

**Q4 2024**

# THE UNSTUCK CHURCH REPORT

**SPECIAL EDITION: MULTISITE CHURCH TRENDS**

*Sponsored by:*

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**THE UNSTUCK GROUP**  
— WE HELP CHURCHES GET UNSTUCK. —

# Introduction

## November 2024

Every quarter, The Unstuck Group compiles all the data we've collected to monitor trends in churches in the United States. For this quarter's report, we are specifically focusing on trends in multisite churches. The insights in this report reflect our experience serving more than 100 multisite churches throughout the years as well as observations on specific data points provided by more than 100 churches that participated in our multisite survey conducted in October 2024. This provides a very current snapshot of multisite churches of all shapes and sizes.

We received survey responses from churches that ranged in size from under 500 to more than 20,000 in physical attendance for worship gatherings. The churches that participated have as few as two locations and as many as 20 locations. The average in-person attendance of churches that responded to the survey is 2,892 people.

This is the second time we have produced this special edition of The Unstuck Church Report with a focus on multisite. We intend to repeat the multisite survey for one of the quarterly reports each year so we can continue to monitor trends over time.

Though we know that the percentage of churches utilizing a multisite strategy is relatively low in ministries around the world, a high percentage of churches The Unstuck Group serves are either currently multisite or are considering additional locations in the near future. Because of that, we understand this needs to be an ongoing focus of our team's research and shared experience.



### *Snapshot of Multisite Churches Included in This Report*

	Average
Annual In-Person Weekly Attendance Growth	+15%
Number of Locations	3.9
Total Baptisms in the Last 12 Months	219
Attendees Per Volunteer Leader	9:1
Staffing Budget as Percentage of Total Budget	52%
Year When First Multisite Campus Launched	2014

## Is your church considering multisite?

Or maybe you are one of the 41 percent of churches that are already multisite and planning to launch a new location in the next 12 months.

Recently, the push for new locations has been driven by double-digit percentage growth, the high cost of adding onto facilities and a desire to extend reach further into the local community. If your church falls into that category, there is a lot in this report that will help you as you plan for your next (or first) launch.

With that said, here's a key stat that stood out from this quarter's report:

**Healthy multisite campuses launch new locations much larger than declining or failed campus launches.**

In fact, the churches that have sustained a healthy, growing campus long term started with an **average attendance of 483** at launch compared to **142 in attendance** at campuses in decline or that have closed.

Over the years, as our team at The Unstuck Group has served churches on the ground, we've seen this to be true.

**When churches launch too small**, the new campus can quickly become more insider focused, making it harder for new people who are visiting to find ways to fit in.

**When churches launch too small**, there are often not enough staff leaders, volunteer leaders or people volunteering on teams to carry the core ministries that the church expects to have in place.

**When churches launch too small**, it's difficult to replicate the experience of the sending campus. And when the experience is not replicated well, it likely doesn't feel like their church. When it doesn't feel like their church, not only are people hesitant to invite their friends, but they are also likely to migrate back to the sending campus.

I point out this metric because we've seen too many churches rush into a multisite strategy. Often, the urgency of making space for more people wins out over taking the time to build and implement an intentional plan and launch team.

There's a lot more that we will cover in this quarter's report, but I wanted to start there because **a healthy multisite strategy takes time and intentionality**. In a season of growth for many churches, rushing into a strategy like multisite could be the decision that stifles the momentum in your church.

Because of that, I hope this summary spurs some healthy conversations among the leaders on your team. If your church is experiencing growth, I hope it causes you to consider whether or not it's time to open a new multisite location and expand your reach. If your church is stuck, I hope it causes you to consider the changes that would have to take place for your church to experience health again. In either case, I hope this report helps more people meet and follow Jesus.



A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Amy K. Anderson".

**Amy Anderson**

Director of Consulting

# Multisite General Characteristics

**The average in-person attendance over the previous 12 months increased by 15%.**

The average weekly attendance for the last 12 months increased from 2,522 people to 2,892. This is the total of all people, including children.

**Multisite churches are reaching people for Jesus.**

The number of people who went public with their faith by being baptized was 8% of this year's average in-person attendance. The average church in this survey had 219 baptisms in the last 12 months.

**About half of multisite churches are nondenominational churches.**

Close to 50% of the multisite churches surveyed are not connected to a denomination. Of the nondenominational churches reflected in our survey, only 13% are connected to another network of churches.

