</sup> Neitz, 145.

<sup>134</sup> Koessler, 178.

<sup>135</sup> Mary Jo. Neitz, "Reflections on Religion and Place: Rural Churches and American Religion," *Journal For The Scientific Study of Religion* 44.3, (2005): 244, accessed January 4, 2019.

living in the rural context,<sup>136</sup> it is imperative to objectively embrace the positive behaviors and critically examine the negative behaviors. Through the understanding and consideration of these previously stated attributes, it may be plausible to consider the validity of a multisite church model within the rural context. In the continuation of understanding the rural church context, this thesis will not look at pastoring within such a setting.

## 2.2: PASTORING IN THE RURAL CONTEXT

Pastoring in the rural context carries obstacles that may differ from urban and city centers. These obstacles range from authority to lack of key relationships in which may lead to pastoral burnout.<sup>137</sup> This section will by no means cover every component of the rural pastorate, but I will explore pastoring in the rural context in regards to authority and church government and examine possible clergy burnout within the rural church.

### 2.2.1: AUTHORITY AND CHURCH GOVERNMENT

In the rural setting, not only newcomers, but also pastors can be viewed with skepticism.<sup>138</sup> This viewpoint may affect a minister's influence in a congregation. Koessler highlights Layle Schaller's view of authority in rural pastoring. He relates:

In thousands of small congregations there are no seminary-trained and ordained ministers on the scene. Even in those small-membership churches served by a seminary trained minister, the pastor usually has less influence in charting the course than is true in large congregations.<sup>139</sup>

Schaller is highlighting that despite the level of education a pastor holds, they wield little influence in a small congregation. I agree with Schaller in that a diminished influence may be the case if a rural congregation views the pastor as a hired-hand. A hired-hand mentality is one in which the congregation has established an employer and employee relationship. This relationship would imply that influence rests most often within the congregation or key families instead of the minister. Sanders augments this writing that "...many church

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<sup>136</sup> *United States Census Bureau*. "Rural America." <https://www.census.gov/library/stories/2017/08/rural-america.html>.

<sup>137</sup> David Kinnaman, "Burnout & Breakdown: Barna's Risk Metric for Pastors," *Barna.com*, January 26, 2017, accessed February 8, 2019, <https://www.barna.com/burnout-breakdown-barnas-risk-metric-pastors/>. See Appendix, table four to view the Barna Risk Metrics.

<sup>138</sup> Koessler, 180.

<sup>139</sup> *Ibid*, 181.

members have a very flawed view of the pastor's role as it pertains to leadership. They believe that since they hired the pastor, then in some practical way he belongs to the board or the congregation.”<sup>140</sup> A flawed view, such as this, may create points of struggle for the pastor who has accepted the responsibility to lead such a congregation. Such a conflict may arise in decisions made by the pastor, in which the congregation disagrees. The disagreement may manifest into threats about the minister's salary. Sanders highlights this writing: “But the minute their hired-man steps out of line, they are there to remind him of who signs his paychecks and to whom he answers to.”<sup>141</sup> If the person who wields the power of influence is not the pastor, it may be a point of contention for rural clergy. The balance of power may be hard to manage until the minister has earned the respect of the congregation and been accepted as a partner, not a hired hand, within the ministry of the rural church.

Church government is a set of guidelines in which a congregation functions and performs the business and order of the church. The scope of this thesis does not allow for detail on this subject. Therefore, I will attempt to highlight several thoughts about church governance that may affect a rural church pastorate. Church government takes on many different forms and scripturally there is not one prescribed function. Frye cites Erickson in this matter. He states:

Attempts to develop a structure of church government that adheres to authority of the Bible encounter difficulty...The churches are not commanded to adopt a particular form of church order...On the one hand, there are strongly democratic elements, a fact pointed out by the advocates of the congregational form. There also are strongly monarchical elements, particularly the apostles appointing and ordaining officers in instructing the churches, passages highlighted by those who favor the episcopal approach...It is probably safe to say that the evidence from the New Testament is inconclusive; nowhere in the New Testament do we find a picture closely resembling any of the fully developed systems of today.<sup>142</sup>

Frye's point about Erickson's observation is to expose the perception that there is only one biblical way to govern a church body. The inconclusive evidence provides latitude to which a congregation may function to perform its mission. Sanders describes the rural church

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<sup>140</sup> Sanders, 25.

<sup>141</sup> Ibid, 25.

<sup>142</sup> Frye, 195.

governance he witnessed as a child and believes others may have witnessed the same structure. Additionally, Sanders found himself functioning in similar governance as a pastor.

He shares:

You can probably remember sitting through some long, boring, and at times fiery business meetings where church decisions were made. You quite possibly recall the pastor having some role in the meeting, but coming off as very weak and at the mercy of however ‘we the people’ voted.<sup>143</sup>

