

Reproducing



Strengthening and Sending

Though the reproduction of new congregations begins here, multiplication at every level of ministry should have been built into the church from the start. Reproduction begins by teaching new believers how to share their faith, teaching disciples how to disciple others, teaching leaders how to train up new disciples and other leaders, and reproducing cells as the spiritual building blocks of the church. Reproduction thus becomes part of the very DNA of the church. With the birthing of new *congregations*, kingdom impact is also multiplied and whole *movements* can be launched. A single congregation, no matter how large, will eventually plateau in size and be limited in its ability to reach new people groups and bring the gospel to the ends of the earth. Reproduction is not only the natural outgrowth of every living organism but also God's desire for the church, be it through the planting of daughter churches, the planting of pioneer churches at greater distance, or partnering with others who launch new kingdom communities.

Overview of Phase

Biblical Examples

Acts 13:1–3: The church at Antioch sends its best leaders as missionaries

Acts 9:31: The church(es) in Judea was (were) multiplied*

Acts 19; Colossians 4:12–13; Revelation 2–3: The church at Ephesus gives rise to a cluster of churches in Asia Minor

Key Steps

1. Sustain evangelistic thrust
 2. Prepare the church for reproduction
 3. Determine the location and approach of possible daughter church or pioneer church plants
 4. Launch the daughter or pioneer church plant
 5. Send cross-cultural missionaries
 6. Participate in common efforts with other churches
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Critical Issues

1. Avoid slipping into maintenance mode
 2. Launch the first daughter or pioneer church plant well
 3. Continue multiplication through evangelism and equipping of leaders
 4. Be willing to take steps of faith in obedience to the Great Commission
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*The Western and Byzantine texts read “So the churches . . . were multiplied” (Bruce 1977, 208). The object of multiplied in Acts 9:31 is not the disciples but churches. The dispersed Jerusalem church is sometimes considered collectively, but Paul referred to it as “churches” (Gal. 1:22; 1 Thess. 2:14). Note that this *multiplication* occurred after the dispersion and a time of spiritual strengthening and growth.

Counterintuitive Convictions in Moving to Reproduction

Before discussing the various tasks of this phase, we address several convictions that are essential to a church's becoming a reproducing church. These convictions move church reproduction from an obligation to a passion and joy. They should already have become part of the church's ethos during the previous phases, but now they will be put to the test at a new level as the church anticipates this move. These convictions are counterintuitive—they go against what one would normally expect. Therefore they must be taught and lived continually.

Success Is Defined by Impact, Not Size

As we noted in chapter 1, the churches we seek to plant must be kingdom communities that have an impact on lives, families, communities, and beyond. The goal cannot be merely large numbers of people attending church services or meetings without experiencing the transforming lordship of Jesus Christ. In some ways large churches can have more immediate community impact than small churches because of their greater visibility and resources. But smaller churches that multiply can ultimately have greater kingdom impact as more lives, families, and communities come under the gracious and powerful influence of Jesus Christ.

Every true church wants to see more people transformed by the gospel. As people become devoted followers of Jesus Christ, they become responsible, serving members of the local church. In this sense it is good that every church wants to grow. But if it is to reproduce, the church's vision must be greater than merely reaching more individuals. Even being the

largest church in the city or state is too small a vision. The vision must include depth—lives and whole communities that are touched by the gospel.

Growth Is Measured by the Capacity to Release, Not Retain

One of Milfred Minatrea's nine essential practices of missional churches is "Measure growth by capacity to release, not retain" (2004, 111). If churches are to reproduce, significant resources, both personal and financial, must be allocated to the cause. A high level of commitment and sacrifice will be necessary. Every church will always have need for more workers and resources. Giving some of these away to launch a new church is costly. Not only will the needs in the mother church remain, but the resources to meet them will, in the short term, actually be *fewer*. A church will be willing to make such sacrifices only if it is convinced that growth is not measured by attendance, buildings, and budgets but by reproduction that increases overall kingdom impact. This is the spirit that characterized the church of Antioch as it released its beloved leaders Barnabas and Paul[1] for the wider mission to which God had called them (Acts 13:1–3).

