7

Pioneer, Reproduction, and Regional Approaches to Church Planting

Until recently there were relatively few well-developed models and methods for planting churches. Now so many strategies and methods abound that it can be difficult to assess which might be the most appropriate for any given situation. In this chapter we will survey a variety of approaches to church planting, beginning with pioneer church planting, where few if any churches already exist in the area and there is no nearby partner church in the effort. Then we will examine approaches to reproducing existing churches. Tim Chester (2000, 38) points out that these two broad categories, pioneering and reproducing, roughly correspond to what we find in the New Testament. Paul was primarily a pioneer church planter when he entered a new city to preach the gospel. But the churches he planted reproduced by forming numerous house churches in the same city.[1] In conclusion we will describe strategies for multiple church plants in a region.

Approaches to Pioneer Church Planting

By "pioneer church planting" we mean planting churches in locations where there are very few Christians and, apart from the church planting team, there are few if any local Christians who will assist in the launch. The work will grow almost exclusively through evangelism. The possible approaches are summarized in table 7.1.

Table 7.1
Approaches to Pioneer Church Planting Where Few or No Churches Exist in the Immediate Area or among the Focus People

Approach	Features
Solo pioneer *or* paratrooper church planter	A solo church planter moves to the target area and begins from scratch
Church-planting team	A church-planting team is formed and prepared; team members have diverse gifts but the same vision and calling
Colonization	A large number of persons (often from the same church) relocate to the target area, forming the new church
Nonresident *or* short-term church planting	A church planter or mission team seeks to plant a church or churches through short visits and efforts apart from a resident church planter or team

International church plant	When an international church is planted, nationals are also reached who might not otherwise be reached (usually in a context of persecution)
Indirect church planting	A church is planted as a by-product of development work, student ministry, Bible translation, or other ministries that do not normally intentionally plant churches

The Solo Church Planter

The solo church planter might be compared to a lone paratrooper who drops into a location. This has been perhaps the most common model of church planting and is the typical image many people have of the pioneer church planter. A "Rambo" ideal of a church planter comes to mind who single-handedly does the work of evangelism and discipleship, gathering the new believers to form a church. Indeed many churches have been planted this way by gifted and determined church planters.

Yet this approach is very difficult and has a high rate of failure. It may work well when the church planter is planting a church in his or her native culture and is exceptionally gifted; it may also succeed where people are highly responsive or where mature local Christians can be recruited to form a church-planting team. But it is rarely effective when crossing cultures or among populations resistant to the gospel. Most church planters are simply not gifted enough to go it alone in such settings. Even the very gifted church planter can quickly reach his or her limits, and then discouragement or fatigue sets in.

The Church-Planting Team

A second approach is the church-planting team. In this case a team of workers with a common vision and various gifts join together in the effort. Today, in cross-cultural mission, the team approach has become the norm for pioneer church planting. Often team members are all vocational missionaries, but this is not always the case; some may be bivocational.

Team building and strategizing is an important part of preparing the church plant. Increasingly these teams are international or multiethnic. For example a team may be composed of an American, a Korean, a German, and a Filipino.

Clearly the team approach overcomes many of the difficulties of solo pioneer church planting, but it is not without challenges. Team building and maintenance demand much energy.[2] The potential for conflict is especially high in an international team, where culturally different understandings of leadership, decision making, and values collide. Teams, especially expatriate teams, must also be cautious that they do not become a clique. During the early days of the church plant, team members may rely too heavily on one another for support and friendship and thus fail to build relationships with local people. Too many expatriates in one small church plant can make locals feel like outsiders. One pioneer church-planting team in southern Germany consisted of several American families, and in the early years there were more Americans than Germans in the fledging church. Occasionally German visitors would enter and then turn around to leave, thinking that they had mistakenly entered the American military chapel!

Another challenge for the church-planting team can arise when the team members are full-time vocational ministers. Local laypersons may see a large number of "professionals" and feel excused from volunteering their time and energy. "Why should I sacrifice my precious time when there are so many professionals in a small church with nothing else to do? They are trained to do a much better job than I could ever do." Such teams might consider planting multiple churches at once to

overcome some of these difficulties.

Church Planting by Colonization

Church planting by colonization is seldom practiced because of the high level of commitment it demands, yet it can be one of the most successful methods. A number of persons, often including whole families from the same home church or recruited from several churches, relocate into the target city or region. Like a "colony" of settlers, they form the core of the new church. This offers most of the same advantages as the team approach, except that the group relocating consists of more people and most are usually laypersons. Thus a church is virtually transplanted into the new location.

This approach resembles mother-daughter church multiplication (to be discussed below). The difference is that the members relocate to an entirely new city or region, finding new homes and jobs, which presents a great hurdle. Not only is it difficult to persuade members of one community to relocate to another, but it may be difficult for them to find housing and employment there. This approach is normally possible only when the colony moves to a location of the same or similar culture. Large numbers of people are rarely willing to learn a new language and adopt the lifestyle of a new culture. Furthermore, their large foreign presence in the new church would overwhelm new believers from the local culture, giving the new church a foreign feel.

Pointing to Abbott Loop Christian Center in Anchorage, Alaska, C. Peter Wagner (1990, 63–64) notes that it planted forty churches over a twenty-year period using primarily the colonization method. Members who had relocated to start ten of the new churches numbered 137. These ten churches grew

to a combined membership of 2,068. Community Christian Church of Naperville, Illinois, sent some twenty-five members with a staff pastor to relocate in Kansas City and form the core of a pioneer church plant in that city. Later thirty-five members sold their homes, quit their jobs, and moved to Denver to do the same.

Nonresident or Short-Term Church Planting

Nonresident or short-term church planting occurs when the church planter or church-planting team does not take up permanent residence at the launch location. They either make repeated short visits to the location or remain on site for just a few months. The idea is to quickly evangelize and gather a core of local believers, equip them with the basics of understanding the Bible and church life, and then move on. The planters then continue to strengthen the congregation through occasional short visits. The approach is well suited to locations where traditional resident missionary work is not possible, but it has been attempted in other contexts as well.

Efforts have been made by some mission organizations to fully plant churches using only short-term teams, such as with summer mission trips, or by showing evangelistic films and forming follow-up Bible studies with inquirers. However, such efforts rarely bear long-term fruit where there is no local, indigenous church or missionary familiar with the language and culture to provide ongoing guidance to the fledging work.

In his book *The Nonresidential Missionary* (1990) V. David Garrison describes this approach. Here the missionary operates

from a nonresidential base but still seeks to learn the language and culture of the focus people. He or she networks with various Christian organizations and coordinates their efforts in order to evangelize and plant a church among a specific people group. A variety of people and projects may be combined in the overall effort: short-term teams, "tourist evangelists," medium-term exchange students, development workers, itinerant evangelists, or long-term immigrants or tentmakers. Garrison highlights the example of a Filipino nonresident missionary, Lena Rabang, who worked in the Sarawak Highlands of Indonesia to reach Muslims. She was already a seasoned church planter in the Philippines when God led her to minister among a people group where resident missionaries were not allowed. She established a steady witness for Christ and the beginning of a church by working on a six-month visa and with the assistance of rotating coworkers. "After ten years, she had seen 47 churches planted among the Visayan Negritos and an equal number of lay pastors trained to lead the churches in continued growth and witness" (Garrison 1990, 33).

