

The History of Church Multiplication Associates

By Neil Cole October 2008

Church Multiplication Associates (CMA) has roots that go back to 1990 with a few pastors in the Southern California/Arizona District of the Grace Brethren Fellowship of Churches. Their initial meeting focused on their mutual desire to see new churches started in the Southern California and Arizona region. Within a few months a charter was written, the vision was initiated and the foundation was put in place to begin this new work.

In 1991, the church planting board held its first meeting to brainstorm what our vision should be for the next ten years. We concluded that if God blessed and our church plants multiplied, we should be able to plant 50 churches by the year 2000. We started work on the Pastor Factory, which would eventually be called a Leadership Farm System, and would be published in a work called *Raising Leaders for the Harvest* (Logan and Cole, 1995).

A pivotal year in CMA's history was 1995. It was the beginning of a two-year drought for church planting. This drought brought some of the most fruitful changes and advances in strategic development, which would bear much fruit in the years to come. It was during this year we introduced the Leadership Farm Systems, and published *Raising Leaders for the Harvest* and Life Transformation Groups (LTG) cards. Within a single year of the LTG cards being published, word had spread. LTGs were found on nearly every continent of the globe.

The following year (1996), due to the drought of new leaders, we had to reevaluate our original goal of 50 churches by the end of 2000. That goal changed to "*to see the momentum of multiplication increase each year.*" This new goal allowed us to focus on the task of reproducing disciples, leaders and churches in a more organic fashion. These changes would lay the foundation for CMA's breakthrough year in 1998. It was this year we changed our name to Church Multiplication Associates.

Neil Cole and a small team began Awakening Chapels in Long Beach, CA by reaching out relationally to lost urban post-moderns in a local coffeehouse. Within months many were coming to Christ. A second church was commissioned, and then a third. We were not only seeing fruit and reproduction, but we were also learning key concepts for establishing a church multiplication movement.

By the end of 1999, 10 churches were planted in a single year. In 1999, CMA had also designed and implemented a new system for training emerging leaders in systematic theology entitled *TruthQuest*. Also in 1999, CMAResources, our training ministry, was born with its first publication of Neil Cole's book

Cultivating a Life for God (April 1999). The first printing was sold out before year end. Today almost 30,000 copies have been sold. As we began to share our learning, it seemed wise, to hold a weekend “retreat” that would overview the organic church planting process for our burgeoning group. In the year 2000, a new form of training and farming of church planters was birthed-- the *Organic Church Planter’s Greenhouse*. This year, 18 churches were planted as well.

By January 1st of 2001, CMA had seen 53 churches started under her watch. God had fulfilled our original goal in spite of a two-year drought in planting. More importantly, God continued to increase our momentum of multiplication.

Every year we have increased the number of Greenhouse trainings and Greenhouse trainers. This year (2008) we will average a Greenhouse every week and touch a minimum of 3,000 people with this training, spanning 12 different countries as well as many states in a single year.

Today we calculate that we are close to seeing an average of two churches starting every day. We have realized God's intent for CMA is much broader than originally thought. We are seeing the realization of our mission: the reproduction of healthy disciples, leaders, churches and movements to the ends of the earth to the glory of God.