

- Announcer: Welcome to the Carey Nieuwhof Leadership Podcast. A podcast all about leadership, change, and personal growth. The goal? To help you lead like never before in your church or in your business. And now your host, Carey Nieuwhof.
- Carey Nieuwhof: Well, hey everybody and welcome to episode 295 of the podcast. My name is Carey Nieuwhof and I hope our time together today helps you lead like never before. Well, fall is here in earnest. Every time I talk to you guys. So many of you tell me fall is your favorite season. So wonder what your favorite season is. Mine is summer actually. Maybe because I'm Canadian and it's the warmest and I love sunshine and the water and boating and biking and all that stuff. But whatever you're doing, I hope this episode finds you enjoying yourself and our goal is to help you thrive in life and leadership. Lead like never before. That's what we're trying to do and that's why I'm so glad to have Rich Birch back.
- Carey Nieuwhof: Rich has been a friend for many years, coworker in many respects as well. And I'm not sure anybody knows more about multi-site than he does because he has lived it as an executive pastor or director of operations, helping three large churches launch campuses, perhaps more than any other leader in the church today. And so he's kind of like a walking encyclopedia and we talked about church growth before, but today we're going to talk about all things multi-site.
- Carey Nieuwhof: And there is a buzz about that, multi-site has peaked. Some churches are shutting down campuses. Is that true? We're going to look into that. And for those of you in the business community, this has a lot to do with opening new locations. How do you know you're ready? Is that something that's going to continue in the future? Are people looking for more boutique original solutions? Also in the church world, we asked the question, does video actually work? What about all those critics who say it doesn't? And a whole lot more. So it's going to be a fascinating episode. Plus Ask Carey is now in effect. I take one listener question. We're taking Chris's, who wants to know about attendance goals. How do you break 200? It's something 85% of churches never do and most businesses never break \$1 million in revenues. So I'm going to answer that at the end of the podcast. If you listen all the way through and I hope you do, it's going to be a great episode today.
- Carey Nieuwhof: Now your church website, speaking of growth and your business website can make you or break you and that's why I'm really excited to share with you that Pro Media Fire who a lot of in a lot of you use are starting this fall, the Pro WebFire Service. This is how it works.
- Carey Nieuwhof: Pro WebFire team builds you a custom website now. You get a monthly plan and you get a new website every three years with that because you've got to keep updating. You get also weekly updates to your site, digital strategy sessions and they manage Facebook, Instagram, and YouTube campaigns for you. Pricing plan is simple. Everything's included. Even a new custom website every three years. So this month in October, listeners of this podcast get a launch special of

up to 30% off for life depending on the plan. It's no upfront website development fee.

Carey Nieuwhof: You're not hiring staff. Up to 30% off for life on the plans only till October 31st. How'd you get it? You got to go here, go to ProWebFire.com/Carey. That's ProWebFire.com/Carey. Another thing a lot of faith-based or not-for-profit organizations are doing is getting ready for the 2020 budget. And what about your health care? Listeners of this podcast have already plowed \$625,000 worth of savings back into their ministries.

Carey Nieuwhof: Yeah, because what happens is sometimes you offer benefits, they're not great, but they're really expensive. That's where Remodel Health comes in. And what they do is they use technology to get customized plans for all of your staff. So whether you have three staff, or 30 staff for 300 staff, they'll go through it with you, step-by-step, employee by employee, and create custom plans that usually result in two things.

Carey Nieuwhof: Number one, lower costs savings or lower costs for the church. And number two, better benefits or at least the same benefits for your team. So everybody's happy, you save money, your team does as well or often better. And so far they have helped nonprofits across America save \$7.2 million, that they can plow right back into their budgets. So interested, here's what you can do. Go to RemodelHealth.com/Carey, C-A-R-E-Y. You can learn more and there download their health insurance buyer's guide. So go to RemodelHealth.com/Carey and you can download their health insurance buyer's guide. So guys, I am so excited to bring you a in-person conversation with Rich Birch as we talk about things. And if you listen toward the end of the interview, he's got some free bonuses for you. And then I've got Ask Carey at the end of this podcast. So here we go. My conversation with Rich Birch.

Carey Nieuwhof: Well, I am super excited to be here again with Rich Birch. Rich, welcome back.

Rich Birch: Carey, so glad to be back on your show. I love the podcast. I love how you're helping so many leaders in so many different contexts. So glad to be here today.

Carey Nieuwhof: Well, listen, it's good. We're meeting at World Headquarters once again.

Rich Birch: Carey Nieuwhof Enterprises International.

Carey Nieuwhof: You are almost a decade in the US and now you're back in Canada. So we live 10 minutes from each other's house.

Rich Birch: So glad to be in the same neighborhood.

Carey Nieuwhof: And we heard in the basement World Headquarters-

- Rich Birch: It's good, it's a nice space.
- Carey Nieuwhof: ... My podcast studio. Thank you. Thank you. We do our best. But Rich it's funny because you and I talk all the time, but I think for leaders, there's very few people with your pedigree and it wasn't on purpose, but you've worked at three multi-site churches. So for those of you listening from a business context, what is a multi-site church?
- Rich Birch: Yeah, so multi-site church is one church that has expressed itself in multiple locations. The vast majority of them, some of them we get into, the vast majority of them have less than three, but some have up to a dozen or maybe two dozen different physical locations. They generally are having a common leadership structure. They have a common kind of approach to programming. So really it's in some ways like a franchise or like a company store where you've opened up a couple of different locations.
- Carey Nieuwhof: Right. So kind of at the far end Starbucks or McDonald's or something like that, but not really.
- Rich Birch: Yeah, it's actually, they're closer to like a family business I would say where they've got four or five locations all across one geographical area. That's probably closer-
- Carey Nieuwhof: So a local chain of restaurants.
- Rich Birch: Yeah, a local chain of restaurants. We have a mutual friend who works in like a lumber yard and they have three or four different locations close to it. It's that kind of thing, is probably more typical, Although obviously the extreme examples and there are a few of those that cross state lines, that go across the entire-
- Carey Nieuwhof: Like Life Church is-
- Rich Birch: Life Church is one of those.
- Carey Nieuwhof: ... 30 campuses?
- Rich Birch: Yeah, I've lost track.
- Carey Nieuwhof: Yeah I know.
- Rich Birch: They're in that range.
- Carey Nieuwhof: Every time I talk to Craig it's like more.
- Rich Birch: Yeah, exactly. They just keep sprouting up.

Carey Nieuwhof: All right. So that's sort of the framework and tell us about your unique background, like-

Rich Birch: Yeah I always feel a little bit self-conscious probably because I'm Canadian talking about my experience. But I do think that I have a unique kind of angle on this multi-site thing and there may be someone that has more experience out there, but I just haven't bumped into them. So I've been a part of 13 different launches. I was in the driver's seat of 13 different launches. The part of that that I'm the proudest of is over those 13 launches we mobilized about 1,500 volunteers and today all of those campuses together account for about 9,000 people in attendance, which is amazing to me.

Rich Birch: And those three churches have gone on and launched a bunch of more churches. And so the actually now they total up close to 30 campuses. So I've been kind of at the hub of the multi-site movement even before we called it multi-site early 2000s, going on 20 years, which is weird to say. It doesn't feel like I'm old enough to say I've been doing something for that long. But it's been really a fun experience. It's been amazing to see have been really on the front lines of some really cool, incredible things over the last number of years.

Carey Nieuwhof: I think one of the things that's been really interesting for a multi-site or multi-site, depending on what part of the US you're from, why do you say multi-site?

Rich Birch: I don't know. It's like the dash or no dash in multi-site. I go, no dash. Some people say it should be multi dash site. I'm like, I'll just put it all together. I don't want less letters.

Carey Nieuwhof: Data or data.

Rich Birch: Yeah, exactly.

Carey Nieuwhof: Here we are, we could really go, exactly. Okay. So I'm going to say multi-site. I think that's more Canadian, Northeastern.

Rich Birch: Yup.

Carey Nieuwhof: But what's really interesting is I think it was a response to the birth of technology.

Rich Birch: Yeah, absolutely.

Carey Nieuwhof: And a lot of it started as video locations. It's like we're at a room and also as churches have been in decline there's a lot of industries in decline right now, but as many churches have been in decline, sort of the growing ones have taken over not only more of the market, but more the mission. Is that fair?

