



THERIVERNETWORK.ORG

An e-newsletter from The River Network International, dedicated to helping you multiply disciples, leaders, and churches.

"...so where the river flows everything will live"
-Ezekiel 47:9

Multiplying Groups – Multiplying Churches

by Rev. Dr. Steve Cordle

Did you know that you can start a church by starting the right kind of small group? In fact, if your church has holistic small groups, you have already taken the first step toward planting a church.

That is because the holistic small (cell) group is the basic expression of the Church.

A "holistic small group" is one which balances UP, IN, and OUT. That is, the group connects people with God (UP), with each other as a family of believers (IN), and in mission to a broken world (OUT).

Those three dimensions sum up the purposes of the Church. So, members of a fully-functioning small group can rightly see the group as their church.

It is common for people to think of the weekly corporate worship service as the basic expression of the Church, but it is not. The cell group is the basic expression because we can do all the purposes of the church in a group. We cannot do all the purposes of the Church in a worship service.

For decades, the fastest-growing Churches in the world have been the Church in China and Iran. Due to persecution, believers there cannot meet in large groups for corporate worship services. Instead, they meet in small groups in homes or other discreet locations. And yet, the number of Christ-followers has multiplied rapidly year after year.

Corporate worship services are wonderful ways to praise God and strengthen the Body of Christ. If (when) the Chinese and Iranian believers are able to worship corporately they will do so. But when they cannot, they worship in their small groups as they minister to one another and share the gospel with people they know. They are still the Church.

When someone tells me that they are feeling the tug to plant a church and asks me what they should do, I tell them: Start a group and multiply it. Then, when you have several groups going, bring them together for worship while continuing to multiply groups.

Admittedly, it helps to have training in starting a holistic group. That is why The River Network offers an 8-week online training called "Multiplying Disciples Practicum." Step by step, we walk you through the process of starting a holistic small group so that at the end of 8 weeks you will be making disciples in a group environment. The next 8-week training starts soon with two options to choose from: April 20 (Mondays) at 7p.m. or April 23 (Thursday) at 1 p.m. See below for more information.

SPOTLIGHT ON Planting

Josh Barker will be launching 3D Church in Lexington, Kentucky out of Trinity Hill Methodist Church this year. Aaron Mansfield, pastor of Trinity Hill, says there are two core commitments driving the new church plant. First is prayer. "Ask the Lord of the harvest to send workers into His harvest field" (Luke 10:2-3). Second is a commitment to multiplication of disciples, leaders, and churches. Josh works with men in the local jail. One of them has been radically saved, and is leading a Bible study among the inmates. He is also feeling a call to plant. Josh marvels that his new church will plant another new church as soon as the planter gets out of jail!

Training Opportunities

ONLINE MULTIPLYING DISCIPLES PRACTICUM

Are you ready to make disciples who make disciples?

Multiplying Disciples is an 8-week interactive online "practicum" that will equip you to be making disciples by the time the course is done.

You will work with others to:

- ✓ Deepen your own discipleship
- ✓ Practice a simple, tested disciple-making approach
- ✓ Instill the DNA of groups that multiply
- ✓ Reproduce disciple-making leaders

Recommended for a church team of a Pastor and two church leaders (though individuals are welcome)

Starting Dates:

- April 20th, 2026 at 7pm EST
- April 23rd, 2026 at 1pm EST

therivernetwork.org/events

Building a Disciple-making Culture
8:30 am - 11:30 am | Mt Vernon, OH

June 24 |

It takes more than a new program to become a disciple-making church; it takes a culture. Learn how at this 3-hour session that meets prior to the Allegheny West Annual Conference.

[Register Here](#)



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