One can only imagine the joy in the Antioch church when Paul and Barnabas returned to report on the fruit of their mission and the churches that had been planted (Acts 14:26–28). Reproducing churches everywhere have since discovered that there is much greater joy and satisfaction in seeing workers mobilized and released, new churches birthed, communities and people groups reached with the gospel, and a

movement launched, than in merely growing a single larger church. Minatrea rightly adds, “Missional churches are not simply releasing members to start churches. Their focus is on starting church-starting movements. Releasing members to start new churches is addition. Releasing members to start church-planting churches results in movements” (2004, 122).

Giving up members and resources to launch new church plants does not mean that the mother church cannot continue to grow. Indeed countless examples can be given of churches that have not only planted numerous daughter churches but have continued to grow and become megachurches. The measure of success is not size in itself but rather obedience to God’s leading resulting in kingdom impact. This vision involves selflessness and a great step of faith, which leads us to the next point.

Acting in Faith Is Prudent, Not Seeking Security

Whenever a church gives away workers and resources to launch a new church plant, faith is exercised: believers trust God to prosper the plant as well as fill the gap left in the mother church. Our natural human tendency is to gravitate to the secure and predictable. But in the kingdom of God, opting for the secure and predictable can result in severing a church from dependency on God—the spiritual lifeline of the church. One of the sins of the church in Laodicea was self-sufficiency (Rev. 3:17). Steps of faith keep a church dependent on God.

There is a difference between a prudent step of faith and “bungee-jumping-without-a-cord” (Williams n.d., 3). A fine line divides a bold step of faith in God from a foolish leap, testing

God. The difference is often spiritually discerned. However, if God has blessed a church with growth in the early phases, it is a reasonable act of faith to trust God for continued growth as the church releases and reproduces for greater kingdom impact. Jesus himself taught that the kingdom *will* grow and spread as a tiny mustard seed becoming a large tree and as the unseen yeast leavening the whole lump of dough (Matt. 13:31–35). Results will not be calculable in proportion to initial appearances but in proportion to God’s supernatural working. It is only prudent to trust God for such results.

Begin with Multiplying Disciples and Leaders, Not Programs or Institutions

Neil Cole has said, “If you can’t reproduce disciples, you can’t reproduce leaders. If you can’t reproduce leaders, you can’t reproduce churches. And if you can’t reproduce churches, you can’t reproduce movements” (quoted in Williams n.d., 4). The multiplication of disciples provides the source of leaders who are necessary to launch new congregations. This principle applies to a house church multiplication as well as large church multiplication, in every part of the world and in any context. Sometimes we want to see large results without giving attention to the basic necessities. Basic discipleship is, however, the fundamental building block of reproduction, because church reproduction is not primarily about reproducing institutions or programs but about reproducing spiritual life. That life begins with evangelism and the new birth, which grows in discipleship, develops to maturity with strong leadership, and functions organically in

cells. When these reproduce, the infrastructure for natural reproduction and multiplication is in place. Overlooking or attempting to bypass this fundamental principle will result in anemic reproduction, if there is any reproduction at all.

Simple Beginnings, Not Big Budgets and Large Numbers

Churches that wait until they reach a certain size or until they can raise a certain amount of extra funds before reproducing will rarely ever do so. The local needs never seem to be adequately met, and the threshold to launch typically increases with time. Reproducing churches are less concerned about fully meeting local needs, because they know that this will never be possible! Over and over again, research confirms that reproducing churches find ways to plant new churches that are not dependent on large budgets or large memberships. This is not only true of grassroots house church movements in the Majority World, like those described by David Garrison (2004a), but also in Western contexts. For example, Robert Vajko reports on a church in Grenoble, France, that was able to plant six daughter churches without giving any extra funds to do so. He concludes, “I discovered that as soon as a group bases its church multiplication on how much money is available, they stop planting churches” (2005, 297).

This is, of course, possible only when the new churches are primarily lay led (with perhaps assistance from the mother church pastor) or have bivocational pastors, and when inexpensive or free meeting places (such as homes or public venues) are used for the initial phases. Creative approaches can be taken. For example, mother and daughter church can

share the services and expenses of one paid pastor. In the greater Munich area, retired pastors with energy and vision gave initial leadership to several church plants, costing the plants only the reimbursements for their basic ministry expenses.

