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Embracing house churches

Traditional and organic unity. An unlikely duo, maybe, but a dynamic one. More conventional churches are now supporting the house church movement. Multisite churches are launching sites in homes, traditional churches are providing resources to house churches and vice versa. As a result, churches are finding new ways outside of seminaries to train people to lead a congregation, pastor a campus or start a small group.

Underscoring this idea of traditional and nontraditional unity is a kingdom mindset that recognizes the need for churches of all sizes, shapes and forms to come together to reach the world. The caution: Training leaders too quickly or training the wrong leaders during the reproduction process poses a threat to solid, authentic leadership.

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‘Almost real’ experience

Multisite churches are no longer new, but the technology they’re using to reproduce themselves and enhance the worshipper’s experience is.

At NewSpring Church based in Anderson, S.C., (NewSpring.cc) attendees at the church’s new Greenville, S.C., campus aren’t sure if they’re watching Senior Pastor Perry Noble live or on video. That’s because NewSpring uses a telepresence system that syncs two video signals live over the Internet. NewSpring creates an “almost real” experience by using a lockdown shot on a center screen that stretches across the length of the stage accompanied by two image screens on both sides of the stage. The result—and the subject of numerous conversations Chief Strategic Officer Tony Morgan is having with churches wanting something similar—is a life-sized visual representation of Noble as he teaches.

“We believe God is calling us to expand our outreach to other communities, and we think we can reach more people faster and cheaper by tapping technology solutions,” Morgan says. “God has given NewSpring a vision to reach 100,000 people, and we believe technology is a key to seeing that become reality.”

Since the campus launched six months ago, more than 1,600 people attend, 150 of who have been baptized in that time.

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Message CONTEXT

Got a tough question? Mark Driscoll, senior pastor of Mars Hill Seattle (MarsHillChurch.org), told his congregants to text their questions to him. And they did. They asked things like, “Why does Romans 9:20 feel like a cop-out answer?” and “Is birth control a black-and-white issue or does it fall under the category of ‘liberties?’” Driscoll compiled their questions and responded to them in a message series.

In San Antonio, Texas, attendees at Imagine Fellowship (ImagineFellowship.org) tweet in worship. Pastor Kevin Joyce incorporates Twitter—the mobile social messaging service—into his Sunday morning messages. Joyce poses a question, and then using their cell phones, attendees send tweets—responses in the form of text messages—that are then projected on the main screen up front.

These types of digital interaction are taking pastors directly into the lives and minds of their audiences, providing ample tips on how to best contextualize the Gospel for particular congregations or communities.