

Best Practices In Church Revitalization & Renewal

The church has a future and a hope. Before any one of us can go forward with the idea of church revitalization, we must arrive at that conclusion. It is more than research, location, statistics, negatives, the past, the present, the people, or the naysayers. In order for anyone to initiate revitalization effectively into the local church, that person must believe Christ's promises about His church.

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Disclaimers & Opinions

Only 5 percent of people in ministry are heading to a healthy growing church, and most of them have been pastoring for some time. (Pre-Covid)

I have made many mistakes in helping churches experience renewal and revitalization.

Many pastors and church leaders are unwilling to try revitalizing a church. They are simply planning on trying to survive as long as they can.

My Experience in Church Revitalization & Renewal

I have gone to declining, unhealthy, financially unstable, conflict-ridden churches of various sizes throughout my ministry.

*I learned many things about church revitalization at my **first church**, which averaged about 20-22 when I became a pastor in the Church of the Nazarene.*

- *The Holy Spirit played the piano.*
- *My treasurer could not spell one hundred.*
- *The people were discouraged and depressed (Mirror)*
- *There were few young people, children, or College Age students.*
- *Pastoral Visitation was vitally important.*
- *We had to experiment with all kinds of activities and events.*
- *We did everything.*
- *No water in the church (frozen pipes)*
- *Trailers/building relationships with neighbors and the community.*
- *The next pastor declared: "These people are idiots!" The Church closed sometime later!*

2nd Church -Okmulgee

*Dealing with the weird stuff - It was on a Sunday somebody touched me . . .
I Had to deal with people of different social-economic differences.
No salary increase
Sports team
Exegete my culture -Western/Rodeo/Bull riding*

3rd Church -Lombard

*Dealt with conflict
Building teams and relationships
I discovered I needed a DS
I prayed for God to bring the right people to the church. (John & the Redwings)
Loss of a Leader-The people rallied*

4th Church-Kalamazoo First

Steep Decline - Fighting over Santa Claus
Conflict - day we moved In - God is moving in this area, and you get to be a part of it.
Preaching a New Day-A New Beginning
Doing Whatever To Bring about Change - - Cooler/New Building-Christmas Lights

5th - Decatur First

Debt-Leave Your Wallet At Home
Survival is a good motivator for church revitalization.
So is one's desire to lead people to a Christlike Life

6th -Salem First

50 funerals by staff first twelve months
Church plant -after the lead pastor resigns

Any pastor can lead a church in renewal and revitalization. How successful you will be is determined by many factors, training, resources, and the grit and determination through which you endeavor to take on this worthy venture.

What I Believe About Revitalization & Renewal

- 1) **Many pastors are unwilling to pay the price to lead a church in renewal and revitalization because the cost of doing so is high.**
- 2) **Many churches and their leadership will say they desire renewal and revitalization but often turn away as they begin to recognize the cost of initiating change as they perceive the loss of control and their preferences and desires.**
- 3) **Churches do not have to die, but they do!**
- 4) **Many Nazarene churches are on life support, and pastors and people are looking to strategize to hold onto what they like and enjoy.**
- 5) **A church simply trying to survive desperately needs revitalization and renewal because death is closer than they know.**

Reasons Why Some Pastors Are Not Ready To Lead Church Revitalization

- **It usually takes a long time.**

It's rare for a church revitalization to take less than 3-5 years.

To revitalize a church, you must give yourself and the church a minimum of three years. After 18 months, people will become satisfied when things are getting better.

- **It requires facing reality.**

There is no magic formula to turn around a church.

Revitalization requires a church to face reality and make adjustments.

- **It means the pastor could lose their job.**

It means taking risks.

- **It often requires asking for help.**

Leading a church to revitalization requires humility from the pastor and the congregation.

- **It requires thick skin.**

Revitalization is not for wimps-if you are a wimp, just plant churches.

- **It requires perseverance and tenacity.**

Two things you need to revitalize a church

- A willing and committed pastor
- A willing and committed core from the congregation

- **Some people will leave your church, but some will return to your church again if you stay long enough.**

- **It means you may hurt some people you love.**

Revitalization will cause pain for some church members because it requires them to change.

Motivation For Church Revitalization

- 1) God's love for us and our love for God should result in us seeking revitalization.
- 2) The Truth - The Word of God (My son said a few days ago - Facts don't seem to matter!)
- 3) Opportunity to Be a Difference Maker - from being a person who catches fish to a fisher of men.
- 4) Heaven
Some of our church's mottos can be summed up this way: "Will the last one alive turn out the lights!"