It is sometimes recommended that a church reach a “critical mass” before reproducing. It is reasonable to guard the mother church from being too severely weakened in the process. However, what constitutes a critical mass will vary and may be fewer members than suspected. Vajko’s (1996) study of reproducing churches in the greater Paris area showed that most churches planted daughter churches giving only twelve to fifteen members to the launch team. For house churches, a critical mass in the mother church might be fewer than twenty persons; for churches with lay leaders but needing to pay rent, the critical mass may be forty persons; for churches with paid pastors and a mortgage, the critical mass might be one hundred. Highly attractional and program-oriented churches often “launch large” with a core launch group of one hundred or even two hundred persons. Since the average church has fewer than two hundred members, this approach is an option for very few. Much will of course depend on the overall strategy and church structure. But no matter what the church size or budget, church reproduction will *always* involve a step of faith beyond the safe, predictable, and calculable, a step that stretches the resources of the mother church. This spirit of faith and vision, not size or budget, characterizes reproducing churches.

Messy and Unpredictable, Not Neat and Calculable

This principle is not an argument against careful and prayerful planning. Rather, it is a reminder that a daughter or pioneer church plant will encounter surprising breakthroughs as well as unexpected setbacks. There will be spiritual opposition and many unanticipated turns of events. Not every attempt at reproduction will meet with visible success. Often opposition comes hand in hand with opportunity, as Paul wrote of his ministry in Ephesus: “A great door for effective work has opened to me, and there are many who oppose me” (1 Cor. 16:9). As a movement grows, local government or religious authorities may take notice and create problems. As people are reached for Christ, they often bring broken lives and relationships into the church. They may have many personal or relational dysfunctions that inhibit the building of a healthy and trusting fellowship. Satan may incite division, false teaching, and conflict. All of these challenges were faced by the early church, and we can expect to experience them today. Yet the first Christians also experienced the grace and transforming power of God in the midst of the challenges. We can count on the same God to be at work in our efforts.

Furthermore, the church-planting team must be flexible—on the one hand remaining faithful to the ultimate vision of launching a reproducing movement with kingdom impact, while on the other hand responding creatively to opportunities and unexpected developments. God may open doors to minister to people groups or subcultures that were not part of the original vision. He may at the same time close doors that seemed to be the most strategic. Here again we can learn from the Pauline

missionary band as they attempted to move in the direction of Asia and then to Bithynia, but were hindered each time by the Holy Spirit. Only with the Macedonian vision did God's plan become clearer (Acts 16:6–10). The beginnings in Philippi, the first church planted in Macedonia, were meager (a women's prayer meeting) and filled with spiritual and political opposition (harassment by an evil spirit and imprisonment, Acts 16:11–38). Yet in spite of its unpromising beginnings, the Philippian church became one of Paul's dearest partner churches, contributing to his support needs (Phil. 4:14–15). The best of plans must remain open to the leading of the Holy Spirit and respond to circumstances as they arise.

For a summary of the essential traits of reproducing churches, see case study 14.1.

Tasks of the Reproduction Phase: Strengthening and Sending

Sustain Evangelistic Thrust

Church planting is hard work not only for the church planter and initial launch team, but for all the committed members during the early years. Often by the time the church has matured to a point of considering reproduction, the members are weary and want to rest and enjoy the fruits of their labors. Care for new believers and their assimilation into the life of the church demand increasing attention and energy. Many will have the impression that there is work enough just sustaining the gains that have been made during the young life of the

church. Such concerns and fatigue are fully understandable but can lead to stagnation and spiritual lethargy if allowed to become the dominant spirit.

Case Study 14.1

Why Do Some Churches Reproduce?