Rich Birch: Absolutely. There's this fascinating thing about multi-site when you look at the church in general, and this I think has great application if you're a business leader listening in. So in general, if you look at all churches across the country, across North America, 85% of churches are in plateau or decline.

Rich Birch: But actually there's a recent study that just came out from Leadership Network, this kind of think tank, great organization where literally it's the inverse. So 82% of multi-site churches are growing or state that they're growing. And so I think there's a fascinating thing for us to study this group of churches particularly and say, why is it that this group is growing? Why is it that they seem to be reaching more people? And so I think, again, it's important for us as church leaders, but if you're listening and you're a business leader, to be able to look at, frankly for crass kind of language to look at a market where there seems to be a subset that is growing a lot faster than the others. I think we should be looking for lessons to pull apart and say, hey, how does that apply to what we do in our part of the world?

Carey Nieuwhof: Well, I wonder if some of that, and we're going to get into some nitty gritty soon, but I wonder at a more meta level, whether when you look at how everything's changing, and I keep talking about that on my blog and on this podcast because I think one day I really sincerely believe hundreds of years from now, if there is a hundreds of years from now, the way we're treating the planet, right? If there is a hundreds of years from now, historians will look back on our lifetime and go, this is one of the biggest changes in a millennia, if not more.

Rich Birch: Well, absolutely, and there's no doubt that technology is at the core of what's driving multi-site. There's just is like I think again, only about a third of multi-site churches use exclusively videos, for folks that are listening in, businesses that are listening in, one of the kind of common things about multi-site is you're saying, hey, we're trying to figure out what we're doing common among all these different locations and in the church context, a big part of what we do frankly is teaching.

Rich Birch: We know that two thirds of the reason why people come is because of teaching and so about a third of all multi-site churches only do video that they share video among their locations. Now the interesting thing there is that's growing, but that really was not possible 15, 20 years ago for most churches. There's this interesting graph that if you plot out the cost of 100 ANSI lumens, which is just the way to measure how bright projectors are. As that drops down, you see the increase of multi-site campuses go up. So literally there's an inverse relationship as it becomes cheaper to buy projectors.

Carey Nieuwhof: Only you would know that.

Rich Birch: Well, but it makes sense, right, that it's an enabling technology. This idea of a projector, if we can get people in a room, and I think that has then kind of

associated with a broader cultural phenomena, which people are just frankly spending a lot of time looking at screens.

Rich Birch: We're more used to bringing in information through a screen, whether it's on our desktop like here that we're today or in our pocket or even at work or at school. We're used to this idea of looking and taking in content on screens, which again, not all multi-site churches are video, although an increasing number are. But that kind of technology has been enabled, which I think is an important thing for all of us to look at and say, what are those pieces of technology that are underlying our culture that ultimately are changing the people that we're trying to serve? And what difference is that making in the way we deliver what we deliver? So for us in the church world, one of the things that we realize is, oh wait a second teaching is really important. And frankly we can deliver teaching I think in some ways more effectively through video. And so if we do that in a room and we can distribute that in multiple locations, and that enabling technology enables us to do a pretty amazing thing, which is instead of forcing people to drive to us, we can go to them.

Rich Birch: Instead of being restricted to one zip code, we can say, hey, let's go to multiple zip codes. Man that's an amazing opportunity for us as church leaders. And also I think for other business leaders who might be listening in.

Carey Nieuwhof: I'm glad you're raising that. I think at the meta level in every plateaued or declining industry. So for example, I mean we're recording this as Thomas Cook, the biggest travel agency in the world and the oldest one in the world completely goes bankrupt leaving tens of thousands of people stranded.

Rich Birch: 150,000 I think they say are stranded, that's a real number of people.

Carey Nieuwhof: And so the industry, like obviously they went bankrupt and I don't know the whole history, the whole corporate history, but the reality is it's like, oh, so does that mean tourism is going away? Right? No.

Rich Birch: Exactly.

Carey Nieuwhof: And the CEO's cited, well obviously things are changing, people are booking their own trips, the Internet has changed things. Websites like Expedia and Airbnb and hotels.com have changed things. And Airbnb has been a massive disruptor.

Rich Birch: Absolutely.

Carey Nieuwhof: And I think in every industry well, retail might be in trouble, but there are some retail establishments that are growing and people have not finished shopping. They're just shopping differently. And so spiritually a lot of people say, "Oh, we're not a Christian culture anymore, et cetera." Which is true. And yet people are still spiritual beings. And yet you see these outliers, these groups in almost

any industry that are actually the same is true spiritually that are like, "No, this is an opportunity not an obstacle."

Carey Nieuwhof: So I want to push back on something, because you've talked a lot about video and I hear this all the time. People are like, "Listen, Carey, video doesn't work. Video teaching doesn't work. People will not sit under video teaching." What do you say about that?

Rich Birch: Yeah. So first of all, I've heard this all across the country. I've been in LA and I literally have had church leaders look at me and say, "Well this is like the entertainment capital of the world. Video won't work here." I've been in rural communities where I'm like, this is a church that I've done work with who are literally, they're out in the fields and they're like, "This is a rural community. People aren't going to watch stuff here." I've said it and when I was at Liquid church in New Jersey, we had the similar kind of thing. They're like those people in that part of the world, they all believe they're super special and they're like, people are not going to watch. They don't want to fake replication. But what we're finding statistically, again by the most recent study from Leadership Network says, so in 2009 only 20% of all campuses were just video, were exclusively video.

Rich Birch: Now, the most recent stats from this year, 2019 is that 33% are all video. What we're finding is basically the longer a multi-site church is in multi-site, and the larger they are, the more likely they are to use videos. So a lot of times they start, and I think there's an interesting thing going. And you might be able to relate to this as a communicator. There's an interesting thing that starts at the beginning where I think frankly a lot of church leaders are humble and they're like, "Listen, I don't want to make this about me. I don't want to get a camera and put it on me. I don't want this to all be about me. I want to raise up other people." And although that can be great and that could be amazing. For whatever reason, God has seemed to limit the teaching gift.

Rich Birch: There just are not as many people out there that have the teaching gift. I don't know why that is. I'm not sure why that is at a spiritual level, but it doesn't seem to be the case, so it's not all about video. The other kind of misnomer, which is very true to critics of the multi-site movement is it's not like the majority of campuses are just video. Really what we're seeing is the majority of campuses use video in some way, so they're maybe three weeks doing video and then one week they have a live local teacher, a campus pastor teach. Or they'll do a couple series a year where they have a live local teacher who will do that. That's actually a more common expression of multi-site than the either end of the spectrum which is all video or all-

Carey Nieuwhof: All live local.

Rich Birch: ... All live local. And so, no I think there's some advantages of using video and again, for the church example is for us frankly, if I can speak a little bit crassly

our core product is teaching. At the end of the day that's what people come to our churches for. And so it is a relatively simple way to replicate what people are coming to us for. If I'm a business leader coming today, I think the question for you is why is it that people come to you and is there a way for you to replicate that in multiple locations? For us, there was a restriction. There's this thing called the Marchetti's constant, which we can get totally geeky on it. But basically what it says is over time, people are only been willing to travel 30 minutes to commute on a regular basis. And so if you look back before the advent of, I think even horse and buggy, people were walking half an hour to get to work.

Rich Birch: And then once people got access to horses, they were going about half an hour. And then with the advent of cars, they're going about half an hour. There's this thing, it's a development like a community development concept called Marchetti's constant that basically people won't go more than half an hour. Now, it shouldn't be surprising then that we find that the majority, actually 95% of all multi-site campuses are found within 30 minutes of the other location. They're in there clustering. Now we think of the exception. We talked about Life Church earlier. We think of these exceptions where they're four or five hours apart, but that isn't the norm. Most are within a tight area. And so for us, what we said in the multi-site movement we said, "How do we replicate, why we know people are coming, which in our world is teaching and how do we do that within various areas that are slightly outside of what people would normally drive?" That's really what's at the core of it.

Rich Birch: And that's what drives why churches are using video. Because frankly, it's an easy way. It's a simple way to replicate the most important part of what we do.

