

Executive Summary

The Task Force to Study Multisite Churches was established by Synod 2024 to address the fact that current Church Order and synodical regulations do not explicitly envision multisite church arrangements. The task force was mandated to provide guidance on which models best fit Reformed theology and polity, to offer “roadmaps” for churches transitioning into multisite structures, and to recommend necessary Church Order changes. The report explains that the term *multisite* describes not a single model but a spectrum of models ranging from “one church in many rooms” to one church in multiple locations to a decentralized church network or family of churches. These models are distinguished by five key organizational factors: governance, budget, membership, preaching, and branding.

The report affirms the rationale for multisite expressions as a response to numerical growth, a means to extend ministry into new geographical areas, and a strategy for revitalizing dying congregations. In addition, multisite models are recognized as a strategic tool for planting for diversity and mission, allowing for language-specific or culturally distinct worship communities to thrive within existing church structures. Throughout these expressions, the task force emphasizes that Reformed ecclesiology must remain the foundation, maintaining the marks of Christ’s church. Pure preaching of the gospel, administration of the sacraments, and faithful discipline must be local and embodied rather than centralized or mediated.

A critical distinction made in the report is between “organized” congregations, which have the maturity to ordain local elders and deacons, and “emerging” worshipping communities, which may temporarily rely on the oversight of a sponsoring council. This framework ensures that while there is flexibility for growth, there is always a clear trajectory toward local governance. To prevent abuses of power, the report stresses that authority must remain with the elected council rather than a single charismatic leader or centralized staff.

To assist churches and classes, the report provides four “roadmaps” tailored to specific scenarios: responding to growth, extending ministry to new places, revitalizing a church, and planting for diversity and mission. These roadmaps emphasize early consultation with classis, clear pastoral oversight, and establishing transparent relationships regarding finances and membership.

In addition, the task force recommends a Supplement to Church Order Article 35, which would require classis approval for any multisite arrangement and which would mandate the maintenance of site-based membership records to ensure pastoral accountability and ecclesiastical clarity.

Ultimately the task force concludes that multisite expressions can flourish within the CRCNA when they are deeply rooted in Reformed polity and oriented toward the health of local congregations.