Robert J. Vajko (1996; 2005) studied churches from several denominations in France and identified fourteen qualities that all reproducing churches evidenced:

1. A vision for reproduction
2. Willing to take risks
3. A spirit of selfgiving
4. Growing themselves
5. Know how to plant daughter churches
6. Sensitive to the Spirit of God
7. Finances not central
8. Care for the training of their own church planters
9. Leadership base multiplied
10. A Pauline vision
11. Receptive areas sought
12. Homogeneous populations targeted
13. Creativity is encouraged
14. Clear principles

The vision of evangelism, discipleship, kingdom impact, and church multiplication must be continually refreshed and

refocused if growth is to be sustained and reproduction is to become a reality. The passion for seeing lost persons reconciled to God and transformed is best kept before the congregation by ongoing teaching, vision casting, evangelistic emphases, training, and outreach efforts. Regular testimonies of new believers can be a great stimulus.

New believers themselves are often the best evangelists. Their faith is fresh, their testimony compelling, and their zeal uncontainable. Unlike most who have been Christians for years, they still have many close relationships with non-Christian friends, relatives, and colleagues with whom they can naturally share their faith or whom they can invite to evangelistic events. Not having been immersed in a Christian subculture, they still speak the language and think in terms of the contemporary culture. They can thus potentially communicate the Christian message in ways more easily understood by their peers. Such new Christians should be equipped, mobilized, and encouraged to maintain healthy relationships with unbelievers and share their faith. They too are often the best candidates to form the missional team when the first daughter or pioneer church plant is being launched. What they may lack in maturity they make up for in enthusiasm, energy, and understanding of the unreached.

Prepare the Church for Reproduction

A vision to plant a daughter church does not develop accidentally or automatically. As we have noted above, the leadership must cast the vision for reproduction and multiplication not only by instilling these as core values but

also by explicit teaching and vision casting. Dietrich Schindler recommends, based on his twenty years of church planting and studies in Germany, that vision for reproduction be “time released” like the tiny capsules that begin releasing their medication early on and continue over time. “Time release is the discipline of setting the date of the next church plant shortly after the current church has been launched” (Schindler 2008, 322). Vision tends to “leak” over time and be lost. The spiritual needs of the city, region, nation, and world must be continually held before the congregation. The Great Commission, taking steps of faith, and God’s heart for the lost should be recurrent teaching themes. At a church leadership retreat followed by a congregational meeting, these questions might be prayerfully considered:

What are the biblical reasons to start another church?
How does church reproduction fit into our calling and mission?

What is God doing that indicates this may be the time to begin reproduction?

What obstacles are there to reproduction? How can we overcome them?

How can we mobilize more workers and resources to start another church?

What steps of faith are appropriate at this time?

Where are the spiritual needs greatest and what opportunities has God opened up to us?

The church must be spiritually prepared for reproduction, just as women prepare physically and mentally for giving birth. The vision and plans for church reproduction must be bathed in prayer for discernment, that the Lord of the harvest would raise up workers (Matt. 9:38) and that God would open doors of opportunity (Col. 4:3). The church can expect increased spiritual opposition when considering such a move. Bible studies on Joshua taking the land, Nehemiah building the walls, or Haggai on spiritual priorities and sacrifice to restore the temple can be helpful to challenge and prepare the church for bold steps of faith for Christ's kingdom purposes.

Careful preparation is especially important for a church's first effort to reproduce. The mother church has no previous experience to build on. If the first effort fails or encounters serious difficulties, the congregation may develop a negative attitude toward church reproduction that will be difficult to overcome. On the other hand, if the first effort succeeds, it will be considerably easier to motivate the church to plant additional churches in the near future and build on that experience.

Determine Location and Approach for Possible Church Plants

Two strategic questions must be answered as a young church considers launching its first church plant: location and church-planting approach. Though we consider them separately, the two decisions are closely interrelated.

DETERMINING THE LOCATION OF THE CHURCH PLANT

Broadly speaking, either the new plant will be local by way of cell division (also known as the mother-daughter church plant), or the new church will be a pioneer plant in a new, more distant location. If it is a pioneer church plant, then the steps of preparation and planning discussed in chapters 9 and 10 can be followed to determine the focus people and build the church-planting team. Unreached communities or people groups where the spiritual need is greatest can be identified. Evangelistic efforts might be conducted in various communities, and the most responsive could be chosen for the new church plant. One of the most common ways to reproduce through pioneer planting happens when members of the church move to another city or new community. They can become the catalyst for a pioneer church plant in that location, much like the Jerusalem Christians who were scattered by persecution and planted churches throughout Judea and Samaria (Acts 8:1; 11:19–21). Today church members may be scattered for reasons such as famine, war, economic opportunity, available jobs, or housing.