Carey Nieuwhof: Do you think in part the rise of video, I mean, I've been a communicator now for 25 years, preaching, speaking, et cetera, et cetera. And even when I started in the 90s, there was no Internet to speak of. There was dial up, but I mean, video wasn't a thing. To get another message, you were the local communicator and basically it's one of the few venues in which you were a regular public speaker was in a local church. I mean, the average preacher will speak more than the average mayor.

Rich Birch: Yeah, absolutely. Absolutely. Yeah, definitely.

Carey Nieuwhof: And so there wasn't a lot of, and I hate to use this term, but competition and now with the rise of the Internet, like I used to preach just before we met. I was just thinking about that while you were talking. I probably was preaching 90 different messages a year.

Rich Birch: Wow.

Carey Nieuwhof: I was preaching almost every weekend and then almost every Wednesday.

Rich Birch: Wow.

Carey Nieuwhof: So it might be a little less, but it was maybe 70. These days, I'm preaching 28 to 30. And it's not because I'm like, "Oh, I'm lazy now." And lying in the beach half the time. It's like I've found the expectation around communication is much more elevated than it used to be.

Rich Birch: Oh, absolutely.

Carey Nieuwhof: They expect you to have your research done. I mean, I just came out of a meeting this afternoon at Connexus. I'm teaching this weekend. We're looking at graphs, we're looking at props. I did research for this obviously scriptural research and so on, but do you think that's part of it, that the communication expectations of the average person because they have the whole Internet on their phone?

Rich Birch: Absolutely. I think it's true and things as simple as TED talks. It's amazing how that, that just become a part of our culture, this idea. I remember when I started in ministry I was at school and I took a preaching class and I remember thinking at the time, there's not really many forms of communication that are like this. People standing up and just talking.

Rich Birch: You had standup comics but they work for a year to get an hour of content. They'll work that one joke to get that seven minutes, get the tight seven, then the tight 15. But there's not very many words. Every week we're coming up with new content. Well that's not entirely true anymore with stuff like TED talks or the advent of video.

Carey Nieuwhof: YouTubers.

Rich Birch: Yeah, YouTubers, the advent of kind of video blogging and all of this where there is this explosion of content where I do think that is in a good way, I think helping us in the church to look at, "Hey, how do we need to get better at what we do? How do we leverage the communication forum." I still think at the end of the day as... And I'm listening, I love online stuff. I love digital communication, but I still think there's something about communicators standing up communicating that is a form that just connects with our culture when done well. It can bore people, but when it's done well it really does connect, it really does make a difference.

Carey Nieuwhof: Before I leave the subject of video, most of the listeners of this podcast will not be using video. They will not be multi-site churches, just statistically demographically and some would be critical, I'm sure of a video teaching because like you, it never goes away. It's always there. But is this something a single site church could use to say, "Hey, we're going to use Life Church Open or we're going to use some of the free licenses so that when I'm not communicating we run video." Do you see that more and more?

Rich Birch: Absolutely. We're seeing that more and more that churches that are sub a few 100 are choosing to connect with other churches. A little bit of a tip for church leaders that are listening in. There may be a church across the state, across the country that you really love the series that some pastor did. I almost guarantee you if you reach out to that church and they've done a video and say, "Hey, can we use that video?" Most churches are going to say yes. They're going to be like, absolutely. Because for them they created the content, it's done, it doesn't cost them anything more and they just want to be generous and they'd be happy to have you use it. And then folks like Life Church have really led the way on making it even simpler.

Rich Birch: You don't have to talk to anybody, just get an account and download it and use it, which is, I think it is a shift and a change. I think even at Connexus for over years, we've had this joke, the joke internally that like Andy Stanley is our backup preacher. Which he's not a bad backup preacher.

Carey Nieuwhof: No he's pretty good. He's decent.

Rich Birch: As a secondary communicator to Carey Nieuwhof. Yeah he can do that. But there's that potential, that kind of potential with all kinds of communicators across the country. You could find someone who really resonates with your culture, resonates with who you are and plug them in and yeah, maybe try that for... There are those days through the year where you just don't want to teach or can't teach, it'd be a great opportunity for your church.

Carey Nieuwhof: So there's this amazing stat in the Leadership Network report they studied 434 churches who together have a total attendance of 1.5 million.

Rich Birch: Yeah. I love the Leadership Network guys. Because they really are the experts on a lot of things, multi-site particularly, they've really been able to kind of narrow down and get some really clear crystal clear research on multi-site and so yeah, their most recent study, because you might say like, "Oh 434, that's not that many churches." But actually the aggregate of the entire attendance, like you said, is 1.5 million. It really does give some and there's a ton we could talk about in there, but it really doesn't give you a good sense of what's happening in the multi-site.

Carey Nieuwhof: One of the criticisms that again, I've heard a multi-site is, well that's great. 1.5 million who used to go to smaller churches who now all go, they're not really like multi-site churches don't actually reach new people. They are just consolidating the Christians who don't want to go to smaller independent churches anymore, thoughts on that?

Rich Birch: That's a great question. So Warren Bird did a study a few years ago that looked at... It was actually a fairly convicting study that basically said that churches' ability to reach new people. If you look at, and this is from a conversion point of view, however you measure that, baptisms people that say the prayer figuring

out what that looks like in your church. Basically churches reach all the people they're going to reach in the first five years is basically what the conclusion of the study came from.

Carey Nieuwhof: Wow.

Rich Birch: That when you look at the entire history of how many people a church will ever reach, that really comes within the first five years of our existence and it drops off significantly after that first five years. What multi-site churches have done is they've unlocked this ability to always be a church. If you're launching more than once every five years, you unlock this potential of constantly reaching new people.

Rich Birch: And so statistically, although that's a nice thing to throw around, statistically, it's just not true. There's the other kind of nuance to that question is people will often say multi-site or church planting, isn't one better or holier than the other isn't one? And actually, again, statistically when you look at effectiveness to reach new people, the issue seems to be multiplication. It seems to be restarting something new. There's nothing like new campuses. There's nothing like new churches, frankly, to reach new people. And so that criticism frankly is unfair. Statistically, most churches after being five years old, their ability to reach new people or not only their ability, their results in reaching new people drop off dramatically to the point where basically and it's not my study, it's Warren Bird's study. Shoot him. I'll get you a link for that study and for the show notes.

Carey Nieuwhof: I thought you were going to say, here's Warren's email.

Rich Birch: Yeah he's great. He's a great...

Carey Nieuwhof: Yeah, Warren is a super guy.

Rich Birch: I love him.

Carey Nieuwhof: Previous guest.

Rich Birch: Yeah, basically what they came out with was this idea that basically your church is going to reach everybody they're going to reach in the first five years. So for me, I'm like, man, we got to work hard in those first five years. What can we do to reach as many people as possible? And then multi-site, really what that does is it keeps you constantly renewing because you're always adding a new campus, which is then out forcing you to reach new people. And that the trickle down impact of that in the rest of your ministry is that you see, wow, this is what it's like to kind of stay fresh and reach new people. So yeah, that's an unfair criticism.

Carey Nieuwhof: Anything else from that report that really stood out? And I think this is helpful. I've heard, I think it's Ed Stetzer said on this podcast that basically most of the growth is coming from new churches, which obviously is tied to multi-site. They all tend to kind of look the same. They've got the band, they got the lights, they got the preacher, and you can talk about variations of it, but there's pretty much a model that churches are using. I mean, do you agree with that? Any other insights?

Rich Birch: Yeah. So if I was going to criticize as an insider to the multi-site movement, if I was going to criticize multi-site, to rephrase your question a little bit. So 50% of all multi-site churches, again, this is from the most recent study, this number is sticking in the research. It's not moving. 50% of all multi-site churches have two or three campuses. So they're not getting to five, six, seven, eight locations. That is the exception, not the rule to get beyond two or three locations. So for me, that's a crime. That's terrible. I'm like, that's why we have to stop that because what I don't hear churches say when they go multi-site, when they talk about going multi-site, they don't say, "You know what we're going to do? We're going to launch a campus or two and we're going to stall out.

Rich Birch: Our plan is to only reach these two areas." Often what they're saying are things like, "Our vision is to plant a campus in every county or we want to be within 15 minutes of everybody in the greater metropolitan area or we're believing for one campus a year for the next 10 years." But that's not actually what's happening. What's happening is 50% of campuses churches are stopping after one or two locations. They become a two or three campus church and then they stop.