In another example, churches were planted among the Xiao people, who live in a remote and restricted part of Asia. After research and mobilizing prayer, a nonresidential missionary coordinated the establishment of a Christian hospital, a Bible translation project, and Christian radio broadcasting, and placed twenty to thirty English teachers among the Xiao. After only two years an estimated three thousand persons were baptized and received into newly established churches (Garrison 1990, 65–68).

The International Church Plant

The international church plant may employ any of the above methods, the unique feature being that the church plant does not initially seek to be an indigenous church but rather is intentionally international in character. English is typically the language of ministry, and the church is, at least initially, composed of expatriates living in the target location: native English speakers from the international business community, diplomatic corps, students, refugees, or guest workers. By beginning with outreach to the international community, the church can often grow in numbers more rapidly. In addition to serving the spiritual needs of the expatriate community, it is hoped that the international church plant will attract local residents who either wish to improve their English language abilities or are curious about the Christian faith (Bowers 2005). Similar to the international church is the expatriate or immigrant church, which may not use the lingua franca but another language, such as Mandarin or Korean in the United States, and have a specific ethnic or cultural character. Such churches seek to serve the needs of recent immigrants or refugees, who often are not comfortable with the predominant host country language or do not feel accepted in other churches (Prill 2009). In predominantly Muslim countries, planting indigenous churches that reach Muslims is usually forbidden; however, churches for the expatriate community are allowed to exist and have relative freedom.

Some international churches, after establishing themselves and having reached a significant number of local citizens, have transitioned from using English as primary ministry language to

using the local vernacular. Sometimes a children's program is offered in both English and the local vernacular. Preaching may also be translated into the vernacular to ease the transition. This has been done in cities such as Moscow and Budapest. The church may also choose to remain international in character but serve as a base for further outreach and church planting among the indigenous people.

Mission organizations such as Christian Associates International have promoted this strategy in Europe, planting successful international churches in cities such as Amsterdam and Geneva. An additional advantage to international church plants is that they can be laboratories of innovation. Even in contexts where indigenous local churches are already present, international churches are generally less hindered by traditional forms of church life and can model alternative or creative approaches to ministry and outreach, stimulating such thinking among more traditional churches.

The international church strategy is, however, not without significant drawbacks if the goal is to reach beyond the expatriate community to the local residents. It is an option only where the target city is cosmopolitan with a sizable international community. Where English is not the heart language of the local people, the use of English as the language of ministry will appeal to only a small minority of the local population. At the same time, attempts to transition away from English to the vernacular are not always easy if one of the church's main attractions is use of the English language.

Another pressing challenge is that in an international church Christianity maintains a largely foreign face. The broader

population may perceive Christianity as the faith of outsiders, of expatriates, but not a genuine option for nationals. This foreign image relates not only to language but to worship style, forms of leadership and decision making, and other culturally conditioned aspects of church life. Indeed, the church *is* foreign, not contextualized, and faces all the challenges of noncontextualized churches.

Indirect Church Planting

Often churches are planted by Christian organizations and ministries whose primary intention is not to plant churches. For example, Wycliffe Bible Translators / Summer Institute of Linguistics has the primary goal of translating the Bible into indigenous languages. Sometimes, due to contractual obligations with local governments, translators must depart after the translation work is completed. However, it is not unusual for a church to be established during the process of Bible translation. Similarly, churches may be planted by Christian staff at a local hospital, by relief and development workers, or by Christians on international business assignments.

Christian development workers in Curtea de Arges, one of the oldest cities in Romania, led several persons to faith in Christ and started a church there, though church planting was not the primary purpose of the organization. The leader of the developmental work was not trained as a pastor or church planter but ended up planting a church! In the mid-1990s Campus Crusade for Christ (CCC) staff in Budapest began meeting on Sundays with students and others who had come to personal faith in Christ. Though it is generally CCC's policy not to plant new churches, a church grew out of these meetings. The leaders then approached another mission agency for assistance with the church plant.

Though the persons planting such churches are seldom trained as church planters and rarely have a long-term plan for the development (much less for multiplication) of the church, there are advantages to the approach. Local laypersons are

normally forced to take greater initiative in leading the church because the Christian worker remains busy with other responsibilities and cannot devote his or her full efforts to pastoring the new church. In the case of compassion or development ministries, the church plant is positively associated with the contributions of Christians to the community. In countries closed to traditional missionary activity, it is often possible for Christian relief, development, or educational workers to enter and then become indirectly involved in planting churches. The workers make a contribution to the well-being of the local people, and they are not perceived as a threat to established religions.

Approaches to Church Reproduction

We now turn to describing various methods by which existing churches reproduce by mobilizing their members to become directly involved in planting a new church in the same city or a nearby location. Such approaches move church planting from addition, planting one church at a time, to multiplication, churches planting churches that plant churches. An overview of these approaches is given in table 7.2.

Mother-Daughter Church Planting or Hiving off

The most common approach to church multiplication is "mother-daughter" church planting, sometimes called "hiving off." Planting churches by this method is comparable with the biological process of multiplication through cell division. What could be more natural than having a baby! The mother church births a daughter church by sending off some of its members to form the core of the new church. The number of members sent can vary from just a few to hundreds, depending on the size of the mother church, the location of the new church, and other factors. Staff members of the mother church may be sent out to help start the daughter church.

Typically the members forming the new church already live in the target area or belong to the focus population for the new church. Thus they do not need to find new housing or employment as would be the case with church planting by colonization. Often one or more home groups affiliated with the mother church already meet in a particular community. The vision is cast to plant a church in that community, and the

members of these groups prepare to become the core of the church plant.

Table 7.2

Approaches to Church Reproduction
Where Churches Already Exist and Want to Reproduce

Approach	Features
Mother-daughter church plant *or* hiving off	Members of an established (mother) church separate to build the nucleus of a new (daughter) church
Multisite *or* satellite church plant	Mother church starts additional worship or ministry venues (often with video sermons); staff and organization remain largely centralized
Adopted daughter church plant *or* church replant	An independent fellowship decides to form a church by requesting assistance of an established church; or a small, struggling church is revitalized or "replanted"
Multi-mother *or* partnership church plant	Several established churches give members to start a common daughter church
Focus people church plant *or* multicongregation	A church establishes a new congregation among a particular ethnic or social group, often using the same building; the congregations are organizationally linked
House church network	House churches multiply by cell division, with minimal structure and usually lay led; the church planter is not a pastor but an equipper-coach of lay house-church planters

For example, the Central Munich Evangelical Free Church (membership of two hundred adults) desired to start a daughter church in one of its suburbs. A home group had already begun

meeting in the community of Ottobrunn, which was identified as an area in need of an evangelical church. Over many months the vision was cast and members were prepared to launch the new work. Eventually thirty-four adult members were commissioned to begin. The pastor of the mother church served both churches until the daughter church was able to call its own pastor. The mother church provided not only members but also financial support, pastoral care, and counsel as well as practical support in evangelism, music, remodeling, and a host of other services that extended beyond the resources of the daughter church. Thousands of such examples could be given.