Sanders refers to this type of governance as a ‘congregational led government,’<sup>144</sup> which Erickson references as ‘congregational form’.<sup>145</sup> This congregational led government may reinforce the ‘hired-man’<sup>146</sup> perspective of the pastor. This reinforcement of the ‘hired-man’ stems from the placement of decision making and power. If major decisions rest primarily within the congregation, then the pastor holds little influence and power to direct the church body. Additionally, congregational led governance may create division in a church. Sanders notes; “Any time a decision is put up for a vote, the stage has been set for there to be “winners” and “losers”.”<sup>147</sup> It is to this point I would suggest that the ‘loser’ may be the pastor. I believe this is possible if the pastor is considered the ‘hired-hand’ and does not have the tenure to hold the respect of the congregation. Church governance may affect the pastor and create a struggle to make decisions and produce change at a reasonable pace. Some decisions are time sensitive and when a pastor is required to process decisions through a committee or congregational vote it may reduce the effectiveness of the decision. Shannon O’Dell, pastor of Brand New Church, addresses boundaries that may be encountered through a congregational government model. He shared a story, highlighting a problem that needed a decision. O’Dell articulated a situation where the parking lot of their church would often flood after a rain and become a muddy mess. The solution was to simply add more gravel to the parking lot. However, he could not do so without forming a committee and having a vote to solve the muddy parking lot problem. He recalls, “Somebody could have just ordered a

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<sup>143</sup> Sanders, 26.

<sup>144</sup> Ibid, 28.

<sup>145</sup> Frye, 195.

<sup>146</sup> Sanders, 25.

<sup>147</sup> Ibid, 29.

truckload of gravel five months ago! I thought. But we couldn't do it. It had to be approved.”<sup>148</sup> O'Dell went on to state. “Most rural pastors may hear from God but they can't go forward because someone else is leading the church other than them.”<sup>149</sup> The authority and structure of church government will affect a pastor. O'Dell and Sanders suggest that a congregational led government will prove detrimental to a rural pastor. However, I would suggest that if a pastor is moving into an established rural church, there is little change to be accomplished until the pastor has earned the trust of the congregation. In both O'Dell's and Sanders' circumstance, they eventually updated and changed the church governance after a period, when trust was established.<sup>150</sup> If a rural pastor can build trust, then perhaps they can adjust the placement of power and decision-making. However, it is this struggle of decision-making that articulates the rural pastor's context.

### 2.2.2: RURAL PASTOR BURNOUT

Pastoral burnout is prevalent throughout many church contexts. In Ruben Exantus' book he quotes a study by Richard A. Murphy, who cites: “80% of seminary and Bible school graduates who enter the ministry will leave the ministry within the first five year.”<sup>151</sup> According to Murphy's study, burnout among clergy is considered a prevalent reason for leaving the pastorate. The reasons for burnout may vary; however, burnout amongst rural pastors may have unique reasons. Greg Scott and Rachel Lovell conducted research in partnership with Rural Pastor Institute.<sup>152</sup> Over eighteen months they surveyed rural pastors in areas of loneliness, compassion fatigue, and burnout. Scott and Lovell describe the rural

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<sup>148</sup> Shannon O'Dell, *Transforming Church in Rural America: Breaking all the Rurals*, (Green Forest, AR: New Leaf Press), 2010, 43.

<sup>149</sup> Ibid, 44.

<sup>150</sup> Sanders, 28. “Over a six-month process and through a series of meetings, I patiently and carefully led our membership to adopt a brand-new set of bylaws in which our members would never cast another vote to determine church leadership decisions.”; O'Dell, 45. “That day was our first time during our tenure at the church to have no votes; but there weren't enough to stop the change. We had done it. In 90 days, we radically changed the way things had been done for more than 50 years.”

<sup>151</sup> Ruben Exantus, *Pastoral Burnout and Leadership Styles: Factors Contributing To Stress and Ministerial Turnover* (Bloomington, IN, Author House: 2012), xiv.

<sup>152</sup> Greg Scott and Rachel Lovell, “The Rural Pastors Initiative: Addressing Isolation and Burnout in Rural Ministry,” *Pastoral Psychology* 64, no. 1 (2015).

church pastor's role in the church and in the community. Their description helps create an understanding of the expectations on a rural pastor. Scott and Lovell state:

Small rural churches typically operate under the stewardship of a lone pastor who in many instances splits his or her time between or among multiple congregations. The rural pastor only infrequently enjoys the support of a church staff and therefore must manage all aspects of the organization along, including sermonizing, fiscal planning, managing the church office, and tending to the congregants' personal needs and problems. Pastors of small community churches discharge these numerous and diverse responsibilities while simultaneously representing and working on behalf of the church in the community's inter-organizational life.<sup>153</sup>

The myriad of expectations placed upon a single pastor begin to weaken the pastor due to the inability to disperse the weight and responsibilities of the pastorate. These expectations and duties of the pastorate are similar to findings of those who are in the field of social work.<sup>154</sup> High exposure to clients and lack of boundaries to disengage are contributing factors to burnout. Through studies of social workers, Scott and Lovell see similar patterns within rural clergy. Additionally, Scott and Lovell note; "Although sparse, the literature on rural pastors reveals some definable trends. The daily lives of rural pastors involve a sufficiently troubling degree of boundary confusion, role conflict, emotional exertion, and isolation (both geographic and social)."<sup>155</sup> Repeatedly boundaries and relational expectations are a cause for burnout. Exantus augments this when he states; "Being a spiritual leader of other people creates unusual relational dynamics and expectations."<sup>156</sup> I would suggest that these unusual dynamics, expectations, and boundaries are not isolated to only rural clergy, but affect all clergy. However, it is the isolation that may be a greater contributing factor that makes burnout among the rural pastorate unique. Exantus highlights, "61% of pastors surveyed admitted that they have few close friends."<sup>157</sup> Exantus is examining pastors in varying contexts. Yet if we consider Exantus' and Scott and Lovell's findings collectively, I would suggest we may have a greater understanding of burnout amongst rural clergy. Scott and

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<sup>153</sup> Scott and Lovell, 72.