Location can also be determined when members of the church have relatives in a distant community who are believers or open to the gospel. Sometimes members in the church have come from distant towns where they still have many relatives and friends. Such contacts can become key persons in opening the door for a church plant in that community. This can be particularly important in more traditional societies, where outsiders may have difficulty gaining access to the community but extended family is always welcome.

If a number of persons from the mother church are commissioned for a more local plant, a somewhat different approach will be taken. One of the simplest ways of determining the location for the plant is to map out where the present members of the church currently live. Often one or more cell groups already meet in a particular district of the city or region and can serve as a potential core launch team for the new church. As a next step, the spiritual needs of the communities where such groups exist can be assessed. Communities that have very few or no churches would be given priority over those that already have churches.

Neighborhoods undergoing population growth might also be given priority over those that are in decline. Also, when several church members relocate in a nearby community, that community can become a potential location for a church plant. For example, housing in the city of Munich became so expensive that larger families with only one wage earner were forced to move to more affordable housing in suburbs or villages. A plan was devised to plant churches in towns along the commuter rail routes surrounding Munich, with such believers constituting the core groups. Several churches were planted in this manner.

A community might also be targeted where there is a critical social need that the potential church plant could address. For example, a middle-class church in Manila partnered with expatriate missionaries to plant a church in a poor squatter district, bringing both material and personal resources to the task. In addition to evangelism and Bible studies, community services such as preschool educational programs and tutoring

were launched.

DETERMINING THE APPROACH

In chapter 7 we outlined various approaches to both pioneer church planting and church reproduction. The planting church will want to prayerfully consider these options. The long-term goal to launch a multiplying movement should always be kept in mind. Some approaches multiply well in one context but not in another. For example, house church networks may multiply best in situations where there is considerable governmental or religious opposition or where extended family networks become the bases for house churches. The multisite approach is most effective in urban settings, where more program-oriented churches have access to many resources and where people have high expectations of quality and professionalism.

Furthermore, the regional strategies discussed in chapter 7 should be considered as part of a larger plan for multiplying churches in a region. Such longer-term planning and vision place the immediate church plant in a larger perspective. It is wise to consider such regional church-planting plans with other churches and possible partners in the area, so as to coordinate efforts, develop synergy, and demonstrate unity in the cause of Christ.

Launch the Daughter or Pioneer Church Plant

If a daughter church is being planted, then members living in the target community typically form the church-planting team. Others may be recruited to move to the location or participate at a distance. This team will meet regularly over several months

to pray, plan, and grow together. Many of the preparatory tasks described in chapters 9 and 10 will be undertaken. Chapter 16 explains how to build the team. Several resources are available for launching a daughter church in the North American context (e.g., Logan and Ogne 1995; Harrison, Cheyney, and Overstreet 2008), and these may be adapted to other cultural contexts. The leadership of the new plant will be critically important. If a community is targeted but the believers there lack the necessary leadership skills, then someone with such skills should be recruited to the team. Leaders of the mother church can assist in the ministry of the daughter plant, or an apostolic church planter may assist. However, if multiplication is to occur, new leaders must be prepared to lead the new work under the coaching of an experienced church planter. They can begin meeting in the target community for outreach events and occasional worship services. At the appropriate time a commissioning service can be held in the mother church to bless and celebrate the launch.

Launching a pioneer church plant will be more challenging. A church planter or launch team may be recruited from the sponsor church, but because the pioneer plant is often at a considerable geographic distance from the sponsor, the team will need to relocate to live in the focus community and find employment there. More preparatory research may be necessary if the launch team is unfamiliar with the community or if a new ethnic group is to be reached. The steps outlined in chapters 9 and 10 can be followed.