**The average multisite church that completed the survey has more than three locations.**

Of the churches that participated, about 35% had four or more locations, with the highest number of locations being 20.

**Churches have been in multiple locations for an average of 10 years.**

The average launch date for the original location is 1972, and the first multisite location opened on average in 2014.



*"Churches have now been engaged in a multisite strategy for an average of 10 years. That's 10 years of learning from mistakes and building on success. This should bring hope to other churches that are considering multisite. There are now predictable outcomes and success factors that we can all learn from together."*

**Amy Anderson**

# Multisite Leadership

**Multisite churches have a span of care of one volunteer leader for every nine people in attendance.**

Leaders include adults and students who are serving in roles where they are responsible for leading a team or a group of other people (e.g., team leaders or group leaders). By comparison, in last year's report, all churches, including primarily single-location churches, had one volunteer leader for every 17 people in attendance.

This difference between single-site and multisite volunteer leadership has widened over the past 12 months. It appears multisite churches continue empowering more lay leaders.

**Leadership development is part of the multisite strategy.**

Of the churches surveyed, 56% indicated that they have a formal development strategy to increase the number of ministry leaders.



*"The data shows that the fastest growing churches in our survey also had the strongest engagement of volunteer leaders. One church in particular had one volunteer leader for every four people in attendance. That church had grown by 33% year-over-year. This continues a trend that we've seen over the years that the churches with the strongest volunteer leadership strategies seem to also experience greater growth."*

**Amy Anderson**

**Multisite increases volunteer engagement.**

In fact, 93% of the churches indicated that volunteer engagement increased with the launch of a new multisite location. In our experience at The Unstuck Group, that increase in serving happens at *both* the original and the new locations.

# Multisite Staffing & Structure

**Staffing levels are healthier at multisite churches than at single-location churches.**

In last year's report, we learned the average church employs one full-time equivalent (FTE) staff person for every 60 attendees. Multisite churches surveyed for this report employ one FTE staff person for every 71 attendees. This number includes all ministry and support staff. By comparison, The Unstuck Group recommends one FTE for every 75 people in attendance.

**Multisite churches are investing more than half of their ministry budget into ministry staff.**

The average staff budget is 52 percent of the overall ministry budget. This includes the cost of all salaries and benefits. We recommend that churches try to keep staffing budgets between 45% and 55% of the overall budget. The Unstuck Group does not collect salary information for individual employees.

The Unstuck Group does not collect salary information for individual employees. We recommend The Church Lawyers for expert guidance in establishing reasonable compensation policies and practices that comply with IRS rules and regulations. Learn more [here](#).



*"It's encouraging to see in this quarter's report that multisite staffing is trending towards healthier levels. Churches in this latest survey had one FTE staff person for every 71 attendees compared to 2023's multisite data, which showed churches having one FTE staff person for every 55 attendees. This may be a reflection of church attendance growth catching up with staffing levels, but it also shows that churches have been intentional about not adding more staff before they need to. As we've learned over the years, one of the easiest ways for churches to get stuck is to be overstaffed."*

**Amy Anderson**

**Multisite churches have dedicated central ministry teams to support all of the locations.**

Nearly 75% of the churches that responded to the survey indicated that they have central teams—staff paid to support the success of all locations but who do not have any specific campus responsibilities.

**Central teams tend to form when a church prepares to open its third location.**

In this year's data, churches established central teams at about 2.25 campuses on average. About 30% of all churches that responded formed central teams when they had three or more locations.

**Most of the staffing is on campus teams rather than central teams.**

The survey indicated that churches have about 66% of their staff members in campus roles for all locations and 34% of their staff in central ministry roles. For reference, The Unstuck Group recommends a two-to-one allocation between campus and central ministry roles, which aligns with what we're seeing in the surveyed churches this year.



# Multiplication Strategy

**On average, churches had an in-person attendance of 1,455 people when they launched their first multisite location.**

The median size of the churches was just over 1,100 in in-person attendance at their original location before they launched an additional location.



*"This year's report showed that four out of 10 multisite churches plan to launch a new location in the next 12 months. This is likely a reflection of the growth that many churches are experiencing. Churches are finding multisite to be more effective in reaching people they haven't yet reached as well as being more cost effective than adding on to existing facilities."*

**Amy Anderson**

**Many multisite churches are also committed to church planting.**

For instance, 44% of the churches surveyed indicated they are also involved in church planting outside of their multisite strategy. That's a strong indication that multisite churches are committed to multiplication with whatever strategy is most effective for a particular community.

