

AN EXAMPLE OF A MULTI-WORSHIP VENUE CHURCH

While the circumstances of the church below differ from ours, it still provides an example of a church breaking away from traditional ways of doing things and trying some new approaches. We believe their experience is something we can learn from as we add more services.

Like North Coast Church below, we at New Life intend to have the same message preached at every service, thus helping to maintain unity as one church. However, their approach is to video tape the message for later play in the other services. At this point we are not intending to use video messages but will attempt live communicators in each service.

[North Coast Church](#) had a problem in 1998, albeit a very good problem. Squeezing in a little more than 3,000 people into four worship services was getting more difficult with every new guest that came to the church. And people just kept coming.

Adding a fifth service was impossible. Four services had already begun to take a physical toll on Senior Pastor Larry Osborne. With the extra services adversely affecting his health and his family time, the church board made a gutsy decree – there would be no fifth service.

Without the funds or the time to expand their 550-seat auditorium, Osborne and his staff were left to be creative to meet the need. An overflow room – where people could go and watch when the service was full – seemed the obvious choice. But Osborne knew that overflow rooms tend to turn away the very people the church is trying to reach.

"Most overflow rooms are punishments for latecomers and guests who don't realize how difficult it is to park at a larger church and get your kids checked in," said Osborne, who has led the Vista, Calif., church since 1980.

The North Coast staff set out to do the opposite – create an overflow room that visitors might even prefer. And they have. Eight years later, the church has more than doubled in weekend attendance. Much of the growth can be attributed to reaching entirely new segments of the church's community by transforming the typical overflow room into new worship services called venues and off-site campuses – with music and atmosphere targeted to those they were trying to reach.

The church now has services aimed to reach those who like hard rock, country-Gospel, traditional music, and more. Two thirds of those who now attend the church go to one of 23 new services – held in other locations on campus and four off-campus sites. The church has grown to more than 6,300 in average attendance without a single worship service averaging more than 500 people. And Osborne and the rest of the teaching staff still only preach three messages a weekend.

"There's no way we could have grown like this without these extra venues," Osborne added. "We still have no room. We're in the same place we were. Growing like this would have been impossible. Either that or we would have needed 20 services."

Each of these worship venues experiences the same teaching on video – all piped in from the church's original North Coast Live services. It's the music and atmosphere that's different, all tailored toward the interests of the venue's target audience.

"We're a society of so many segments," Osborne said. "Just look at FM radio or cable television. They've shaped our culture and kind of Balkanized us into little tribes of different tastes. So what we started to do is ask, 'Is there a way we can reach more people with different tastes with the same message?'"

But the key for North Coast has been the church's ability to remain united despite the fact that the church meets in such a wide variety of locations. According to Osborne, that's because every venue and every off-site campus experiences the same teaching each weekend. Osborne believes this is crucial.

As one of the first churches in the country to try multiple live music venues on the same campus in 1998, North Coast didn't have mentors to lean on during the transition. That's one reason the church has started their own training network to help other churches looking to make the same transition. The most effective way they have done this is by providing intensive weekend training workshops for small groups of churches, and inviting a team from the interested church to North Coast for the weekend to see how the venues work live. Since the church started training other congregations this way, every church that has completed the program has successfully implemented a multi-site or multi-venue strategy. They also provide more traditional training conferences on multi-site ministry.

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