Meanwhile, members of the initial apostolic church-planting team will have already phased out of all key ministry

responsibilities in the first church plant. They may now assist the new daughter or pioneer church plant, either directly or in a coaching role (illustrated in figure 14.1). Other possible roles for the apostolic church planter are explored below. This process of reproducing churches should continue repeatedly, with each generation of church plants continuing to reproduce and plant multiple churches (figure 14.2). The movement can be considered to be multiplying only when a third or fourth generation of churches has been planted, evidencing that the DNA of reproduction truly characterizes the movement.

Send Cross-Cultural Missionaries

Thus far we have spoken of church reproduction mainly in terms of local or regional church planting within the same culture as the initial church plant. But the vision for church reproduction must include a vision for the world and the unreached peoples who live without a viable and understandable gospel witness. For a young church plant such a vision may seem overwhelming or even presumptuous. However, many new congregations include in their early vision statements, core values, or prayer goals the desire to become a missionary-sending church. The vision can be stimulated by inviting visiting missionaries to speak, by sending members on short-term mission trips, by including world mission themes in biblical teaching and preaching, by regular prayer for missionaries and global needs, and by making available to the congregation mission-related literature. Most of all, the church should pray that the Lord of the harvest raise up global harvest workers from within the church (Matt. 9:38).

Figure 14.1
Church Reproduction

First Generation

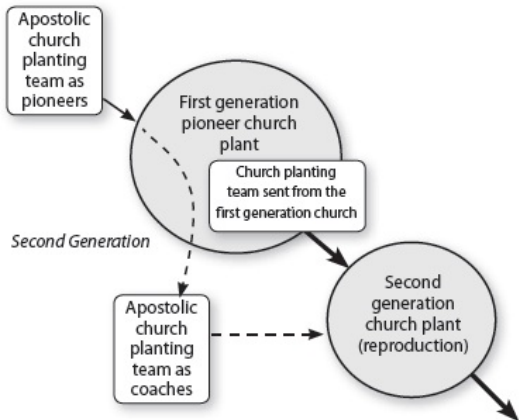
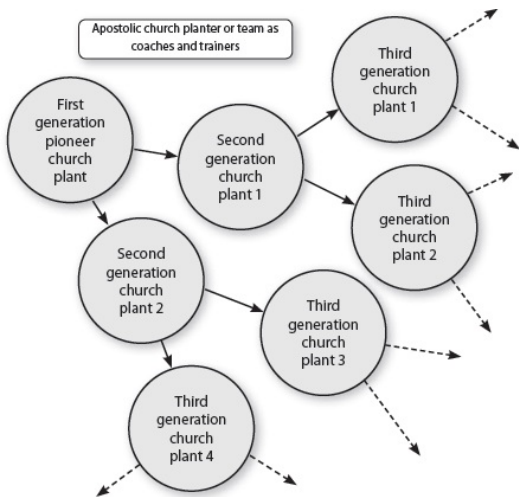


Figure 14.2
Church Multiplication



As God calls members of the congregation to cross-cultural mission work, they can be sent out through a mission sending agency, with the church contributing to their financial support together with other supporting churches. Or, as is increasingly the case with Majority World missionaries, the missionary may be bivocational, earning the majority of financial support through secular employment. Advocates of “business as

mission” call for Christian businessmen and women with international assignments or projects to see these as a means of both economic development and missional engagement. Christians in the Philippines have developed a whole strategy for world evangelization by mobilizing for mission Christian Filipinos who live and work in some 180 countries (cf. Pantoja, Tira, and Wan 2004).

As the church plant becomes a full participant in fulfilling the Great Commission by sending and supporting its own, this will be a sign of having come of age as a mature and full participant in the global body of Christ. However, the church will also experience great joy in knowing that it not only has been a recipient of missionary effort but is now a contributor so that others might benefit likewise.

Participate in Common Efforts with Other Churches

A spirit of independence tends to dominate American attitudes toward all of life, and it is often reflected in the way local churches relate to one another. However, as noted in chapter 3, the apostle Paul linked the churches he planted with one another in various ways. Today such partnerships and relationships are no less important. They may come in the form of associations, denominations, movement networks, local evangelical alliances, or common mission and diaconal efforts. There are many ministries such as theological education, missionary sending, and Christian media that a single church can rarely sustain alone.