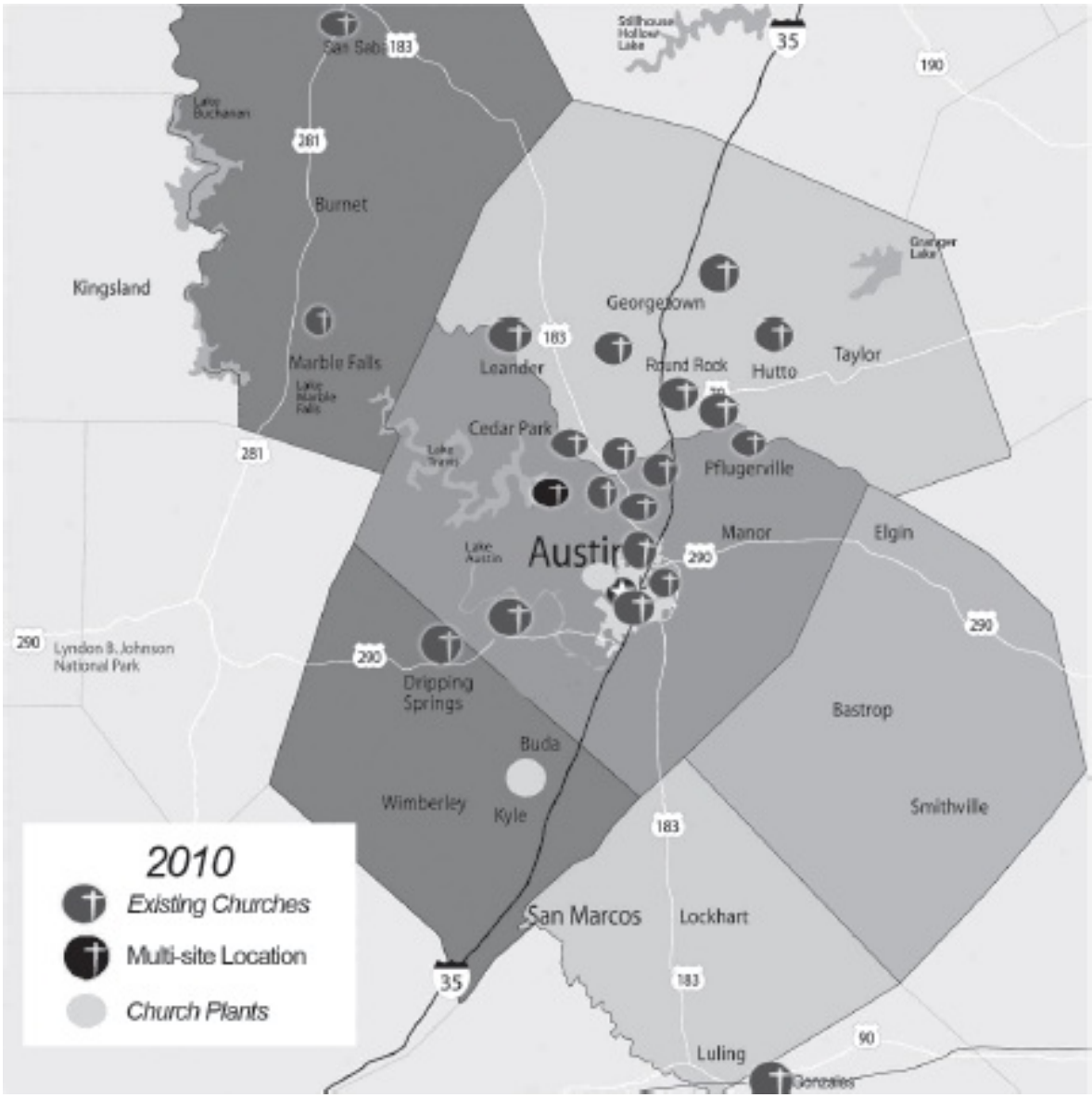
There are many other ways to start a daughter church, such as intentionally recruiting from the mother congregation those who would launch the daughter church or hiring a church planter to lead the new work. Some reproducing churches avoid using the language and mindset of hiving off and speak rather of recruiting a missional team or core group to launch the daughter church. For example, Hill Country Bible Church in Austin, Texas, planted fifteen daughter churches between its founding, in 1986, and 2010 (figure 7.1). It shifted its approach away from merely assembling a critical mass of believers from the mother church to form the launch team and began to intentionally recruit families who possessed a mission mindset and calling. Hill Country speaks of a fourfold shift in strategy for planting daughter churches:

- from gathering from the church to gathering from the

community

- from transplanting to transforming
- from critical mass to missional core
- from financial dependency to creative funding (Herrington 2009)

Figure 7.1
Hill Country Bible Church—Church Plants



The launch team may be smaller in number, but it is more missional in outlook, with evangelism, sacrificial service, and community connectedness determining the DNA of the daughter church.

Numerous practical resources are available to aid the planning and planting of daughter churches. Most of these are geared to the context of Western cultures and must be adapted for use in other contexts;[3] nevertheless, they provide a good

starting point for mapping out the process.

There are many advantages to the mother-daughter approach to church multiplication. The survival and growth rates of such daughter churches are higher than those of pioneer church plants because the launch groups are usually larger, more workers are present, immediate support and resources are available through the nearby mother church, and the launch can be carefully prepared and planned over time. Since the members originate from the same mother church, they tend to share a common vision, ethos, and philosophy of ministry. As a result, more time and energy can be devoted to evangelism and discipleship. Generally, the core launch group will include members who are experienced in ministry and mature in their faith, and this provides leadership and stability that are often lacking in pioneer works. Furthermore, the process of hiving off is easily reproducible. The daughter church is more likely to one day become a mother and birth its own daughter church.

An indirect benefit comes to the mother church. Not only does it have the joy of birthing a daughter, but it realizes that it too must mobilize for evangelism and recruit and train new workers in order to fill the void left by members who were commissioned for the daughter church. This keeps the mother church from becoming complacent, comfortable, and passive. In fact, it is not unusual for the mother church to experience a season of accelerated growth as God honors its vision and commitment.

Though effective, this approach also has pitfalls to avoid. If the mother church is small, starting a daughter church could

potentially weaken the mother church enough to threaten its continued existence. Further, the daughter church should be cautious about duplicating in detail the ministry methods of the mother church. It needs to develop new approaches to ministry by adapting to the particular needs of its community. Much as in the relationship between real mothers and daughters, the mother church can overly dominate the daughter, and the daughter can remain overly dependent on the mother by being "tied to her apron strings." Unhealthy competition can also develop between the mother and daughter. These cautions notwithstanding, once a pioneer church plant has been established, the mother-daughter approach remains the method that God has most richly blessed in multiplying churches around the globe. Most other methods of church reproduction are a variation of this approach.

Multisite or Satellite Church Planting

One of the most popular trends in church planting today among larger churches is the multisite concept (see Ferguson 2003; Surratt, Ligon, and Bird 2006; McConnell 2009). Much as in hiving off, new church venues are usually started by sending off members from the mother church. The difference is that here the daughter church remains closely tied to the mother church, without becoming autonomous; it normally remains fully integrated into the larger ministry of the mother church. A common multisite slogan is, "one church, many locations." On these grounds some do not consider the multisite approach real church planting. "A multisite church is one church meeting in multiple locations—different rooms on the same campus, different locations in the same region, and in some instances in different cities, states, or nations. A multisite church shares a common vision, budget, leadership, and board" (Surratt, Ligon, and Bird 2006, 18).