<sup>154</sup> Ibid, 73.

<sup>155</sup> Ibid, 74.

<sup>156</sup> Exantus, 3.

<sup>157</sup> Ibid, 3.

Lovell state, “Perhaps these pastors (rural clergy) suffer provisional disconnection on a professional and collegial level. They are surrounded by people, as necessitated by the work they do, but they want a sense of connection to others who minister.”<sup>158</sup> Considering 61% of pastors do not have many friends and rural pastors are longing for peer to peer relationships, I would argue that a multisite church model within a rural context may be a solution to reduce pastoral burnout within rural communities. The network and synergy of a multisite church creates connection throughout its campuses and staff. This model of church may produce an environment where a rural pastor can maintain continual connection with fellow ministers at a collegial level.

### 2.3: RURAL CONTEXT CONCLUSION

The context of ministry in the rural landscape carries its own unique behaviors and clergy experiences. Pastors who move into a rural community to lead a congregation may experience resistance because they are viewed as the outsider.<sup>159</sup> Additionally, rural pastors may find themselves as newcomers to a congregation due to frequent turnover. However, over time the pastor may earn the trust of the congregation only to find themselves navigating a church government structure that does not allow for the pastor to lead with the authority that may be needed.<sup>160</sup> A pastoral newcomer to a congregation, facing a congregation led church government, may experience pastoral burnout. Sanders highlights these components when he recalls:

I once read a statistic that said the average pastor switches churches every 2-3 years. I’ve also heard it said that thousands of pastors quit the ministry altogether every year deflated, discouraged, defeated, burned out. While there may be many factors that play into these grim statistics, I believe one major cause for pastoral discouragement is the lack of ability for the average pastor to lead his church as God is directing him to do so.<sup>161</sup>

Sanders is suggesting that a congregation led church government is a direct cause to pastoral burnout. O’Dell amplifies Sanders opinion of congregation led government, when he writes,

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<sup>158</sup> Scott and Lovell, 91.

<sup>159</sup> Koessler, 180.

<sup>160</sup> Frye, 195.

<sup>161</sup> Sanders, 30.

“A pilot needs to be able to fly the airplane. If he needs to push the throttles up to make it over the next mountain range, does he go back and take a vote from the passengers?”<sup>162</sup> I agree with Sanders and O’Dell; however, I believe their statements are somewhat extreme in making their point and they do not clearly articulate how to change such a structure. Sanders and O’Dell do eventually make changes to their church after a period of time due to trust being established. However, I believe clergy are looking for a direct path of clarity to execute needed change in their church governance. Within the context of the rural churches we are considering, they are located within the United States. This context should advise us on how to navigate needed change. Frye highlights Robert Banks’ article on church government:

For modern people questions of order and government are often of primary interest. Organization and leadership are central concerns in any democratic and bureaucratic-rational society. This is also the case in church life, which is more democratized and bureaucratic than in previous times.<sup>163</sup>

Frye and Banks give a more realistic view which I would argue suggests a process of working within the existing system to change the opinion and operation of a rural church congregation.

A rural church pastor faces a unique landscape of church government and congregational behavior. Although there are negatives, which I previously stated in this chapter, there are positives to a rural church. The sense and ownership of place, which Neitz highlights is of great value.<sup>164</sup> The fellowship and family oriented connection of a small rural congregation creates ownership that stems from the identity of place. This ownership creates a care and concern for fellow congregants that may be hard to reproduce in larger urban settings.<sup>165</sup> The rural church context embodies qualities that should be highlighted and cherished in the greater context of church life, despite size and location. After examining the

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<sup>162</sup> O’Dell, 44.

<sup>163</sup> Frye, 195.

<sup>164</sup> Neitz, 145.

<sup>165</sup> Koessler, 178.

rural church context, this thesis will not look at the gap between multisite ministry and a rural church setting.

## CHAPTER 3: THE GAP

### 3.1: Introduction to the Gap

After examining the multisite church model and the rural church context, I will suggest in this chapter that multisite and rural may coexist to create a viable model of church ministry. I will highlight the spiritual condition of the rural context to support the possibility of multisite within rural communities. I will propose how a multisite church model may help a rural pastor and church. I will then discuss possibilities of leadership development for rural communities through a multisite church model. Finally, I will highlight that a multisite church model within the rural context is being considered and practiced in several places.

### 3.2: SPIRITUAL CONDITION OF THE RURAL CONTEXT

Rural communities are suffering spiritually. Glenn Daman relates that, “Rural America is rapidly becoming a spiritual wasteland, where churches are being closed because they are overlooked and cast aside by the larger church community.”<sup>166</sup> Daman’s statement seems broad and accusatory, yet I believe the root of his opinion may be supported by recent research. In 2016 Rural Matters<sup>167</sup> conducted research which created a positional white paper<sup>168</sup> to examine rural North America and more specifically, the spiritual condition of rural North America. These findings were presented at the Rural Matters Conference<sup>169</sup> in September of 2017. The research offered a county-by-county report of religious trends.

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<sup>166</sup> Glenn Daman, *The Forgotten Church: Why Rural Ministry Matters For Every Church In America* (Chicago, IL: Moody Publishers, 2018), 7.