Rich Birch: Now personally having seen inside of multiple churches that have got over that, really what I think it comes down to is the churches inability to build a system that ultimately attracts volunteers to release new locations. What happens is we stall out because we're not actually multiplying. We're just adding, we're not actually saying, "Hey, what are we doing to build healthy and strong volunteer cores in these new locations so that then ultimately those locations will reach more people so that a year from now we can come back and be like, let's do this again."

Rich Birch: Because what happens, I hear this time and again for multi-site churches, they get a campus out the door and then a year later they're like, because they call me a year later. They're like, "Oh my goodness, this is a lot more work than we thought. This isn't what we thought." And on the front end, I say it time and again, anybody that's been around me for wellness, listen, if you're thinking about launching multi-site campuses, you have to build large and strong core groups, large teams of people who are going to go and make this thing happen. I would rather you delay six months and take six months to build a bigger and larger and more healthy volunteer core than to prematurely launch and then spend the next six years trying to patch it up. And that's what happens when I

hear churches that are struggling in multi-site and I ask three or four questions, I literally just had this happen to me this morning.

Rich Birch: I had a leader call me and said, "Oh, you've got to talk to this church. And they launched a campus. They're a year in and man, it's not working." And so I said, "Well, tell me about their volunteer core." And I'm like, "How many people did they have at launch?" And they're like, "Wow I'm not sure." And then we drill it a little bit, founded a little more, and they were a few dozen, like 24, 25 people at launch, which just frankly is not-

Carey Nieuwhof: Isn't enough.

Rich Birch: It's not enough. It's not enough to reproduce. And so, and there's a lot there. There's a whole conversation we could have around it. But ultimately, if you're going to launch a healthy multi-site campus, you need to have a large and healthy cores. And so for to me as big as the multi-site movement is it's had a huge impact, I think in my ministry time over the last 20 years, it's the kind of biggest thing that's impacted the church.

Rich Birch: There are still tons of latent potential in those 50% of multi-site churches that are stalled out at two or three campuses. We want to see. I want to see that push to them get to five, six, seven, eight, nine, 10 campuses. Imagine the impact. If we know that these things are good at reaching people, we've got to figure out how to get more volunteers and to ultimately reach more people to see good things happen.

Carey Nieuwhof: How do you do that? How do you get more volunteers engaged?

Rich Birch: Yeah, it's a great question. So there's a lot there, but the two things I would say is, and this I think has got good application for business folks. I think and it's happened in today's conversation when we think about multi-site, I think we often go to systems and technology.

Rich Birch: So we think alike even today we talk about video, then that happens all the time. That's not a bad conversation. It happens all the time. But actually at the end of the day, the churches that make this jump to five, six, seven, eight locations, what they figured out is it's actually a people thing. It's a culture thing. It's like Chick-fil-A, Chick-fil-A doesn't sell or the Chick-fil-A business isn't chicken sandwiches. Their business is culture replication. It's not by mistake. Listen, I lived in New Jersey for years and they put a Chick-fil-A around the corner from our house. Now New Jersey love it. I love dirty Jersey. It's incredible. But I remember when they opened there was like all these friendly people working at Chick-fil-A and I'm like-

Carey Nieuwhof: In Jersey?

Rich Birch: They found every friendly person there was in New Jersey and they were working there. And I ended up because of just through a couple of connections, I ended up meeting the operator, a great guy, fantastic leader. And I said to him, I'm like, "You seem to have found every friendly person." And he's like, "No, no. We train them to be that way." I think the actual phrase he said is like, "We're in the business of training every young person how to be polite."

Rich Birch: And I'm like, that's really true. Well, a year later, they're still friendly. Now that location is four or five years in, they still continue to do that. The same is true with the local church, with you're thinking about launching campuses, it's really about building a system that slows down and acquires a large group. And I would say somewhere between 75 and 150 volunteers.

Rich Birch: So not people, and this is a nuance. Too many times churches, they get up and they say, "Hey, who would like to go to this new location?" And I'm like, "Don't ask that question." You don't care who's going to the new location. You only care who's serving at the new location. It doesn't actually matter how many people sit in-

Carey Nieuwhof: Attendance doesn't matter.

Rich Birch: It doesn't. At the end of the day, what matters is who's going to go and volunteer. And so I think you've got to slow down. There's this other interesting problem which should I talk about on some other resources that most church leaders are more innovative than the average person they're trying to acquire. So if you think about the diffusion of innovation curve on one side you've got innovators on the other side, you've got laggards. Most church leaders, particularly folks that are doing multi-site, they're more innovative than the middle majority, than that middle majority people.

Carey Nieuwhof: You're out there in front as a leader.

Rich Birch: So what happens is you end up, if you don't build a system that finds middle majority people, all you'll do is find innovators. This is what happens to church planters all the time. They go out and they find innovators, people who love to try new things, that will not help your campus long-term. What you need are middle majority people who are going to stick and stay in the long run, who are going to slow down and say, "Yes, I would love to be here for the long haul." And how do you do that? I think you have to take longer launch processes. You're not launching in three months. You're launching over six, seven, eight, nine, 10 months. You've got a long extended conversation with people. You're walking with them slowly.

Rich Birch: You're not trying to prematurely ask them. Again, a lot of times, I love communicators. You've heard me say that before, but a lot of times communicators think, "All I have to do is stand up and preach on this and we'll get the volunteers we need." That's just not the case. You'll get maybe 15% of

who you need. If you just get up on a Sunday and say, "Hey, we're launching this thing." But you can't launch a church on 15% you need to get that full 100% which in my case I would say is somewhere between 75 and 150 volunteers somewhere in that range.

Carey Nieuwhof: Part of what we're talking about here is really engagement, right? Because if you're volunteering in a church or not for profit, if you're that good Chick-fil-A employee who's learned how to be polite, you're engaged. You're not like, "Oh my gosh, what time is my shift over?" Right? You're like, "Oh, this is hard." It was easier just to come and sit there for 45 minutes and do nothing than it is to get up at three o'clock in the morning on a Sunday on my day off. How do you create that kind of... I know this is like a whole other podcast, but you've seen best practices because not only the three churches that you've worked at, but the hundreds you've consulted with and visited. What are some of the best practices to get highly engaged, highly motivated volunteers?

Rich Birch: Yeah, so this is, again, there's a ton we can unpack here, but I think you've got to work backwards from what is the ideal volunteer experience, back to what your recruiting looks like. So you've actually got to start with what would actually be a great volunteer experience? What is that? What happens when people...

Carey Nieuwhof: Which is what so many people don't think about, right? Because-

Rich Birch: What's in it for them, not what's in it for us? What's in for them?

Carey Nieuwhof: What's in it for them? How does it feel if you would volunteer at your church? Would you volunteer for you?

Rich Birch: Absolutely.

Carey Nieuwhof: Right. So what are the keys?

Rich Birch: Yeah. So I think the kind of broad part of this, and there's so much I could drive down on this, but the kind of 10,000 foot view is ultimately an ideal volunteer experience is relationally driven, not driven by task. And I think so many church leaders get this wrong and so many, I think frankly so many employers get this wrong.

Rich Birch: We need people to do stuff. We need them to check stuff off a list, whatever that is, they need to show up and be the greeter. We need them to set up an environment. But that's not actually what motivates people or it motivates a small number of people. Mostly what motivates people is, "Am I known? Does someone know me? Are they caring for me? Are they slowing down for a moment and getting to know me better? Is this the kind of place that I can grow?"

Rich Birch: I'll give you a kind of just a short example of this. So I've been in a lot of portable churches. We spent a lot of time setting up and tearing down in all different kinds of environments. And I remember it was one Christmas Eve and the way at Liquid are at this phase, and I'm sure this is still the case, what we would say to our staff is, "Listen, no staff leaves until the last volunteer leaves. So we're here until the bitter end." Because we don't want there to be staff going before our... And so what that means within your setup tear down is you're waiting till everything gets put away. And there was this group of guys and I still remember, we were a Hyatt hotel, a really nice hotel and we've got chicken wings and all that again trying to create a relational environment.