The approach is comparable to a planet with satellites that orbit and remain within its gravitational pull, with the central or main church venue being the planet and the satellites being the various "campuses" or smaller venues. Sometimes dual campuses are started, with the additional site having equal status and size as the original site.

This model has been developed with many variations. Often all the venues share the same pastoral staff, though a venue may have a few of its own local staff. Budgets for the venues are usually centralized. The decision-making and leadership structure may be highly centralized, with a joint governing board, or the venues may be granted considerable autonomy in

decision making while remaining legally under the umbrella of the central church. Some have only worship services at the various locations; others offer a full range of ministries at each location.

Today it is also common for attendees at the various sites to view the same Sunday sermon by the senior preaching pastor via video recording or live feed. This maximizes the listening and viewing audience for exceptionally gifted speakers but is possible only where the necessary technology is available and affordable. The strong preaching and leadership of the senior pastor often serve as the magnet that "keeps the satellites in orbit" and drives the launch of new venues. However, in some cases a team approach to preaching at different sites has been adopted, so that dependency on a single gifted speaker is reduced.

The multisite approach has the advantage that an effective ministry of the mother church can be consistently reproduced in the daughter churches. This is much like the concept of franchising a McDonald's or Pizza Hut, whereby the quality of the product is closely monitored and reproduced. On the other hand, some churches make an intentional effort to plant new sites that are quite different in ministry style, able to meet the diverse needs of various subcultures and communities. The multisite method has also been used for church "restarts" (discussed below).

Because most of the churches starting multisite venues are large, the plants are usually launched with a relatively large number of members. The venue builds on the strong reputation of the mother church in the community. By sharing staff,

resources, and expertise with the mother, the site church can immediately offer a high-quality and wide range of ministries not possible in more typical daughter church plants.

There are also drawbacks to consider with this approach. Highly centralized ministry and staff may lack the flexibility to adapt to the needs of new locations. Decision making can be cumbersome for the off-site venue. It can also promote an overly professionalized concept of ministry that depends heavily on paid staff and technology. Start-up costs for staff and equipment can be high.[4] Because the multisite approach usually relies on the initiative of a strong mother church, the satellites seldom reproduce themselves. Thus the approach is effective for church addition but rarely leads to the multiplication of churches planting churches (or venues planting new venues).

One should not think that the multisite approach is a strictly North American phenomenon. Numerous examples exist on every continent. For example, the Works and Mission Baptist Church in Abidjan, Ivory Coast, has 150,000 congregants meeting at hundreds of satellite locations (Surratt, Ligon, and Bird 2006, 203). Such a church virtually takes on the character of a denomination!

Adopted Daughter Church Planting[5]

Occasionally a group of Christians has formed in a locality apart from the direct assistance of an established church. The group may be a home Bible study or a follow-up group from an evangelistic effort. When its members decide that they want to

become a more formal church, they seek assistance from an established church that can provide guidance and possibly resources or pastoral care. When that established church decides to support the new church plant, in a sense it adopts the new work—the new church is not the result of "natural birth," growing out of a nucleus sent from the mother church. Though the members of the new church were not formerly members of the mother church, the adoptive mother church treats the new church as if it were its daughter.

Shortly after the fall of communism in Hungary, for example, a group of believers formed in a small town as the result of an evangelistic concert. There was no local evangelical church in that town, and so no one conducted a formal follow-up to the effort. When these new believers came into contact with an evangelical church in Budapest, they requested assistance in their efforts to plant a church in their town. The church in Budapest became an adoptive mother, not providing members but providing resources, counsel, and occasional teaching and encouragement to the emerging church.

A variation on the adoption approach may be observed when a struggling or dying church approaches a larger healthy church and requests that it be adopted in order to, in effect, "replant" the church. Often the adopted church has failed to adapt to its changing community. But this approach is successful only when ownership of the facilities, decision making, and style of ministry is ceded to the mother church and an entirely fresh approach to ministry is launched. Sometimes members from the adopting church are commissioned to join the adopted daughter. Strictly speaking, this is not church

planting but rather a form of church revitalization. First Baptist Church of Houston has partnered with twenty-four dying churches to revitalize them (Roberts 2008, 116–17). Sometimes the adopted church becomes an additional venue of a multisite church (see also case study 7.1).

The adoption approach shares most of the advantages of mother-daughter church planting. Furthermore, the group of Christians being adopted is usually highly motivated to start the new church and probably already has the kind of significant leadership and vision that would move them to seek to plant a church. The new congregation can gain credibility by associating with a church with an established reputation in the region. However, in order for the adoption to be successful, both the daughter and the mother must become well acquainted before the partnership is made official. Expectations of the two groups may differ widely. Doctrinal, philosophical, and financial arrangements should be clearly spelled out. Most of all, trust must develop between the two groups, and this takes both patience and open conversation. Sometimes such struggling groups do not seek genuine partnerships but merely aid to provide a building or to pay a pastor. In other cases the adoptive mother church may overly dominate the new church, and the transition can be difficult. Nevertheless, if these pitfalls can be avoided, adoptive church planting can be a wonderful way that established churches can partner with emerging churches for greater synergy.

Case Study 7.1

Church Planting by Church Replanting

New Life Community Church of Chicago was founded in 1986 with eighteen people. In 1996 a second worship campus was launched. By 2009 New Life had become a multisite, multiethnic church with 14 locations, 170 home groups, and total weekend attendance of 4,200 in 25 weekend services. Of the 14 campuses, 7 were begun as restarts. New Life's church-planting strategy includes the restarting or replanting of struggling churches, often in older, changing communities, that request their assistance. In one instance they acquired a 125-year-old historic church building and revitalized it offering two services; a morning service made up of young adults and families and an alternative service in the evening for young adults and students from nearby DePaul University. In March 2009 New Life restarted a 115-year-old church with two services, one in English and one in Spanish. If the older church has failed to adapt to the changing community, the adoptive restart reinvents the church, designing it to more effectively connect and minister to the people and needs that surround it. You can view a ten-minute video explaining New Life's restart story at www.newliferestart.org.

Multi-mother or Partnership Church Planting

In much the same way that mother-daughter church planting occurs—by a mother church hiving off members—in this approach, two or more mother churches hive off members who combine to form one new church. This makes the core launch team for the new church larger, as members are recruited from two or more mother churches. But the plant is less demanding on the mother churches, because they share the responsibility. In this way smaller churches can become involved in church planting even when each lacks the resources to mother a church alone. For this approach, the mother churches typically

originate from the same denominational background.

One example is the planting of the Free Evangelical Church of Markt Indersdorf, Germany, a small community just outside Munich. Two mother churches in Munich each had a cell group meeting in the region, which was about an hour's drive from the city. The groups were combined to make a total of ten families who became the launch team for the church plant. Both of the Munich churches contributed members and provided resources. The Markt Indersdorf church was lay led and relied on the Munich churches to provide counsel and regular preaching.

Iteffa Gobena, of the Ethiopian Evangelical Church Mekane Yesus, calls this the "bridging the gap" model. Rural churches team up "to close the unreached gap between two or more congregations or parishes. . . . They assign lay preachers who voluntarily take the responsibility to preach the gospel to close up the gap" (Gobena 1997, 15).