<sup>167</sup> The Rural Matters Institute is a community for pastors and Christian leaders serving in non-urban contexts that was created to provide support, learning, and community for those working in non-urban contexts in North America. It is an institute of the Billy Graham Center at Wheaton College.

<sup>168</sup> Tena Stone and Chrissy Schaeffer, “Rural Matters: A Focus on Church Planting in Rural America,” paper presented at Rural Matters Conference, Sachse, Texas, September 19-20, 2017.

<sup>169</sup> Rural Matters Conference is a 2-day gathering that focuses on affirming, strengthening and inspiring the rural pastor and church leaders, while facilitating the need to plant vibrant churches in rural communities. <https://www.bgcruralmatters.com/rural-matters-conference-2017/>.

Much of the data collected was from the 2010 U.S. Religion Census.<sup>170</sup> Within the research, any number of adherents to a religious group were labeled “claimed” individuals, while those who have no participation in any religious group were labeled “unclaimed” individuals.<sup>171</sup>

Stone and Schaeffer state:

High numbers of “unclaimed” individuals live in rural counties in the United States. To demonstrate this fact in this report, 12 nonmetro US counties were randomly selected... In these randomly selected nonmetro counties, the percentage of the population that is “unclaimed” ranges from 8.7% - 79.0% and the average percentage “unclaimed” is approximately 50%.<sup>172</sup>

Stone and Schaeffer’s research augments Daman’s statement of the spiritual condition in the rural context. Approximately 50% of rural individuals do not have any religious affiliation and therefore highlight the need for further evangelism in rural communities. Therefore, I would suggest a solution to reach the ‘unclaimed’ individuals of the rural context may be found in a multisite church model. Previously I highlighted McConnel’s statement in chapter one of this thesis, where he states, “Multi-site churches are evangelistic. They have experienced growth and are growth oriented.”<sup>173</sup> McConnel supports this statement with Chuck Carter’s words. McConnel labels Carter as a “first-generation multi-site pastor”<sup>174</sup> who stated: “There has got to be something driving the thing (multisite). Among the churches I know where it is successful, it is because the Great Commission is driving it.”<sup>175</sup> Multisite churches focus on evangelism and have a desire to pursue the ‘unclaimed’ individuals regardless of context. I believe a multisite church model may provide a solution to reach the spiritual condition of the rural context.

### 3.3: MULTISITE HELP

Joining the efforts of a multisite church and the rural context may prove to be helpful on multiple fronts. Warren Bird and Jim Tomberlin highlight Justin Anderson about church

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<sup>170</sup> The 2010 U.S. Religion Census is a source for religious data at the county level. It reports the number of congregations in every U.S. county equivalent to each of the 236 faith groups. <http://www.usreligioncensus.org>.

<sup>171</sup> Stone and Schaeffer, 13.

<sup>172</sup> Ibid, 13.

<sup>173</sup> McConnel, 6.

<sup>174</sup> Ibid, 7. “first-generation multi-site pastor” is one of the first pastors to move their church towards multisite in North America.

<sup>175</sup> Ibid, 8.

mergers. Anderson notes, “We are better together than we are apart. When it comes to vision, ideas, leadership, resources, and prayer, 1 + 1 + 1 = 10.”<sup>176</sup> The significance of ‘better together’ highlights the capabilities that become possible for churches and pastors who join together in the rural context. Although Anderson’s statement is focused on the merger of two existing churches, I believe a multisite church model within the rural context may come to fruition through both mergers and new church plants. I experienced this in my church context when Edgemont Community Church in Edgemont, South Dakota merged with Bethel Church.<sup>177</sup> Edgemont is a rural community with a population of less than 800.<sup>178</sup> Edgemont Community Church did not have a pastor and was on the verge of closing its doors when they merged with Bethel Church. Today, the Edgemont church is a vibrant and growing church in the community. The improved health of the Edgemont church may be contributed to the idea of ‘better together’.

Further examining the idea of ‘better together,’ I would suggest that a multisite church model aids the pastor in resources, leadership, and avoidance of burnout. Frank Damazio illustrates expectations of a pastor through a hypothetical minister named “Pastor Jones, superstar.”<sup>179</sup> This autocratic leader handles everything from preaching to administration and fund raising, yet this minister is not realistic. According to Damazio, “The reality is that one-man leadership is limited in both style and effectiveness.”<sup>180</sup> The limitations of a pastor are what highlight the need for a team approach in ministry, which undergirds the idea of ‘better together’ and suggests the need to combine efforts through a multisite church model. Additionally, Damazio notes, “One person simply cannot carry the burden of leadership alone without paying a price physically, emotionally and spiritually...In addition to causing burnout in the lead pastor, a one-man operation destroys leadership in

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<sup>176</sup> Jim Tomberlin and Warren Bird, *Better Together: Making Church Mergers Work* (San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass A Wiley Imprint, 2012), 13.

<sup>177</sup> “Locations,” *Bethel Church*, accessed February 8, 2019, <http://bethel.ag/locations/>.

<sup>178</sup> *Edgemont, South Dakota*, accessed February 8, 2019, <https://www.cityofedgemont.org>.

<sup>179</sup> Frank Damazio, *Life Changing Leadership: Identifying and Developing Your Team’s Full Potential* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2013), 56.