Rich Birch: And one of the guys, he kind of grabbed a couple other guys by the shoulders and said, "You know what?" And this is Christmas Eve because there's a lot of other places people could be. "So you know what? Serving on this team, you guys are like my brothers. This is like a new family for me." Now for us, we have to create those kind of experiences. We have to work backwards from how do we create such a great experience that yeah, we've got stuff to do, we got to put boxes away, we got cables to roll, all that stuff, but we have to make it such a great relational experience, which ultimately is about slowing down. It's about knowing people's names. It's about food, it's about T-shirts. It's about like's a ton of tactics that we could talk about that it's about surprise and delight. It's about all kinds of other things, but it really is ultimately how do we make it more relationally driven?

Rich Birch: How do we make this that, "Oh actually I would love to do this because I get friends here. This is the kind of place I can get to know people." And I would say that's the case with great businesses as well. So I had a chance when I was in university or college for American Friends to work at the Disney stores, which was so fun, a great experience.

Carey Nieuwhof: Oh yeah. I love your Disney store.

Rich Birch: And they were like let's say...

Carey Nieuwhof: And you're a Disney... What do they call those Disney like?

Rich Birch: A Disney freak. I don't know.

Carey Nieuwhof: I don't know. There is no name for that.

Rich Birch: Disnerd. Yeah, Disnerd.

Carey Nieuwhof: Well, you've read everything-

Rich Birch: Love it.

Carey Nieuwhof: .. And yeah.

Rich Birch: But part of that experience, looking back on that, they invested so much. We were just the Disney store people. We're selling stuffed animals basically is all we're doing, but they invested so much time, effort and energy to ensure that wow, this was a fun working environment that we actually wanted to be there. And a part of that, I still, again, it's amazing how these things stick in your brain. I was working the cash register one day and imagine like it's kind of ironic looking back on it now because I hate doing receipts. I don't know anybody that does. But when you have your own bills, so you had to file all these receipts while I lost a receipt. So if somebody had run, they'd paid something on credit card and they lost a receipt. Well the way our system worked is we have to find that receipt. We cannot close the store.

Rich Birch: And so what I literally was doing was you follow all these procedures and eventually you're going through the garbage to find receipts because you know it's there somewhere. So I'm literally sitting on the floor of this store with big bags of garbage around me looking for, and you know what? The regional manager, not even my store manager, the regional manager comes, sits down beside me. A guy named Rob I still remember, sits down beside me, takes off his jacket and says, "Hey, we're going to find this receipt together. I'll work with you on this." And I think back to that and I thought-

Carey Nieuwhof: Oh wow.

Rich Birch: ... That's.

Carey Nieuwhof: And you're how old?

Rich Birch: And I'm like 18, 19 at that time. And this guy's like a Disney, he's a real deal like from California big time guy. Two things was impressed on me that day. He could've just said, "You lowly person receipts are really important."

Carey Nieuwhof: "You're fired."

Rich Birch: Yeah, "You're fired or you're going to sit there all night and find it." The lesson that was burned in me that night was twofold. One was, oh my goodness, receipts are like a really big deal because if the district manager guys is going to sit on the floor and go the garbage with me on it, I don't ever want to lose one of these things again. And also, hey this guy Rob wanted my job to be... He didn't want it to be terrible. He knew this is terrible. No one wants to go through garbage. He wanted it to be a good thing. Now for us, I think oftentimes in the church world to bring it back to kind of a faith context or a church context, there's a lot of jobs that we do that frankly are sitting on the floor taking out receipts.

Rich Birch: It's just not interesting. But we've got to figure out how do we make them relational, how do we make the kind of thing that people want to be a part of?

Carey Nieuwhof: Servant leadership.

Rich Birch: Absolutely.

Carey Nieuwhof: Really at the end of the day, which should be at the heart of it. But I think it's like that whole idea of people don't quit jobs. They quit managers and they quit cultures. Right?

Rich Birch: Yeah, absolutely.

Carey Nieuwhof: And what is your volunteer culture like? Is that, would you volunteer for you? That's a question I ask myself all the time. Would I work for me?

Rich Birch: Yes. Absolutely.

Carey Nieuwhof: Would I volunteer for me?

Rich Birch: Absolutely.

Carey Nieuwhof: I don't know. Some days yes, some days no. I mean you have to ask that. Any other, because this research is really fascinating. Any other data on what a typical multi-site church looks like or shifts in the multi-site movement that are worth noting?

Rich Birch: There's a couple that continue to, we'd probably aren't surprising to folks that are listening in. We know we're seeing an increasing digitization of the local church. So campuses, online campuses continue to be a growing piece of the puzzle. So five years ago, just 28% of multi-site churches said they had an online campus. Today it's 47%. I think for us the question becomes, well, what part of our ministry are we putting online? What are we doing to ensure that if you're not... And this is a church of any size, you do not have to be a large church to have a podcast. I have a buddy of mine, a church planter in Florida, the day they started, they started with a video podcast. They out of the box, are recording video on YouTube.

Rich Birch: You don't have to be a big church to do that. That's important for all of us. And I think for business leaders you know this, every part of your business you need to ask the question, how can technology enable this? What part of digitization should play in your business.

Carey Nieuwhof: Your website, your Instagram, all that stuff actually-

Rich Birch: Absolutely. Super important.

Carey Nieuwhof: ... Actually really matters.

Rich Birch: Absolutely.

Carey Nieuwhof: And it's pretty free, isn't it?

Rich Birch: Yes.

Carey Nieuwhof: You're not talking about 10 grand worth of gear. You're talking about shoot on your iPhone.

Rich Birch: Absolutely. Yeah. If you want to do video, you could. You probably, if you're going to do video, you want to buy a camera, but that's not much, for a few \$100 you could do that. Recording audio frankly, like I've seen church planters, they literally, all they do is they have their iPhone in their pocket. They get another, just a little lav mic that just plugs into their phone and before they go out on stage, they hit record and then that just records an MP3. It's just audio, but an MP3 of them talking and it doesn't even connect into the house system or into the room at all, but then they've got that MP3 and they can give that away.

Rich Birch: That is so important regardless of any churches listening in today. I heard this statistic that there were one in four churches in America don't have a website, which is, that's very puzzling to me.

Carey Nieuwhof: Really?

Rich Birch: Yeah, I find that statistic hard to believe.

Carey Nieuwhof: And businesses are no better. I mean a lot of like sometimes I go even on services I use locally and I'm like, wow, a website from 1996 right. That's pretty incredible.

Rich Birch: It doesn't take much. You don't need a lot. And so yeah, I would think that and continue to think about how are we digitizing. The other trend that we're seeing in multitude that I think applies to us is or is interesting to think about is 42% of multi-site churches are exploring what this study called micro sites. This idea of a quicker, faster footprint. So people, they kind of, as the movement continues along, people are asking the question, we always assume that a campus had to be insert X number, has to be 1000, has to be 500. Everybody has a different number. But regardless, people are asking, could we do this in a smaller area? What would this look like if we went into an old folks' home and there was only 25 people there? Can we make that successful?

Rich Birch: Is that a good thing or what could we do remote almost like house church kind of things where it's like there's maybe only 15, 20 people there, but that again

has a different feel to it. So people are wrestling with this idea of putting it into a smaller box. You can look at Starbucks, right? You've got the kind of full Starbucks experience, you've got the Starbucks at the airport and then you've got all the way down to instant coffee Starbucks. It's how do we take their core product, which in that case is roasted beans in a certain experience. How do we offer that in a different kind of container? What does that look like? And again, I think in the church world, we want to be asking, Hey, let's not just limit ourselves to the one zip code or the one address that we've been given.

Rich Birch: Is there a way for us to extend our ministry into another location? Is there a way for us to look at maybe a smaller box that we can put it into?

Carey Nieuwhof: No, that's interesting too, because we've done even at Connexus what I call pop-up church, where we've gone to cities we're not in for Christmas mostly, but you could do it at other times of the year too.

Rich Birch: Absolutely.

Carey Nieuwhof: It's almost like you see popup stores, right? So somebody opens up a kiosk at the airport or a pop up store. We're just going to pop up restaurants or a thing. So there's that whole idea of smaller micro expressions.