In order for the multi-mother approach to succeed, the various groups that form the new church must grow together and develop a common vision. Even if the mother churches are from the same denomination, it cannot be assumed that the groups will automatically harmonize. In the case of Markt Indersdorf, the two groups prayed, played, and planned together for a year while developing a common vision and strategy, before publicly launching the church plant. The roles and responsibilities of the mother churches must be clarified so that the daughter has clear expectations and does not end up being orphaned, because neither mother church asumes responsibility.

Focus People Church Plant or Multicongregation

Many churches reach out to particular ethnic, linguistic, or social groups in their communities by starting an additional congregation that exists to meet the unique needs of one of these groups (see Prill 2009). Typically such a new congregation meets in the rooms of the mother church, often on Sunday afternoons, and remains to some degree under the authority of the host church. This has proven an especially effective way to reach first-generation immigrants who desire to worship in their mother language and to preserve many of their cultural values and traditions. In urban settings undergoing dramatic ethnic change, starting an ethnic congregation can be a means of helping a church transition and adapt to community change. It may even be a strategy for church survival (see case study 7.2).[6]

Particularly in large urban settings, there are dozens of ethnic groups unreached by the gospel who are unlikely to be reached by existing mainstream churches. Rodney Harrison, Tom Cheyney, and Don Overstreet describe the advantages of the multicongregational approach, which they call "nesting": "Start-up costs are minimal. Generally the new church starts under the legal and administrative umbrella of the sponsoring church. Church materials and staff salaries, if required, are the primary expenses. The host or sponsoring church should anticipate incidental costs, however, including the higher water, gas, electric, and phone bills, along with the higher cost of supplies and office machine wear-and-tear" (2008, 98).

Groups of people in need of specialized ministries are not limited to those of minority languages or ethnicities. Other

focus people might include persons in the arts, street people, migrant workers, or shift and weekend workers. In Nuremberg, Germany, a special ministry was developed for bakers, whose early-morning working hours made attendance at typical Bible studies and worship difficult. They even started a bakers' brass ensemble!

The results of such efforts are multiple congregations that meet under the roof of one church. This demands considerable commitment and flexibility on the part of the mother church, and the challenges should not be underestimated. An additional congregation not only will impose new demands on facilities and resources but also will require an open and missional mindset from the sponsoring congregation. People of different cultures and subcultures often have different sensibilities regarding scheduling, time, noise levels, child rearing, cleanliness, and a host of other potential points of conflict with the mother congregation. Members of ethnic minorities typically enjoy sharing meals together before or after services, and exotic aromas may fill the church for days! In many if not most cases, someone who possesses particular linguistic and cross-cultural relational skills will need to be trained or recruited to launch and help sustain the ministry.

Case Study 7.2

Multicongregational Church Planting in Changing Communities

First Baptist Church of Flushing (FBCF), New York, has three congregations, with services in three languages: English, Chinese, and Spanish. In the 1960s the community began to shift from its predominantly white blue-collar and partially African American base toward a composition of largely Asian and Hispanic immigrants. After over one hundred years of ministry, in 1965 Hispanic and in 1968 Chinese ministries were launched, and this resulted in growth and community impact that would have otherwise been impossible. Though there were painful setbacks, eventually it became a model church of multicongregational ministry. In 1980 the three congregations were elevated to equal status under a common church board. FBCF was no longer a white church with subordinate ethnic congregations, and eventually the church called an Asian to the position of senior pastor. Each congregation can minister in ways appropriate to its focus people. FBCF has various community-service ministries and has even expanded to become a training ground for cross-cultural missionaries (Travis 1997; Ortiz 1996, 78–85; Wang 2007).

House Church Network

In recent years a growing body of literature promotes and describes house churches.[7] Virtually all of David Garrison's (2004a) examples of rapidly growing church-planting movements consist of house church movements; thus many mission organizations are promoting this approach. The house church network reproduces through cell division in a way similar to mother-daughter church planting. In both models, members of an existing congregation are sent to begin a new congregation, but here the process occurs on a smaller, house church scale.

A house church typically has fewer than fifty persons and basically functions as a lay led, single-cell congregation. Thus with each cell division a new house church is born. Because house churches do not require expensive meeting places, have minimal structure, and are lay led, they have potential for rapid multiplication. This is especially the case in societies that are highly relational, those in which the gospel can spread easily through kinship, occupational, and community networks.

One variation of house church reproduction is when two nuclei within one existing house church are formed. The two may meet in different rooms in the same house for a time, but eventually they meet separately and come together only periodically, perhaps once a month. Over time apprentice leaders from the two groups form leadership teams; then the two cells separate and are launched as autonomous house churches. The original house church becomes two new house churches, and the original one ceases to exist. The church planter coaches the new cells but is free to start another house

church in a new area (see figure 7.2).

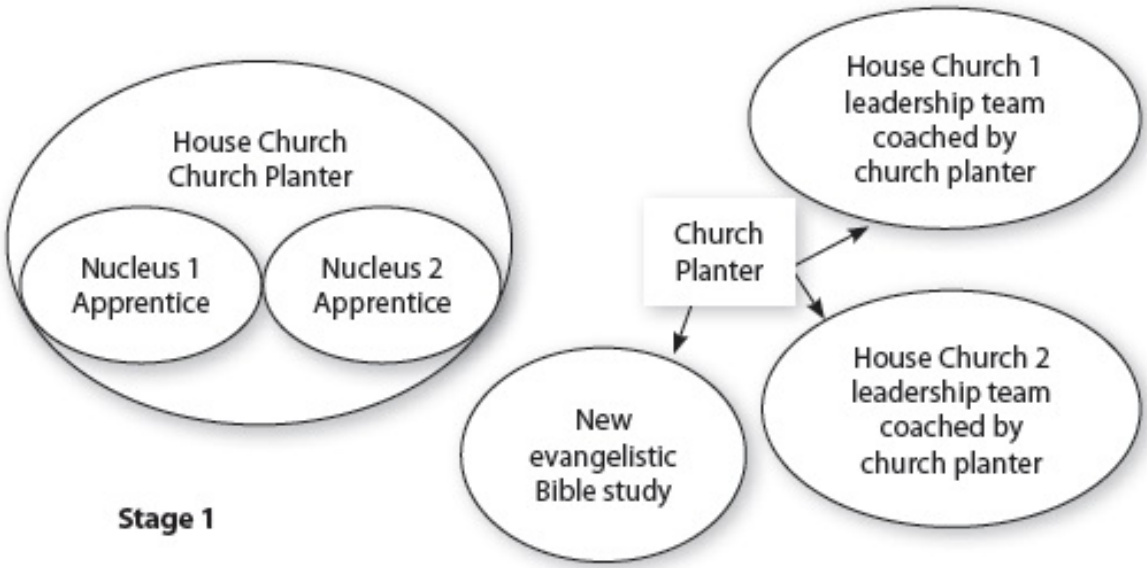
The key to house church multiplication lies in training enough house church leaders to keep pace with the multiplication of cells. The house churches typically maintain some form of networking by means of common leadership teams, consultation, worker training, and occasional joint celebrations. Because of their low visibility and simple, lay-led structure, house churches are more "persecution proof" than are traditionally structured churches. But because the lay leaders are often poorly trained, they can be susceptible to weak or false teaching, weak or inappropriate leadership, and unhealthy dominance by individuals. House churches also lack the kind of programs geared to special needs that are typically offered by larger churches (such as youth ministry); thus they often lose members to larger churches that offer higher-quality teaching and broader ministry opportunities.