<sup>180</sup> Damazio, 56.

others...”<sup>181</sup> A leadership approach that utilizes a team is effective within any church setting. However, a team approach may be more effective through a multisite church model due to chosen expansion. The effectiveness of a team approach, which may be realized through a multisite model, may combat burnout and unrealistic expectations of a pastor within the rural context. Damazio is augmented by Scott and Lovell when they share, “Small rural churches typically operate under the stewardship of a lone pastor.”<sup>182</sup> A pastor operating on their own, without a team, may produce weakness and insufficiency throughout the church. Damazio also writes, “The cultural model of the lead pastor being the only person to do the work of pastoring or other forms of ministry produces weak churches, and weak churches do not grow.”<sup>183</sup> Therefore, I would suggest it is the strength of a multisite church that creates a team approach to which strengthens a congregation and its mission. Churches that choose to operate within a multisite model will expand to varying points.<sup>184</sup> This expansion may force teams to increase their leadership development and training. It is to this end that we may see a multisite church model help the rural pastor and church fulfill its mission and raise up leaders for the future.

### 3.4: LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT

Leadership development is critical in any organization, yet developing leaders within the church context may be of the utmost importance. Alexander shares Bill Hybels thoughts when writing, “Bill Hybels asserts that the reason why Christian Leadership is important is because the Church is the hope of the world and the hope of the Church is its leadership.”<sup>185</sup> Church leadership is the mechanism that will propel a church towards health and its mission to which it is committed.<sup>186</sup> A multisite church model becomes a unique entity for developing leaders. Stetzer states:

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<sup>181</sup> Damazio, 57.

<sup>182</sup> Scott and Lovell, 72.

<sup>183</sup> Damazio, 57.

<sup>184</sup> When a church becomes a multisite, it requires that church leadership positions increase and multiply. For example, when a second location is added, the kids ministry will need to double its leadership to accommodate the second location.

<sup>185</sup> Alexander, 52.

<sup>186</sup> Ibid, 52.

When a church decides to go multisite, a greater number of leadership and volunteer positions open up. In fact, “88% of churches report that going multisite increased the role of lay participation.” At the time a church decides to go multisite and start their first campus, often many pew sitters want to volunteer and lead but just do not see the right roles from them. By starting a new campus, they see tangible opportunities and needs they can fill. Consequently, when more positions open up and lay participation increases, the harvest field is ripe to develop these volunteers into future leaders.<sup>187</sup>

Stetzer is highlighting an increase in engagement amongst church attendees when a multisite model is enacted. This participation will then develop future leaders. McConnell augments Stetzer with comments from pastor Rick Rusaw. Rusaw notes:

With both launches (opening of church campuses) we found people who were part of our congregation yet had never really found a way to be substantially involved in serving. Interestingly enough, all of our current campus pastors were volunteers in the life of our church on our main campus.<sup>188</sup>

Both Stetzer and McConnell illustrate a greater level of engagement began through the launch of a multisite church model. This engagement eventually moved congregants from volunteers to key church leaders. Through these findings, I would argue that leadership development is better facilitated when there is an understanding of the need. Alexander adds to this notion by stating, “The Church needs well equipped leaders that realize the importance and extent of the mission, and understand the enterprise to which they are committed.”<sup>189</sup> A realization for properly equipped church leaders begins with an understanding of the Church’s mission. A multisite church model may create such a call for future church leaders through its mission.

A multisite church model also forces church leadership to properly align its priorities. Damazio suggests that senior church leadership should properly use their time by investing in leaders. He argues, “The main focus of the lead pastor should be to equip current leaders and to develop future leaders.”<sup>190</sup> Considering Damazio’s suggested leadership focus, I would suggest that a multisite church model highlights the importance of current and future leadership development in both the congregants and the senior church leadership. It is the

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<sup>187</sup> Stetzer and IM, 118.

<sup>188</sup> McConnell, 119.

<sup>189</sup> Alexander, 52.

<sup>190</sup> Damazio, 65.

call to action among congregants to participate in a multisite model which elevates volunteers to engage in a leadership development process. This realignment of a church leader's time may shift a congregation's behavior to meet the demands of the multisite, which in turn can fuel the Church's mission.

Developing leadership within a multisite church model can occur when a team works on decision-making. D'Angelo and Stigile urge, "Decision-making is a part of developing as a leader. When only a select few make decisions of consequence, only a select few are fully developing."<sup>191</sup> Allowing ownership among leaders creates moments to make key decisions and learn from their choices. Whether a decision results in success or failure, developing leaders will learn from the outcomes of their decisions. McConnell and D'Angelo and Stigile agree in the development of leadership. McConnell shares, "When I have my leadership team meetings, I don't necessarily come with the answers...I try to get all their input...So giving people that ownership and buy-in is especially key..."<sup>192</sup> Considering a multisite church in the rural context, I would suggest that if a rural congregation understood its mission, it may influence the congregation's focus and therefore capitalize on the inherent ownership of its rural church body. Koessler highlights ownership among rural congregants. He states, "Because the small church sees itself as a family, the feeling of personal responsibility is more intense among its members. This produces a strong sense of ownership for the church's ministries."<sup>193</sup> It is the ownership of decision-making that develops leaders. Therefore, leadership development may be accepted through the behaviors of a rural church congregation.

Leadership development is an expansive topic that this thesis will not be able to adequately address. However, a multisite church model within the rural context may produce a higher level of engagement within local congregants when the church's mission is prioritized. Additionally, multisite increases the burden of participation which can assist in

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<sup>191</sup> D'Angelo and Stigile, 33.