**New locations are in the pipeline.**

More than 40% of the churches surveyed indicated that they anticipate launching another campus in the next 12 months.

**Multisite churches lean more toward identical locations with little or some campus autonomy.**

Fewer than one in 10 multisite churches said they flip that model, giving campuses autonomy with some central influence.

**Two-thirds of churches that completed the survey use video teaching as the primary method for message delivery across locations.**

Of the churches surveyed, 42% deliver teaching primarily through video (with rare exceptions) and 24% use a combination of video and in-person teaching. Only 27% of churches use a teaching model where the campus pastors are the primary teachers at their locations.

The survey indicated that only 34% of churches believe their financial management practices support the church's multisite growth extremely well.

Of the churches that participated, 47% said household giving at campuses mirrors the main or first campus well or extremely well.

Only 7% said giving at campuses did not mirror the main or first campus at all.



### *Insights from Joe Park, CEO of Horizons Stewardship*

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*As with most areas related to culture, establishing a culture of generosity in a new location that is theologically and functionally aligned with the main campus is critical to the long-term success of a multisite strategy. The Core Team staff and volunteers must embody and embrace that culture during pre-launch preparations because giving is one of the first cultural areas to firm up and harden. Visitors pay close attention to what you say and practice around money and will quickly form their understanding of your expectations around giving and money.*

# Predictable Outcomes

We would like to highlight a few predictable outcomes—and the corresponding best practices—that we share in our [Multisite Unstuck process](#). These have been proven over time across contexts.

**Predictable Outcome:** *People transfer and carry culture when we launch new locations.*

Because of that, a best practice continues to be that churches should launch campuses where they are already reaching people. A Core Team full of people who do not live in the area will make it practically impossible to reach the community, and they will gravitate back to the sending location over time.

**Predictable Outcome:** *Your new campus will reach **twice as many people** as you have on the Core Team at launch.*

If you launch with a Core Team of 100 people, your initial attendance will likely be around 200 people. If you launch with 300 people, your initial attendance will likely be around 600 people—and so on. Consider it a best practice to build your Core Team first and then build your campus staff team based on the expectation of twice that size. Prepare financially to support a campus of that size.



## Campus-Funding Insights from Horizons Stewardship

*Devoting the resources necessary for a successful launch is essential. Equally important is setting expectations around the supply of those resources. Expectations should be performance-bound and should follow a specific timeline from the outset. Your Core Team must believe in the adequacy of these resources and clearly understand and buy into the performance and time limitations before launch.*

**Predictable Outcome:** *Multisite churches with identical locations grow **almost twice as fast** as churches with more autonomy.*

Multisite churches that eventually closed campuses were four times more likely to have used a model where the campus pastor was the primary teacher. The healthiest multisite campuses are much more likely to use video teaching, which is why we tend to recommend it as a best practice for message delivery.



For more information related to this survey and the summary of the learnings, contact The Unstuck Group:

**[theunstuckgroup.com](https://theunstuckgroup.com)**

**[help@theunstuckgroup.com](mailto:help@theunstuckgroup.com)**



## ABOUT THE UNSTUCK GROUP

The Unstuck Group has a combined 100+ years of experience serving multisite churches across the country—from helping re-clarify and restructure a current multisite strategy to launching your very first campus. At the end of our Multisite Unstuck process, you'll have a comprehensive, customized plan for healthy multisite expansion and the structure and systems to help you execute your plan. Learn more by visiting [theunstuckgroup.com](https://theunstuckgroup.com).



## ABOUT HORIZONS STEWARDSHIP

Horizons Stewardship utilizes a collaborative and integrated ministry framework designed to fit each organization's unique culture and support church and faith-based nonprofit leaders in their mission to grow disciples and fund ministry through coaching, planning, technology, and analytics.

Horizons has over three decades of experience and has developed a spiritually focused approach that consistently yields more funding for ministry and more effective disciple-making strategies. With the support of seasoned ministry strategists, proven generosity guides, and ICF-trained coaches, ministries that partner with Horizons experience, on average, a double-digit increase in giving within the first year.

Interested in learning more? [Click here.](#)