Rich Birch: Absolutely. Liquid Church This last summer they did a campus, which tongue in cheek was a great choice. They were at a right, literally on the ocean. So they were down the Jersey shore, beautiful location, a block and a half from the water and it was just for the summertime. So it was just over the summertime, Saturday evening basically for people who are down the shore, let's go and provide that experience. I think that's great. What a fantastic opportunity for a church and obviously a great place to go. They had no problem finding people that want to go and volunteer there and lead there and because it's such a beautiful part of the world.

Rich Birch: But yeah, absolutely. This idea of pop up church or Christmas services or testing locations, you were seeing more and more of that churches that are asking the question, is there different ways for us to take this? We've got over the fact that we can multiply. Now is there a different location that we could multiply into?

Carey Nieuwhof: What is the difference between a thriving campus and one that isn't?

Rich Birch: Oh, that's a great question.

Carey Nieuwhof: And those that are struggling.

Rich Birch: Yeah, that's a great question. So part of it I think is ultimately it's a replication issue. Is this campus growing to the point where they could see themselves multiplying? One of the things that came out in these statistics, I don't have it written right in front of me, but I believe it was almost 40% of campuses out

there have birth another campus. So there was this early in the movement, there was this idea that you were only taking from one location. So we are still seeing that one campus is predominantly larger than the rest of them.

Rich Birch: So the numbers in this study show that on average, which average is always tough. But then on average we're seeing that one campus has 63% of the all entire churches attendance in it, both-

Carey Nieuwhof: Typically broadcast, right?

Rich Birch: Typically the broadcast campus, typically where they started from, they have the deepest roots in those locations. There's some of that. There's a lot of reasons why that is, but what we're seeing is that healthy campuses are getting to the point where they're saying, "Hey, we can actually, we could find 50, 75, 100 people, hive them off to send them out." So ultimately I think the greatest measurement is of health is gross to the point where we could hive off, multiply, find some leaders to send to a new location.

Carey Nieuwhof: And what do you need to do to build that kind of momentum and excitement rather than just have people who show up week after week? I know you've talked about that in the church growth flywheel and different things like that. But I mean, there's a lot of people who go to stuck churches. There's a lot of people who run stuck organizations. It's like, "Yeah, we just do, we're hoping for 2% better next year if we're lucky in a good year, hoping not to decline."

Rich Birch: Yeah. There's a ton there. First of all, I think church leaders from growing churches do have a rock solid understanding of why it is that their people or what their people say when they're inviting their friends to come to church. And they're investing in those areas. When people say like, well, "Why do people come to our church?" There's not ambiguity in a growing church's leadership mind. They're not like, I'm not entirely sure. They know that it's like and typically, it's some version of teaching kids ministry, a great kind of welcome environment. Usually worship ministry is in there somehow. And frankly, those thriving campuses, those thriving churches are investing in those areas. They're saying, "Hey, these are areas we want to get better at over time." And so what that means ultimately is you've got to cut out other things so that you can focus on those areas that have the greatest impact.

Rich Birch: I don't know if you've noticed this, Carey, but lots of times when I've been in churches that aren't thriving or they're talking to their ministry. I'm surprised at how much they do. They have a very long list of ministries. They have a very long list of stuff that-

Carey Nieuwhof: 42 things happening this week.

Rich Birch: Yeah. And I'm like, and how does a church of 100 people do that? I don't know what that looks like. Where when you look, there is absolutely an inverse

relationship between a very large church that actually when you look at what they do, they don't actually have a very complex approach to ministry. They don't have a lot of different ministries. They do a few things and they do them well. They've stuck to their knitting and they say, "Hey, we're going to get better at that. We're going to focus in." Again, that's an old idea, simple church, all that. But it still holds true that churches that are making a difference, how do you create the kind of church that people want to come to?

Rich Birch: Frankly, you invest in a few things and get better at them so that ultimately the people in your church will tell their friends about their church and they'll want to come. And that becomes this flywheel, which is a whole other conversation of how you ultimately grow your church.

Carey Nieuwhof: Yeah. It's hard to reproduce complexity. Right?

Rich Birch: Absolutely.

Carey Nieuwhof: Much easier to reproduce simplicity.

Rich Birch: Absolutely.

Carey Nieuwhof: So how do you know you're ready for multi-site? I know there's a lot of leaders here going, "Hey, one day, one day, maybe, maybe." How do you know that day is now?

Rich Birch: Great question. So I would say every church that's listening in today that's growing should be thinking about multi-site. So if you're a church of 200 and you're growing, you should be thinking. And that bears out statistically when you hear statistically about churches that are thinking about multi-site, really, they're the churches that are thinking and that are growing and they're like, hey, they're making an impact. Now the interestingly, the multi-site movement started as a mega church movement. So it definitely started with churches.

Rich Birch: I remember in 2005 I spoke at a conference at Willow Creek and at that point I was at the meeting house and our church at that point we were about 2,500 people. And I was speaking at this conference which was a little bit humbling, my title of my talk was, does multi-site work in a small church? And I was like, I don't think 2,500 is small.

Carey Nieuwhof: Is small.

Rich Birch: But that it was at that point, that was because everybody that was doing it at that point was 10,000 plus. It was a very, very much all big church movement. Now that's changing increasingly actually smaller and smaller.

Carey Nieuwhof: 300, 400.

Rich Birch: Yeah, absolutely. And there's churches that are planting, they're starting day one with saying, I was at a church this week who right from the beginning, they're like, "Hey, we're thinking about multiplication." And they're having their first Sunday and they're thinking, "Hey, we're thinking about multiplication." That could be multi-site, that could be planting churches. So there's a lot there. I think you need to have a measure of health when you replicate, you're going to replicate everything about you. So there is a little bit of nail it before you scale it. If you have problems in your church and you do problems in two locations, it doesn't make it easier.

Rich Birch: It makes it more difficult. So you've got to solve a level of it. But frankly I find myself on the side of the equation often saying to church leaders, "I think you should do this, step in, God's got a huge plan for your community and maybe this is the next step. Maybe this is where he's leading you."

Carey Nieuwhof: Looking back, what would you say has been a surprise for you of the multi-site movement? It's like, yeah, I've been in this for years, but I never thought this would happen.

Rich Birch: So two things. One, I would say video is the greatest non-issue in this whole thing. I've spent a lot of time, effort and energy thinking about how do we do video well, but in the end it's actually really easy. There's really common, and it's become really cheap to do the idea of doing live video between multiple locations of friends at Living As One have solved that problem.

Rich Birch: And so for all the time that I've spent thinking about video, it actually is not really a big deal that by at all. And the second I think is, I'm surprised frankly, how many churches have gone multi-site. I remember when I first started in multi-site, this was 2001, 2002. I found out that there were a dozen churches, there were a dozen other churches that were doing it. And I was blown away by that. Well now they say there's somewhere north of 1,000, or somewhere north of 5,000, sorry, 5,000 churches that have gone multi-site. Millions of people every year are attending these churches.

Rich Birch: And it seems to be accelerating. And those most recent statistics, there's evidence that actually that it's growth is actually speeding up, not slowing down. Which is surprising because it doesn't... I think if you were to talk to most churches they're like, "Oh that's such a passing idea." Or they wouldn't say that. They'd be like, "Oh I don't know. Maybe that was an idea that was really cool five years ago." But actually.

Carey Nieuwhof: Like video or multi-site?

Rich Birch: Multi-site. But actually what we're seeing statistically is it's increasing the velocity of campuses linked. Launching is increasing, the number of churches that are going multi-site and choosing a multi-site is increasing every year. And so yeah, I think those things would be things...

Carey Nieuwhof: Because what you are hearing in the buzz, like James Emery White kind of rocked the world by saying, "We're shutting down all of our campuses moving back to one." And I've had a conversation with him not on this podcast and he says, "Yeah, that actually led to growth for us." Now there's a whole beltway thing around that. Matt Chandler has shut down all the campuses, the multi-site, they're all independent churches. So there's almost a counter argument now that says exactly the opposite, like in the common ether. It's like actually multi-site is a thing from the past, but you're saying no.