<sup>192</sup> McConnell, 121.

<sup>193</sup> Koessler, 178.

elevating future church leadership. Finally, a multisite church model may work well within the rural context by establishing leadership through decision-making and ownership, which is a strength among rural communities.

### 3.5: MULTISITE PRACTICED IN THE RURAL CONTEXT

A multisite church model in the rural context is not prevalent; however, it is being practiced in various rural locations throughout North America. O'Dell was one of the first to document his multisite experience in the rural context through his book in 2010.<sup>194</sup> O'Dell recalls:

We realized that with the proper use of technology, we could multiply what we were doing in different physical locations, if we stayed fully committed to our vision, attitude, development of servant leadership, maintenance of a proper structure of understanding, and did it all with enduring excellence. Thirteen months and three weeks after moving into our new building, we ended up with five campuses.<sup>195</sup>

O'Dell's expansion was a response to meeting needs in various communities surrounding his location. O'Dell shared that a family was commuting over 75 miles to attend their church, which encouraged them to add another campus in the commuting families' town of 980 people.<sup>196</sup>

Jon Sanders pastors Rescue Church, which is a rural multisite in eastern South Dakota.<sup>197</sup> Rescue Church has three physical locations along with an online campus.

Sanders is frequently asked about multisite in rural areas and he briefly addresses multisite in the rural context in the final pages of his book. Sanders notes:

Essentially, the thinking is that because of the challenge of limited resources almost all small-town and rural churches have to deal with, utilizing multi-site to reach a region beyond their small town is simply out of the question. I'm here to tell you that multi-site can and does work in the rural context.<sup>198</sup>

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<sup>194</sup> Shannon O'Dell, *Transforming Church in Rural America: Breaking all the Rurals*, (Green Forest, AR: New Leaf Press), 2010.

<sup>195</sup> O'Dell, 175.

<sup>196</sup> Ibid, 175.

<sup>197</sup> Sanders, 10.

<sup>198</sup> Ibid, 117.

Sanders suggests that a multisite church model within the rural context is possible even with limited resources.<sup>199</sup> He goes on to challenge the reader to consider God's direction, the churches overall vision, the structure of leadership, and the need for a team to properly execute a multisite church model within the rural context.<sup>200</sup>

Griggs pastors One Harbor Church in North Carolina where they operate in multiple locations within rural North Carolina. Griggs states:

We are a couple of years past the first multisite campus and are now moving on to begin working towards our fourth location. In just the past couple of years, I have seen the confusion and hostility around multisite change drastically because we did it and pulled it off.<sup>201</sup>

Griggs briefly highlights the skepticism found within the rural context about a multisite church model. The skepticism subsided after Griggs and his church executed the multisite model with success. Griggs goes on to articulate his desire to experiment with video venue in a rural context so they can expedite their impact within their region.<sup>202</sup> This style of multisite may increase the speed of multiplication; however, it could be met with skepticism, much like the original launch of multisite.

I have highlighted these churches as they are documented in writing through various books, which are cited in this work. There are other multisite churches in rural contexts, which are proving to be successful.<sup>203</sup> However, when considering the totality of multisite, there are still very few within the rural context.

## Conclusion

In this thesis, I have reviewed the multisite church model and some of the literature that has been produced. Much of the literature produced provides both positive and negative opinion of the multisite church model. Multisite churches may operate in various forms, yet

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<sup>199</sup> Churches with limited resources who started multiple campuses: Rescue Church in South Dakota, One Harbor Church in North Carolina, Brand New Church in Arkansas, Bethel Church in South Dakota.

<sup>200</sup> Sanders, 117-119.

<sup>201</sup> Griggs, 133.

<sup>202</sup> Ibid, 134.

<sup>203</sup> *Bethel Church*. "Locations." accessed February 15, 2019, <http://bethel.ag/locations/>, *Bethel Assembly*. "Home." accessed February 15, 2019. <http://www.bethel-anson.com/>, *Freedom Church*. "Home." Accessed February 15, 2019, <http://time4freedom.org>.

the motivation for their existence carries a common thread of evangelistic focus.<sup>204</sup> I have also highlighted the rural church context, which illuminates the general behaviors of rural church communities. The rural context was shown to have a strong inter-community mindset, which did not seem surprising.<sup>205</sup> However, this rural mindset may prove detrimental to the overall Church mission.<sup>206</sup> An unexpected outcome of such a mindset may be found in the research that reflects a lack of engagement with religion in rural communities. As I previously mentioned in section 3.2, the percentage of ‘unclaimed’ persons appear high within rural communities. There may only be a few solutions to combat this finding, and multisite may be such a solution.<sup>207</sup> Additionally, I have addressed some of the possible concerns with clergy in the rural context and given the suggestion that a multisite church model may prove to be a healthy solution to such concerns. I highlighted the potential of joining the rural context and a multisite church model. This model being practiced, although in small quantities, shows signs of potential in the overall ministry of Church in North America. Multisite church models appear to be enduring. Stetzer states, “Some once believed this move to grow via multiple campuses was a temporary trend, but it appears to be a trend that’s here to stay.”<sup>208</sup> I would suggest that a multisite church model in not only here to stay, but expanding into the rural context.