Church Split or Unplanned Parenthood

A church split is a form of church reproduction that no one desires or plans for, but in reality it is the source of many new churches throughout the world. Splits resulting in plants have been called "splats" (Harrison, Cheyney, and Overstreet 2008, 102). They may be a result of leadership conflicts, power struggles, doctrinal differences, or simply interpersonal tensions. Whatever the cause, the result is that a faction of the church splits off and begins a new church under new leadership.[8]

These splits are seldom evangelistically motivated but are usually driven by the particular cause or personality that precipitated the split. They are a poor public testimony to the gospel and a direct contradiction of Jesus's prayer "that all of them may be one, Father, just as you are in me and I am in you. May they also be in us *so that the world may believe* that you have sent me" (John 17:21, emphasis added). Needless to say, we do not recommend this approach to church reproduction! Nevertheless, in much the same way that the conflict between Paul and Barnabas resulted in two mission teams instead of one (Acts 15:39–40), God has used even church splits it to create new churches that will in turn reach new people.

Figure 7.2
House Church Sub-Division


House Church
Church Planter
Nucleus 1
Apprentice
Nucleus 2
Apprentice
Stage 1
House Church 1
leadership team
coached by
church planter
Church
Planter
New
evangelistic
Bible study
House Church 2
leadership team
coached by
church planter
Stage 2

Regional Strategies for Church Planting

We now consider strategies for planting several churches in a geographic region. The focus here is less on methods for planting a single church or reproducing existing churches than on determining the best long-term strategy for reaching a metropolitan area, county, or state. This will take into consideration the location of church plants, deployment of church-planting resources, and how the movement will expand from its beginnings. These approaches are summarized in table 7.3.

Harvest Priority Church Planting

As church planters enter a new region, the question is, where to begin? In the early years of Protestant pioneer mission work, missionaries often evangelized from village to village and then focused church-planting efforts on those locations where people were most receptive to the gospel. This approach is in keeping with the harvest priority principle discussed in chapter 4: one should reap the spiritual harvest where the harvest is ripe.

Table 7.3
Regional Strategies for Church Planting

Approach	Features
Harvest priority church planting	Evangelistic efforts are conducted in various locations and a church is planted in the location of greatest responsiveness
Strategic beachhead church planting	Seeks to establish at least one church in every unevangelized city or town, usually separated by geographical distance
Cluster church planting	Seeks to establish a cluster of related churches in a limited geographical area
Spreading vine church planting	Churches are planted in consecutive cities or towns, often along major transportation routes

Dandelion, spontaneous, or diaspora church planting	(House) churches are planted spontaneously as local believers (who may be diaspora Christians) naturally spread the gospel

All things being equal, this approach makes sense. When planters begin with a responsive location, churches are be planted that can later evangelize the less responsive areas. If one starts with a less responsive area, it may be a very long time before the first churches are planted, during which time resources are bound up and other more responsive areas remain without the gospel. The harvest priority approach seems to be the best way to deploy limited resources and manpower.

But usually all things are *not* equal. For example, one must ask how the receptivity of a locality is determined. A people may initially respond very positively to the *Jesus* film or an evangelistic "blitz" but then be uninterested in more serious, long-term discipleship and spiritual change. On the other hand, a group that is initially resistant, or takes more time to consider the claims of the gospel, might eventually make a deeper commitment to Christ and become a stronger church, able to reproduce. Most non-Christians need time to fully understand the meaning of the gospel in order to make an informed decision.

Furthermore, the gospel most often spreads from urban centers to outlying villages, but it spreads very slowly from villages to urban centers. Though an urban setting may initially be more resistant to the gospel, it can potentially have a greater long-term impact on the region. Thus focusing exclusively on immediate receptivity may be a less strategic approach in the

long run.

Strategic Beachhead Church Planting

The strategic beachhead approach seeks to establish a spiritual foothold in several political, commercial, or educational centers. From those influential cities, churches can be planted in outlying suburbs, towns, or villages. This reflects the apostle Paul's focus on planting churches in centers such as Corinth and Ephesus, from which the gospel would emanate to the surrounding environs. In the early 1990s, as the Iron Curtain fell in Europe, many mission agencies sought to send church-planting teams to each major city of a formerly closed country; some attempted to send one team to the capital city of each former Warsaw Pact country. Sometimes various locations were sought out where no churches existed whatsoever, though these locations were quite a distance from each other. The advantage to this approach is that the gospel is spread over a broad region and less concentrated in a limited area. If entirely unreached locations are chosen, then church-planting energies are focused on the most spiritually needy.

The drawback to the strategic beachhead approach is that resources can be spread too thin over a large area. The church-planting teams and churches planted may thus be separated by hours of travel with little possibility for mutual encouragement, sharing of resources, or developing synergy to have a significant impact in any one region. It can end up being a shotgun approach, with the danger that isolated and weak churches are planted. Both the church planters and the churches themselves can become easily discouraged if progress is slow.

Cluster Church Planting

Cluster church planting is opposite to the strategic beachhead approach: the initial goal is to plant several churches in a *more limited* geographical area, such as a single major metropolitan region. Rather than church-planting teams being spread far and wide, they are clustered in one area. The strength of this approach is that the church planters and the emerging churches are in reasonable proximity to one another so that they can meet for mutual encouragement, have periodic common celebrations, offer joint training of workers, and assist one another in evangelistic and other efforts. If the movement is being driven by lay leaders, churches in the cluster can share lay preachers, further reducing the load on any one church. The church-planting team is spread over several churches, which heightens local lay leaders' responsibility for the individual church plants.

A sense of movement can develop when churches are planted in clusters. For example, Nairobi Chapel in Kenya has planted twenty-five Nairobi churches, many of which are in the slums, and has a vision to plant three hundred additional churches, at least half of them in Nairobi itself, by 2020 (Muriu 2007). In clusters, churches don't feel so isolated. They can learn from one another in the process, and synergy and a sense of movement ensue. Ed Stetzer and Phillip Connor's 2007 study of 2,080 church plants from twelve denominations in North America demonstrates the importance of church-planter peer support for church survivability. Such support is more readily available in the cluster approach.[9]

Church reproduction using the multi-mother approach is

better facilitated by clustering. The region eventually becomes more saturated with the gospel, with a higher church per resident ratio, and the movement will have higher visibility. A study by Daniel Olson of Indiana University–South Bend that examined the factors contributing to the growth of new Church of the Nazarene congregations confirms the advantage of cluster church planting. He summarizes: "The focal question is whether there is an advantage when such congregations are located nearby already existing congregations. The answer is yes. In fact, location in a county with more Nazarene churches and more Nazarene members is one of the single strongest predictors of greater average attendance in the fifth year" (Olson 2002).