Rich Birch: Yeah. So statistically that doesn't bear out. What we are finding is so again, from the most recent statistics, two thirds of all multi-site churches are more centralized than decentralized. If you look at and listen to the stories of churches that have decided to opt out of multi-site that were multi-site and then spun them off, or, and I don't know about these specific examples, but churches that I've been a part of their conversation, they tend to be decentralized multi-site churches where they were allowing, and they were having campus pastors kind of make their own decisions. They really, in a lot of way were a federation of church plants rather than a multi-site church, which is saying it takes a certain leader to get 10 leaders in the room and say, "Okay, everybody think a different thought." It doesn't actually take that complex of a leader to do that.

Rich Birch: It takes a whole other level of leadership to get 10 leaders in a room and say, "All right, this is what we're going to work on together." How do we kind of find our common good and push this thing forward? And what we're seeing is those churches that are choosing to do that are seeing great effectiveness in reaching new people. And so yeah, I understand there and I've said this on my own podcast, I've said it on my blog, I think we will see more of that. There will be more high profile multi-site, large multi-site churches that will demulti-site. But my challenge on that is if you look at what's actually happening behind that, typically it's because they're decentralized models where really what's actually happening there is there're a federation of church plants not really a, hey, let's all work on this together type movement. So we'll see and we'll see what happens in the coming years.

Carey Nieuwhof: What do you think is going to happen in the coming years? If you had to put your not Nostradamus hat on, what would you think is going to be multi-site 3, 5, 10 years down the road?

Rich Birch: Well, I think there will be an increased expression of the micro site. There will be an increased focus on how do we figure out how to do this in a smaller footprint. I know there are thriving robust house church movements out there. To me, there's a real logical birth or connection between multi-site and the house church movement. But I think the thing unfortunately where a lot of house church movements have fallen apart is they're so decentralized, there isn't a common leadership structure to them. And it makes it difficult for them to scale long-term. I think, and there are multiple churches that are doing the

meeting house at church I was at in Toronto. They're doing that. There's a number of churches out there that have decided to try to really come alongside the house church movement and say, "Hey, how do we work with you?"

Rich Birch: I think there's real potential there. Somebody's going to figure out how to do that and there'll be a 500 campus multi-site that'll have 500 campuses of 35 people. And I think, I'm hoping, and this is maybe more in the category of hope rather than prediction, but I really do hope that those multi-site churches that are out there today that have two or three locations will say, "We're going to buckle down and figure out how to go from 2 or 3 to 10." Because I think there's statistically, what we know is that those new campuses will reach all kinds of new people. That there's opportunity for us to see lots of people coming to the kingdom of Christ. And I would challenge those church leaders that are multi-site today to say if you've stalled out, I would say don't give up on multi-site.

Rich Birch: You've done the hard work. You've got out, you've said you're going to do this, you've invested in, you just need to go back and figure out, okay, what was it about the way we launched, particularly what was it about our launch process that didn't work, that didn't, I would say ultimately generate enough volunteers to make it healthy for us long-term? So I hope that churches will invest in that because the churches that I've been a part of. We've seen that time and again, when we slow down, build the right size of teams that a year from now that campus is thriving but that then enable us to go onto the next locations and then ultimately we're able to reach more people down the road.

Carey Nieuwhof: That's good to know. And I think when you see so much growth and momentum, it is a little bit premature to say the multi-site movement is dead.

Rich Birch: Oh absolutely.

Carey Nieuwhof: For sure. What about the single site church? What about the church of 50 to 250 which is the vast majority of churches, they're not connected. You look five years down the road, what do you think happens there?

Rich Birch: Well, I think there's still lots of opportunity there. I think there's a lot of people who, frankly, when you get into church under 200 people, you're choosing to follow a single leader. You're like, "I really like this person. I love this particular pastor." And there are people in our community that are wired that way. They want to have that kind of relationship. They want the pastor to smell like the sheep. They're looking for that kind of relationship.

Rich Birch: And I think there's lots of opportunity there. I think there are lessons and some of we've talked about today. I think if I'm a single cell, single location church pastor, I'd be thinking about the use of technology and I'd be thinking, how do I integrate that? What am I doing digitally to help reach my people? I'd be thinking about the use of video even in a single location. I would be thinking, "Maybe we should be doing IMAG or image magnification where we project

whoever's on stage, project them up on the side screens. Partly because I think those people communicate better. And you've seen this when you go and speak at a conference or you speak at church, the giant screen there, we know that two thirds of communication is nonverbal. And so when your image magnified and there's all those little subtle nuances in your face, you actually just communicate better.

Rich Birch: You actually, people see your message in a better way than just if you're standing on a stage somewhere. And that's not unreasonable for a church of 150 people that say, "Hey, maybe we should invest in video." We don't even have any intention to go multi-site down the road. But, hey, maybe this could be a good next step for us.

Carey Nieuwhof: No, that's interesting and I don't disagree with you. I think what you're going to see is a lot of disruption and a lot of change in the church space. Any thoughts? Last question for you and I know you've got more we could go on all day, future of online church. Any thoughts before I let you go?

Rich Birch: Oh gosh. You're putting me on... You're putting me on. So I've been involved in church online since 2009. I am a fan, an early adopter, did all the math around like, man, this is an efficient way to reach people. I think I've come kind of full circle on it to be honest. I think church online, first of all, I think every church that's multi-site should be doing some version of church online, which we're seeing statistically that's growing. But I don't think you should think of it as it's a separate campus. It's like our opportunity to grow the world. I think it's a front door. I think it's a lobby. I think it's a foyer to your experience.

Rich Birch: I think the idea of offering your entire experience with a chat room so that people can see what it's like to come to your church, I think is the best place for church online. I think this idea, and I know that some people are not going to like this because there are people... And I have good friends who really hold this view that it's like, "No, it's like its own standalone thing."

Rich Birch: I'm like, ah, I haven't seen, to me there's too many problems with church online that get us away from local church. So for instance, we know that children's ministry is a big part of why churches grow. And we know that a high percentage, and I don't have the statistic off my head, but it's like 60, 70% of people come to know Christ or make a decision to follow Christ before the age of 18. Well, I haven't seen anyone or very few people have cracked the nut on what does kids' church online look like? So my problem is if you're saying you're an actual church but you have nothing for kids online, I think you're missing out on a potentially huge redemptive issue. Like, you're not actually reaching people, you're helping people take steps closer to Jesus.

Rich Birch: So again that there's people I probably I can feel the emails already coming my way around that. I think it's an important innovation. I think it's a thing we should invest in. I think every church that's multi-site should be doing some

version of it, but I think ultimately it should be positioned as a front door. It should be positioned as a lobby to say, "Hey, why don't you come to our services." And you'll see this statistically. I know that the church online that I have had have been able to have a kind of behind the scenes view on, we're typically seeing 50%, 60% of the people who are viewing those are within driving distance of an existing campus. So the vast majority of those people should be coming and sitting in our campuses. Now, what we're not seeing is it take attendance away. That's been debunked.

Rich Birch: There's lots of people are like, "Oh, is it going to hurt our attendance?" That's not actually true. I think it's moving people who maybe only attend and you've written a lot on this, once every six weeks. Once every two months they maybe will watch every once in a while and that's okay. That's fine and I think there's a value on it as well. Even just from a community service point of view. I had a guy say to me, this was when I was at Liquid Church, he's a business guy and travels all the time and he said, "Hey man, I am just so thankful that I can open up church online on the weekend and plug in and feel like I'm at home when I'm not at home."

Rich Birch: And I thought you know what, as a church leader pastorally, would I rather have a guy who's traveling in my church watching in his hotel room, watching church online or watching something else he could be watching. I would way rather them watching church online. So I do think there's pastorally a good thing there.

Carey Nieuwhof: So that front door, side door thing, and it's almost like online dating in my mind. It's like okay, eventually this leads to a coffee.

Rich Birch: Eventually you got to sit down across the table.

Carey Nieuwhof: Maybe something, maybe a lifelong relationship, who knows?

Rich Birch: Absolutely. For sure.

Carey Nieuwhof: But the purpose of connecting online is not to leave it online.

Rich Birch: No, absolutely. Yeah. I think it's the first step and that's hard to do and some people have cracked that nut. And a bunch of churches haven't, it can be difficult to do.

Carey Nieuwhof: So Rich, you are pretty much an encyclopedia on all things multi-site. And you put together some fun stuff for leaders who are listening who want to know more and trust me there is so much more hyper practical realm. So do you want to tell us about it?