The scope of this thesis was limited by time and space. However, as I conclude my thesis I would recommend that there are areas for further research. The following four suggestions are identified as part of my research. 1) Rural churches who have agreed to merge with an existing multisite church and the outcome of such action; 2) Rural churches who have joined with other area rural churches to form a multisite and the end results; 3) Multisite churches in urban areas who have successfully or otherwise launched a campus in

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<sup>204</sup> McConnel, 6.

<sup>205</sup> Koessler, 178.

<sup>206</sup> Ibid, 180.

<sup>207</sup> Stone and Schaeffer, 13.

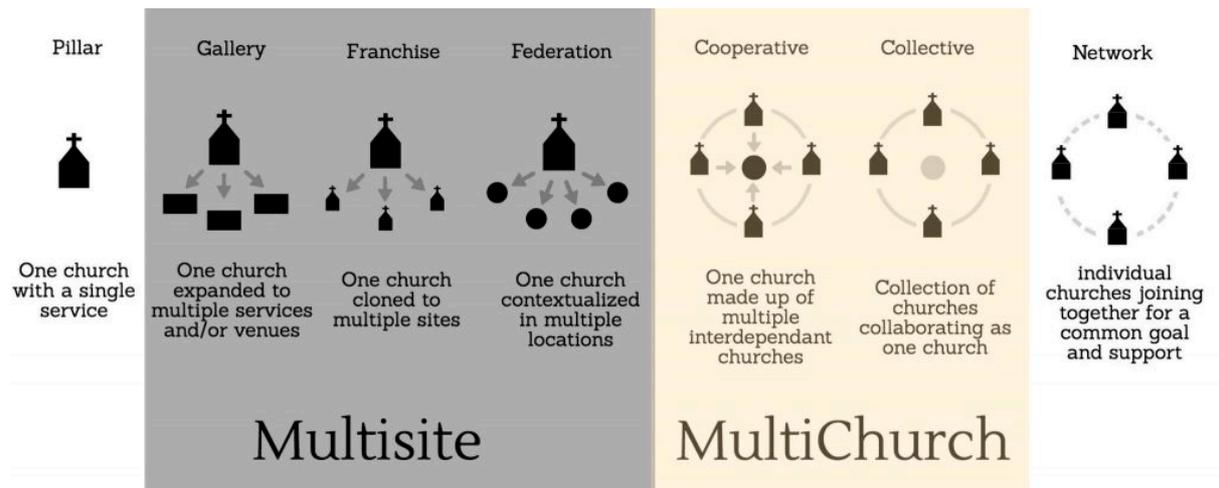
<sup>208</sup> Stetzer and IM, 118.

the rural context; and 4) Is a multisite church model within the rural context successful or otherwise through a merger, new church plant, or both?

I want to acknowledge that a multisite church model is not the only solution within a rural context. However, there is a growing concern of a rural church not connecting to those who are not affiliated with any religious beliefs. A multisite church model is not designed for every leader nor every church. Yet for those who endeavor to pursue such a model, they may find it to be the solution to reach the unclaimed who call the rural countryside home.

# APPENDIX

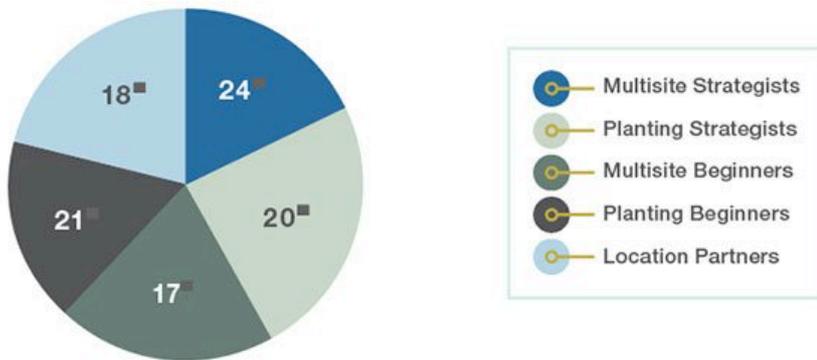
Table One: <sup>209</sup>



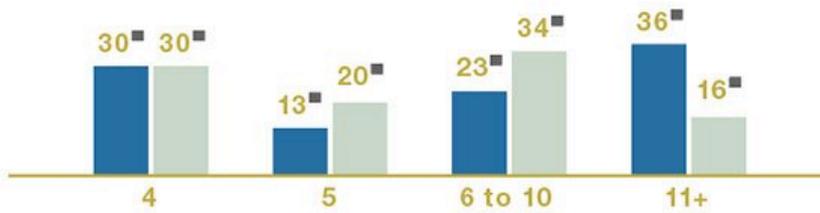
<sup>209</sup> House and Allison, 48-49.

