



Northland – A Church Distributed, located in the greater Orlando area, breaks the traditional concept of church. Their new church building was constructed in 2007, and with more than 160,000 square feet of space, serves as a distribution point rather than a destination, facilitating ministry worldwide with other believers. Congregants worship at multiple sites throughout Central Florida, where they connect with neighboring Christians for support and encouragement and to better serve their communities. Each weekend, these sites are joined in concurrent worship. A two-way video connection allows different parts of the services to be distributed among the sites and gives congregants opportunities to interact with one another in real time.

For the past year, Northland has been working with Global Media Outreach (GMO) to provide Internet evangelism in the discipleship process of new believers so they can be the church wherever they are. More than 250 volunteer online missionaries from Northland connect with seekers from around the world each day. The online missionary program ties into the existing Northland vision of serving people through the Internet. Part of the Northland culture is technology-driven, so the GMO model for online missionaries was a great fit.

At the beginning of the program, Northland Pastor Dr. Joel C. Hunter provided two orientation meetings for the congregation, and also broadcast them live on the Internet. These meetings were key to making the implementation successful. Northland was able to cast a vision for its people, building enthusiasm and community, which has been important to the continuation of the program. Additionally, some of Northland's community leaders have gathered their online missionary teams together for additional training, social networking and fellowship.

The relationship between GMO and Northland has resulted in Northland's online missionaries learning how to share their faith and answer tough questions in an environment where they can research it. "They are gaining skills," says Dan Lacich, Northland pastor for distributed sites. "Confidence in dealing with evangelism and apologetics type of questions has really gone up. The encouragement they have of 'maybe we really are winning,' really helps them see how many people are coming to Jesus – enthusiasm and courageousness is amazing. It broadens some people's worldview. People who have never done ministry now feel like they have a ministry that is brand new for them."

The online missionary program at Northland includes a vision to expand with partner churches, making resources available online so people can be the church anywhere. Northland's goal is for anybody who comes to Christ to be able to become the church. Northland is working to get the top 15 language groups with multiple churches doing online ministry and connecting with GMO to start churches wherever they are.