One of the most impressive examples of urban cluster church planting is the Encuentro con Dios movement in Lima, Peru. From 1973 to 1997, a church with 117 members developed into a movement, planting thirty-eight churches with a total membership of nearly 16,000 and a weekly attendance of 25,000 (Turnidge 1999; Mangham 1987). Austria is considered one of the most difficult countries in Europe for Protestant church planting; yet in the greater Vienna area, a cluster of church plants was launched in 1972 and grew to twelve churches by 1995. Growing out of a home Bible study, the first church, known for its location on Tulpengasse, in Vienna, was planted in 1972. Not until six years later, in 1978, was the first daughter church planted in Floridsdorf. But then additional churches followed more rapidly: one in 1980, two in 1984, and then nearly one per year. A remarkable feature of this movement is that it was Plymouth Brethren in orientation, being largely lay led with

relatively few salaried pastors or church planters—and this took place in one of the most professional and culturally sophisticated centers of Europe! Similarly the cluster approach was combined with mother-daughter church planting in metro Paris, France—another difficult place to plant churches. A group associated with TEAM missionaries planted six churches over a fifteen-year period. Another group led by the France-Mission planted five churches in eight years, and these churches in turn planted another daughter and two granddaughter churches in the following years (Vajko 1996, 56–68, 86–93).

Numerous other examples could be recounted of cluster church planting in urban areas around the globe. Glenn Kendall (1990) describes it in a more rural movement in Rwanda. Baptist churches grew in fifteen years from a regional group of one thousand members to a national movement with over seventeen thousand members and more than three hundred new churches. The key was mobilizing national leaders to plant clusters of up to twelve churches rather than individual ones. Large evangelistic efforts generated enthusiasm, and five to seven new churches would be started during each thrust.

In such cluster movements, planting daughter churches often becomes part of the ethos of the churches. Rather than a single central church planting all the daughter churches, resulting in church addition, it is expected that newly planted churches will also mother new churches, thus resulting in church multiplication. As church members move to other locations, they often affiliate with another church of the movement (thus conserving fruit), or they become the seed for

a new church plant. The only disadvantage to this approach is that considerable resources are concentrated (at least initially) in one region while other regions remain unreached. If receptivity to the gospel is slow, long-term commitment will be necessary.

Spreading Vine Church Planting

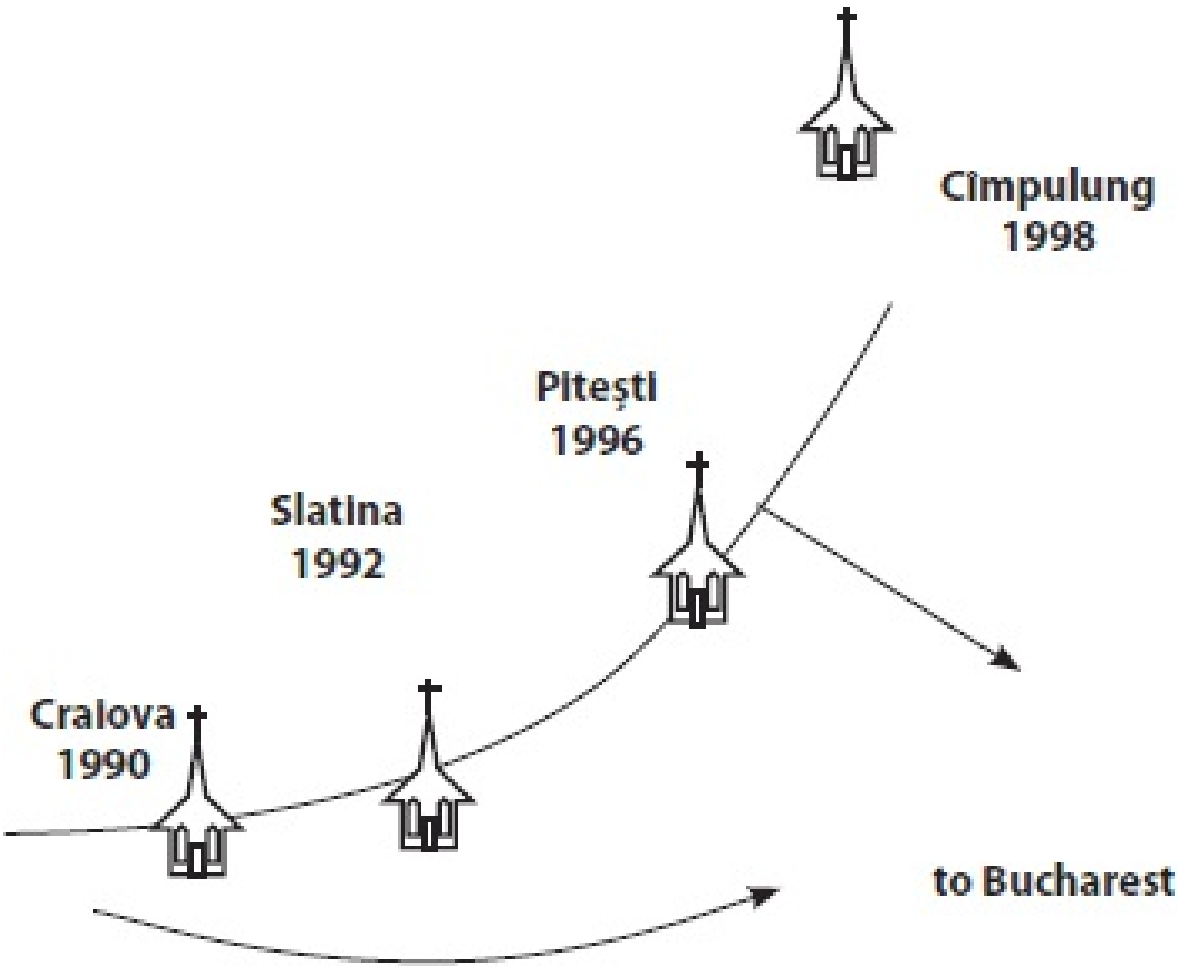
Strawberry plants grow and spread by extending a runner that then sets roots and grows a daughter plant. This new plant in turn sends a runner to start another, and so on. Many vines spread similarly, by extending stems along the ground or another surface and then periodically anchoring themselves. Church-planting movements can also grow like strawberry plants or vines, by planting one church after another, from one town to the next, often following a major trade route or highway. Each church planted becomes the launching point for another daughter church in the next town or city down the road. A simple example of this approach is the church planting by the Evangelical Free Church in southern Romania led by American missionaries when communism collapsed (figure 7.3). This was not an especially rapidly spreading vine, but it illustrates the approach. Churches were planted beginning in Craiova (pop. 300,000), then following the highway northeastward to Slatina (pop. 85,000), to Piteşti (pop. 180,000), and finally to Cîmpulung (pop. 44,000).[10] Instead of following a highway or road, the string of new churches might follow a canal or river. Figure 7.4 illustrates how churches were planted by the German Allianz Mission extending out from Bamako, the capital of Mali, following the Niger Canal.

The spreading vine approach has many of the same advantages as cluster planting and is especially well suited for more rural areas. Each most recently planted church is responsible to assist with the planting of the next church; thus church planting is instilled in the ethos of the movement. One possible drawback is that once a church has helped plant the

next church down the road, it may feel that its obligation for church planting is fulfilled. Also, if vocational church planters are assisting the movement, they may need to relocate frequently to keep moving with the spreading vine.