**Table Two:**<sup>210</sup>

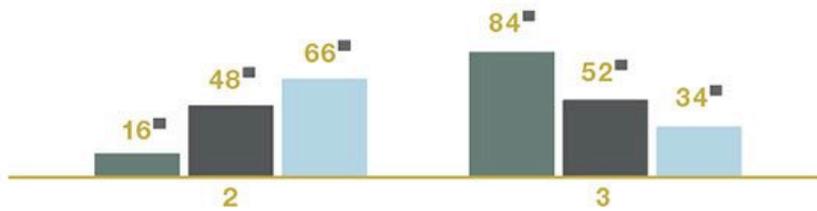
Distribution Within this Study



Total Number of Church Locations:  
Strategists



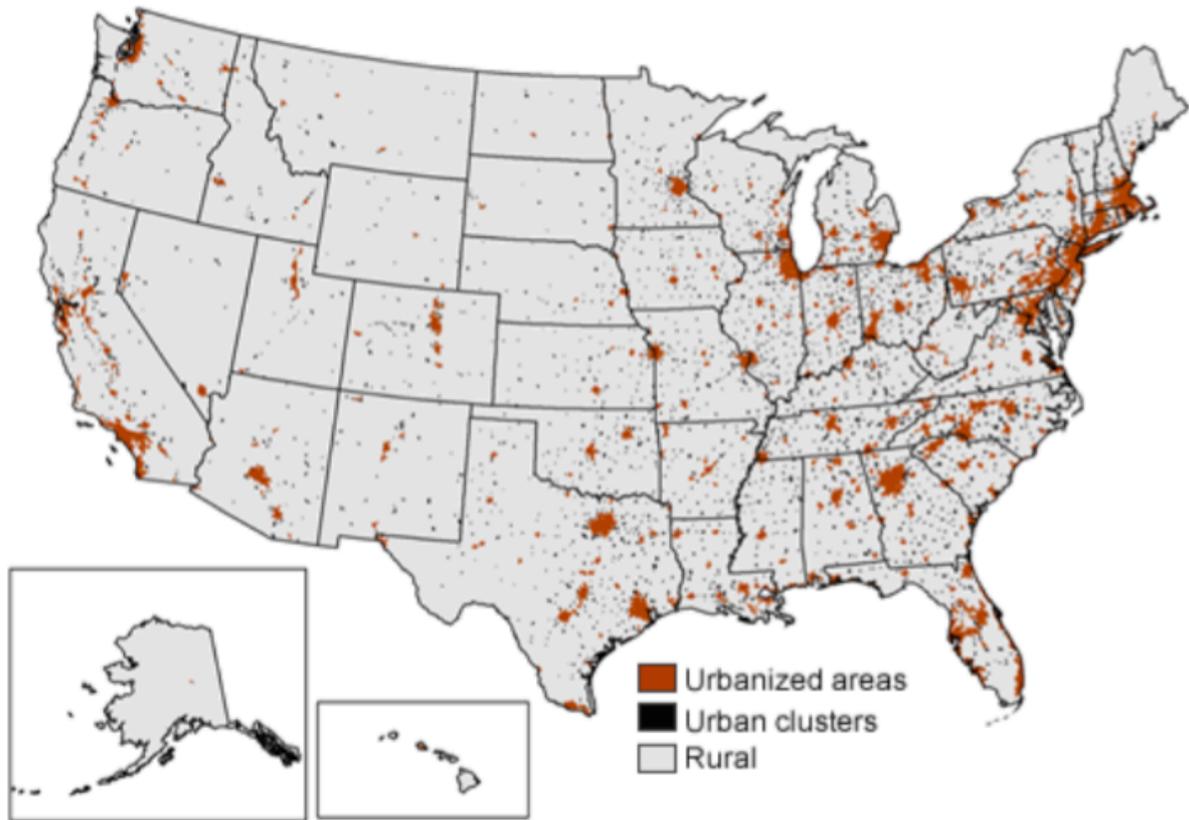
Beginners & Location Partners



March 7–April 6, 2016, N=222.

Table Three:<sup>211</sup>

U.S. Census Bureau's urban and rural areas, 2012



Source: USDA, Economic Research Service using data from the U.S. Census Bureau.

<sup>211</sup> Tena Stone and Chrissy Schaeffer, "Rural Matters: A Focus on Church Planting in Rural America," paper presented at Rural Matters Conference, Sachse, Texas, September 19-20, 2017, 6.

**Table Four:**<sup>212</sup>

## BARNA RISK METRICS



### **BURNOUT RISK**

- Less confident in their calling today than when they began ministry
- Rate mental and emotional health as average, below average or poor
- Seldom or never energized by ministry work
- Frequently feel inadequate for their calling or ministry
- Frequently feel emotionally or mentally exhausted
- Have suffered from depression sometime during their ministry
- Not satisfied with their pastoral vocation
- Not satisfied with ministry at their current church
- Tenure at their current church has been a disappointment
- Tenure at their current church has not increased their passion for ministry
- Their primary day-to-day tasks do not fit their calling or gifts

### **RELATIONSHIP RISK**

- Rate their relationship with their spouse as below average or poor
- Rate their relationship with their children as below average or poor
- Rate their satisfaction with friendships as average, below average or poor
- Frequently or sometimes feel lonely or isolated from others
- Seldom or never feel well-supported by people close to them
- Say it's completely true that ministry has been difficult on their family
- Report a difficult relationship with their board or church elders

### **SPIRITUAL RISK**

- Rate their spiritual well-being as average, below average or poor
- Say it is very or somewhat difficult to invest in their own spiritual development
- Receive spiritual support from peers or a mentor several times a year or less
- Say their tenure at their current church has not deepened their own relationship with Christ

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<sup>212</sup> David Kinnaman, "Burnout & Breakdown: Barna's Risk Metric for Pastors," *Barna.com*, January 26, 2017, accessed February 8, 2019, <https://www.barna.com/burnout-breakdown-barnas-risk-metric-pastors/>.

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