Such partnerships and cooperation are also a sign of unity with the larger body of Christ (John 17:11, 20–23). This spiritual

unity does not necessarily entail structural union but does involve a spirit of fellowship, cooperation, and common cause. An overemphasis on planting churches among homogeneous, strictly defined people groups can lead to ethnocentrism and even reinforce divisions within the larger church. A spirit of unity across ethnic, national, and confessional lines must be intentionally instilled in a church plant (Gal. 3:28; Eph. 2:11–22; cf. LOP 1, 1978; Padilla 1982). Ken Baker describes this as a move from being “evangelistically strategic” to “kingdom strategic” (2005, 166).

Alliances with other churches have the added benefit of stimulating church reproduction. For example, Robert Vajko discovered in France that “churches that are part of a fellowship of churches tend to reproduce themselves more than independent churches. My study of reproducing churches showed that the most reproductive churches, not surprisingly, were a part of a movement that encouraged reproduction” (2005, 299). This may be less the case in other contexts, but the general principle applies: synergy emerges when like-minded churches work together in mutual encouragement and vision. The total effect becomes greater than the sum of its parts.

Furthermore, as Tom Steffen notes, “an Association of Churches provides a second level of leadership that circulates among the churches, providing encouragement and challenge” (2001, 184). It also can help churches remain faithful to Scripture, hold forth a vision for continued mission, and negotiate conflict that a single local congregation is unable to resolve alone. Much as the Jerusalem Council and the apostles

provided practical and theological guidance for first-century churches, church associations or denominations can provide stability and guidance for a movement. They can also help churches resist becoming overly dominated by a strong leader and can encourage small churches that are struggling or have weak leaders. One of the most strategic moves an association can make is to establish a regional church-planting or missionary-training center (see chapter 17).

Of course, church associations all too often evolve into self-justifying bureaucracies that consume resources and lack movement-promoting character and vision. Mission organizations have at times imposed denominational structures and offices that reflect the sending denominations but are poorly suited to the needs of the churches. Association structures should grow organically as needed, with clearly defined goals and in response to the felt needs and vision of the national churches themselves. Movement leaders should be those with the highest level of trust and respect of the local believers.

The Apostolic Church Planter Role: From Multiplier to Memory

Though Paul was the model apostolic church planter who continually moved on, entrusting the pastoral leadership to local elders, leaving the churches he planted was not easy. Sometimes he was driven from town by persecution (e.g., Acts 14:5–6; 19–20), but other times he departed willingly with tears (Acts 20:36–38). In Acts 21:1 Luke describes the team's

departure as having “torn ourselves away from them.” Any church planter who has invested much time, energy, and prayer in the people of the church will relate to these passages. The planter is in many ways a spiritual father or mother to the believers, and a unique bond grows between them. And yet the apostolic planter will move on, as did Paul with his team.

What will the church planter do after becoming a “memory,” departing from the church plant? First, following the example of Paul, he or she will maintain contact with the church and not sever all relations. One must maintain a certain distance so as to allow local leaders to truly lead, yet those leaders may seek the counsel of the planter from time to time. Steffen (2001, 190–91) lists these healthy ways to maintain the relationship:

- prayer
- correspondence
- wise and discreet financial assistance
- subscription to culturally appropriate literature
- culturally appropriate books, tapes, or videos
- assistance in schooling
- periodical visits
- e-mails
- partnerships and networks for training

As the planter departs, several options exist for his or her continued ministry.[\[2\]](#) Some who are of a more pioneering spirit

will choose to recruit partners from the church plant to help plant another church. Others with strong teaching gifts may choose to develop a ministry of equipping national church planters. That might occur by informally mentoring or coaching new church planters, producing culturally appropriate materials to aid evangelists and church planters, offering training seminars, or establishing a church planter training institute. Yet others with administrative gifts may choose to assist with the formation of a regional association of churches, development of missionary-sending structures, or building the infrastructure of the emerging movement (though this would be an option only after numerous churches had already been planted). The church planter ceases to be a multiplier and becomes a memory only in relation to the church just planted. The planter remains a multiplier in the broader sense. In each of these cases, the church planter continues to reproduce himself or herself in the next generation of church planters and to facilitate the ongoing development of the movement.