Figure 7.3

Church Planting in Southern Romania



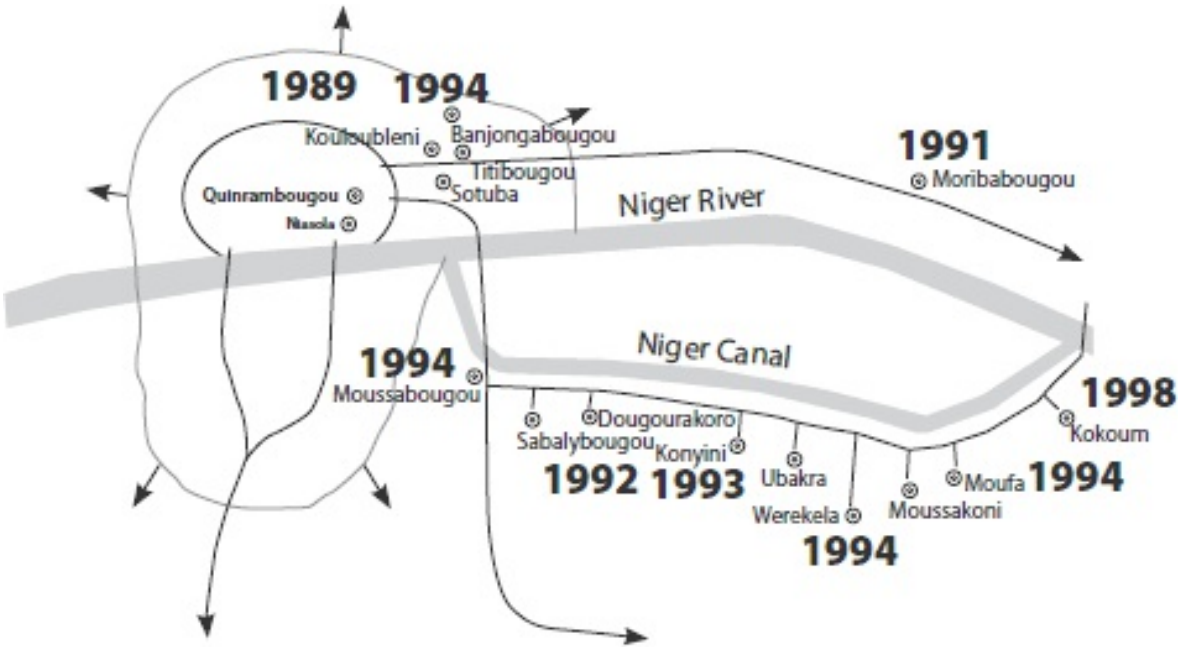
Dandelion, Spontaneous, or Diaspora Church Planting

The seeds of a dandelion float on their fluffy parachutes, blown by the wind, and randomly land wherever they find a foothold to sprout, sink roots, and become another plant. So too churches may be planted at almost random locations as Christians move about. As a result of employment, affordable housing, family needs, war, famine, migration, study, or any other number of crises or opportunities, believers move to new

locations. Wherever they find themselves, they share their faith and form new fellowships that grow into churches. This spread of the gospel is more spontaneous and less planned. But this is nonetheless an effective means of planting new churches, maximizing natural personal relationships, mobilizing laypersons, and often pioneering otherwise unreached areas.

This is indeed the manner by which the gospel spread in the first century. As persecution of the church broke out in Jerusalem, we read in Acts, "those who had been scattered preached the word wherever they went" (8:4). Luke later continues, "Now those who had been scattered by the persecution in connection with Stephen traveled as far as Phoenicia, Cyprus and Antioch" (11:19); this resulted in the planting of the first predominantly Gentile church, in Antioch (11:20–21). Since then God has continued to use the most unlikely means to move his people about, bring the gospel to new places, and plant new churches.

Figure 7.4
Church Planting in the Bamako Region of Mali



In Ethiopia, Gobena calls one variety of this "the go home . . . AND TELL THEM . . . model." "This is a natural model where a Christian young man or woman who received the Lord Jesus Christ makes a conscious decision prayerfully to go to his or her village or locality (where in most cases the parents live) to witness to his or her relatives. Many times this leads to the conversion of the whole family, relatives and neighbors, and then the church planting takes place in the village" (Gobena 1997, 15). Kinship relations are often the most natural and effective ways for the gospel to spread, as whole families or clans respond to the gospel and build the core of a new church. In similar fashion a businessperson might move to a new location where he or she witnesses, leads others to Christ, and begins a small fellowship out of which a church grows. The diaspora of Christians can be either relatively local or quite international. For example, an entire mission strategy has been forged to mobilize the thousands of Filipino emigrant workers

to share the gospel wherever they go (Pantoja, Tira, and Wan 2004). In an age of globalization, the possibilities for such international witness resulting in church planting are limitless.

For this approach to be effective, the believers who have relocated will need to be well prepared. In the Philippines a training program has been designed precisely to better equip Christian international workers for such ministry. Furthermore, ongoing equipping will be necessary because often the churches that are planted are small and lay led. The more spontaneous and rather random manner in which the churches are planted can make the coordination of equipping and the development of movement synergy a challenge.

Case Study 7.3

Tokyo Horizon Chapel

Japan is known as one of the most difficult countries for evangelism and church planting. Tokyo Horizon Chapel is, however, a stand-out example of mother-daughter church planting. The church, established in 1991 by Pastor Koichi Hirano, had by 2007 planted sixteen daughter churches, though the mother church had a regular attendance of only about 150. The daughter churches are quite diverse, ranging in size from ten to seventy in attendance.

Unlike many Japanese pastors, Hirano is willing to experiment and take steps of faith. He and his team avoid investing time with many small matters, programs, and details of ministry, but focus rather on larger plans and vision.

Daughter churches are typically started when members relocate to another community and begin meetings in their homes. As the group grows, a public meeting place may be rented. Pastor Hirano may meet weekly with the group on a weeknight to get them started and then reduce his presence to monthly. Sometimes video recordings of the Sunday sermons are used at the new church.

Eventually a church-planting pastor will be sent from the mother church. These pastors are usually trained in the Bible school operated by the mother church. They are often bivocational, even taking menial jobs, until the church grows large enough to support them. Their bivocational status does not hurt their credibility; rather it is often seen positively as evidence of a deep level of sacrifice and commitment to the church and ministry. Hirano meets every two weeks on a weeknight with the younger pastors. All the pastors meet quarterly (every three months) for a "huddle," for which some travel up to four hours. They spend twenty-four hours together for a program that includes play, devotions, prayer, and encouragement.

Clearly, key factors in Tokyo Horizon's effectiveness lie in the encouragement of laypersons who relocate to become the catalyst for a new church, and in the training and mobilization of the bivocational pastors who give leadership to the new churches. The senior pastor has made the training and mentoring of the church-planting pastors a high priority in his ministry

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In this chapter we have surveyed a wide variety of approaches to pioneer church planting, church reproduction, and regional strategies. Each of these approaches can be appropriate and effective under the right circumstances. Often they can be combined, as in the example of Tokyo Chapel (case study 7.3). Church planters and movement strategists will need to carefully consider not only the local circumstances but also the gifts of the church planters and resources available to them in order to make the wisest decision in selecting a strategy. Ultimately one must seek the guidance of the Holy Spirit as the various options and factors are prayerfully weighed.