Rich Birch: First of all, I love the Carey Nieuwhof audience. Whenever I interact with people who are part of the Carey Nieuwhof tribe, I just, I love this community. And so what we did was we put together a two resources that we're going to give you

for free. You can get these resources in two ways. One, you can just go to CareyMultisite.com or you can text all one word, careymultisite to 44222. And there's two things you're going to get. First, we'll give you access to the Leadership Network, latest findings that we talked about here. So you'll actually get a chance to download that. See the full thing. You could spend a lot of time with your leadership team.

Rich Birch: But then we're also going to give you access to a three part video series, that's all lessons on multi-sites. So what I've tried to do is a whole other series of conversations around what are some of the biggest mistakes that camp churches have made in launching. We talk about keys to picking locations and then I had this whole conversation about dirty secrets, the dirty secrets of the multi-site church movement. So again, all you have to do is go to CareyMultisite.com.

Carey Nieuwhof: You got to tell us like one dirty secret.

Rich Birch: Yeah. Well, so one dirty secret, I'll say this, campus pastors is the hardest and most painful part of this whole process.

Carey Nieuwhof: I almost asked you about that.

Rich Birch: Yeah. Hiring campus pastors is very difficult. We talk about it in this resource. It's very difficult to do. And again, that's a whole other conversation.

Carey Nieuwhof: Okay. No. But that's good. So that's one of the dirty secrets.

Rich Birch: Yes, absolutely. So it's that kind of thing. We're trying to give people a bit of under the hood because I'm hoping really what I want to do is encourage, if there's church leaders that are listening in today, they're thinking we might want to go multi-site, I'd love them to get all these resources. Or if you're already multi-site and you're stalled out, particularly I want you to get these resources because I think they'll help you really think about next locations. It's free. Completely free.

Carey Nieuwhof: The Leadership Network stuff. That's actual data.

Rich Birch: Absolutely.

Carey Nieuwhof: I mean they do great stuff.

Rich Birch: They do a good job.

Carey Nieuwhof: Johnson's been a guest and so many-

Rich Birch: Yeah. Absolutely.

Carey Nieuwhof: ... And the other people.

Rich Birch: This study is amazing. And like I say, you just go there. We'll get you access to that-

Carey Nieuwhof: So CareyMultisite.com. You built a website with my name.

Rich Birch: Yeah, exactly.

Carey Nieuwhof: That's really cool.

Rich Birch: It's just a one page so it's-

Carey Nieuwhof: C-A-R-E-Y, CareyMultisite.com or what's the text number?

Rich Birch: You just text careymultisite to 44222 so-

Carey Nieuwhof: C-A-R-E-Y.

Rich Birch: Yeah. And so if you're in Canada or some part of the world and you can't do the short code thing, you just go to CareyMultisite.com and enter your email address and we'll get it sent to you.

Carey Nieuwhof: All right, that's cool, Rich, as always-

Rich Birch: Thanks Carey.

Carey Nieuwhof: Great stuff. Thanks man.

Rich Birch: Thanks brother. Take care.

Carey Nieuwhof: We'll do it again. Rich's always so generous. I hope you guys check out those resources. Also, we have all the links for you in the show notes. You can go to careynieuwhof.com/episode295. We include transcripts for free with that. Some of you are readers. The other thing I love about transcripts, I love it when podcasts offer them, here's what I love. They're searchable, so you just actually search a term, when he talked about X, you just type it in and boom, there it is. So anyway, check that out at careynieuwhof.com/episode295 if you can't spell that, just go to leadlikeneverbefore.com and type in Rich Birch. Also we are uploading many episodes these days to YouTube. We haven't got this one on, but we've got an incredible archive with, well, all kinds of fascinating people.

Carey Nieuwhof: We've got, let's see, Christy Wright, David Kinnaman, Max Lucado, Sam Collier, Kevin Jennings, Michael Hyatt, Nona Jones, Sean Cannell, Les McKeown and more. You can find that on YouTube. And of course if you subscribe and many of you have subscribed now on YouTube, if you subscribe to the audio, if you're an

audio listener, kind of like me, subscribe to this podcast for free. You never miss a thing. And don't forget to check out the special offers we've got. Go to RemodelHealth.com/Carey today to save on healthcare costs for your staff for 2020. And then Pro WebFire's got a monthly special 30% off for life, new website every three years, weekly updates and they'll manage your Facebook, Instagram and YouTube, et cetera. And all you have to do for that is go to ProWebFire.com/Carey. So we are back with a fresh episode real soon and I am so excited to bring you Mark Batterson.

Carey Nieuwhof: I flew to DC had an in-person conversation with Mark. We'll be bringing you that and I'm super pumped for that. So hang on for that one. And then we've also got Gordon MacDonald, Alejandro Reyes, Patrick Lencioni, Albert Tate, NT Wright and a whole lot more coming up on the podcast.

Carey Nieuwhof: So guys, thank you so much for listening. But before we go, we're going to do our new feature and Chris asked this question on Twitter. By the way, if you get a leadership question, just use any platform and #askCarey C-A-R-E-Y that's #askCarey. Chris says, "I need steps for reaching attendance goals I need to get past. At 200 what do we do next?" So 200 is an almost impassable barrier in church world. Sometimes it's because people don't want to reach more people and that's fine. I assume by your question that's not true.

Carey Nieuwhof: And certainly I'm not wired that way. But 85% of all churches never make it past 200 and in the business world there's a parallel. Here's the parallel, 96% of all small businesses never get past \$1 million in sales. Now why is that? Often it's not because of ambition or in the church case because of a lack of faithfulness. It's actually structural issues that prevent it and a lot of businesses, a lot of churches run like a mom and pop shops. So what you've got to do, Chris, is you got to get rid of all the vestiges of mom and pop in the church. Sometimes we call that the chaplain model and at the heart of the mom and pop/chaplain model is this, the leader who does everything. You're doing all the pastoral care, attending all the meetings, leading all the meetings, coming up with all the initiatives and basically 200 is the level or \$1 million in sales in business is the level at which your ability to run around like a chicken with his or her head cut off ends, it just doesn't scale. It doesn't work.

Carey Nieuwhof: You will burn out or your organization will just always stay small. So a couple of things in this specific church context you can do. Number one, pay attention to how you do pastoral care because that's really, really important. Pastoral care where one person is doing all of it does not scale. The other thing you can do is delegate and equip leaders and then the next barrier that comes along is the church boardroom. So the board at 400 to 600 will not be able to process all of the information that they need to make great decisions. So you have to move from board based decision making to staff based decision making. A final tip I would have for you, Chris, is make sure that at this point you don't hire doers, you hire leaders, so as you're adding staff, don't hire people here.

- Carey Nieuwhof: You take pastoral care here, you do this because you'll end up with a whole bunch. I think Patrick Lencioni may be somebody else called it the genius with 1,000 helpers syndrome where there's one person kind of driving everything and a whole lot of people who assist. That is another recipe for stagnation. What you need to find is leaders and leaders would be defined in your context as people who can recruit volunteers, lead volunteers and lead beyond themselves. So they of course you do some ministry, but basically they don't do the ministry. They equip others to do the ministry and that's very biblical. That's Ephesians 4, that's 1 Corinthians 12 and so much more.
- Carey Nieuwhof: So I hope that helps. By the way, this is a quick summary. I have a whole lot more for you if anyone's interested at ChurchGrowthMasterclass.com. So check that out, ChurchGrowthMasterclass.com, I share everything about all the attendance barriers, 200, 400, 800, 1,000 on what you need to do to get your church growing.
- Carey Nieuwhof: All those resources are housed at ChurchGrowthMasterclass.com. And in business you know what? It's the same thing. It's like you can't just be the people who open the store, close the store, open the business, close the business, do everything. You've got to start to scale and delegate beyond yourself. So hope that helps guys, I'm really enjoying this. So make sure whatever platform you're on, you leave me a question at #askCarey and we'll be doing this. So excited. Next episode, Mark Batterson and thanks so much for listening. I hope our time together today helps you lead like never before.
- Announcer: You've been listening to the Carey Nieuwhof Leadership Podcast. Join us next time for more insights on leadership, change, and personal growth to help you lead like never before.