Communicate early and often because knowledge is power.

Share with everyone - bring your whole congregation along with revitalization.

There is a big difference between a good pastor and a revitalization pastor.

A good pastor is efficient, but we must become effective - become the master of visionary leadership.

It would be best if you nudged people every day so they walk further down the road toward growth, health, and vitality.

You have to be bold in revitalization.

You have to ask yourself . . .

What is God's plan for your church for revitalization? You have to hear from God.

Keep your effort birthed in prayer.

Prepare yourself spiritually, and then prepare your leaders.

Ten Things You Need If You Are Going To Help Revitalize Your Church

1 A Commitment to the Revitalization Process.

You have to stop some things to revitalize.

Check your budget - where are you spending your money?

2 A Commitment to the Harvest

Many churches do nothing! They do not exit the church - they do not share the gospel.

Think more about others and less about ourselves.

Tell people about the church.

If you have a terrible reputation - fix it.

If you have visitors come all the time but never come back, that is an assimilation problem.

Often no one ever talks to guests.

People often come to church and plop their bodies in the pew.

3 A Commitment To Growth

People love growth until they grow.

When people say save our vote - - they want things to remain the same and pay the bills.

If your people are not kind - - -

Pastor, God does not owe you a revitalized church.

Growth requires Change . . .

Change is an attitude of obedience. Obedience is a call to personal change.

The Pastor must change first - - -

We must hear from the Lord as He says . . . “Do This . . . “

4 A Commitment as a Church Revitalizer

People need to understand that God has called them to revitalize.

Align your life daily to the Lord and the authority of the Scripture.

Abide in your Scripture.

Churches get in trouble because they walk away from Scripture. Lean into Scripture.

Lead your people into the Word and spiritual formation.

“Hey, pastor, have you visited so and so . . . “

Everyone wants the pastor to do the work of the laity . . .

A commitment to implement the agreed-upon initiatives - allows the whole church to participate in leading the process. Get them to be a part of leading this endeavor from the beginning.

5) Share the Vision and keep the church connected to what is happening.

Tell everyone.

The Church got in trouble by having people doing what they wanted.

Watch for vision fatigue.

Remember, our call is not to invent the future but to discover what God is doing.

Our call is to align ourselves with his purpose in expanding God's Kingdom.

Sometimes churches have vision fatigue. The past few pastors shared what God wanted to do - and never did anything.

#6 A Commitment to Bringing About Healthy Change

Change builds upon urgency and vision for a new community.

There must be a feeling of holy discontent with the heightened gap between the current realities and God's ideal plan.

You must be willing to pull the trigger - - you need to embrace a new community in a church.

What could your church be?

It would be best if you also built a sense of urgency—a healthy momentum.

Declining churches are prone to ancillary thinking - - you think are they blind - - - people want to go back - - but you can't go back, only forward!

When God does something - tell everyone.

Shared ownership is a prerequisite.

Share the good!

7 A Commitment to Influence the Culture- where the church is located.

Many churches are upside down - they say come to us - but the church should be coming to you! It is not build it, and they will come - - so how do you get your people out in the community?

Community Ideas -

Picking up trash for Jesus!

You have to go out because they will not come in.

8 Commitment to Develop Influencers with the Revitalized Church

Leader/Influencer - - - positively impact others

Influencers can change congregational behavior by supporting or boycotting ministries, withholding resources, or using their influence.

You must have more positive influencers.

There are power brokers of your church - - and they believe they will outlast you - - - I have seen it come, and I have seen them go - you must bring about unity - -

Start new groups with new people.

There are always people who want to give you their opinions.

There are gatekeepers. Gatekeepers want to keep their jobs.

What is your spiritual gift - I am here every Sunday!

Don't forget you have to take others with you.

Types of Influencers in the church

1. Encourager - ability to affirm people
2. Blocker - struggles with changes and mythologies of change -
3. Resister - Reacts with Skepticism and doubts. They have never grown a church, but they doubt you can do it.
4. Vocalizer - able to articulate issues and express insights. They can repeat or flesh out what the pastor has said. They will stand up.
5. Innovator - there are people drawn to that which is new and untrue.
6. Defender - Speaks on behalf of the existing. Someone has said . . . if your church is more interested in the past - then you must be blunt and say we have to change or die.
7. Maintainer - desires the enhancement of the current conflict.

9 You have to be able to manage the conflict that will surface during church revitalization.

You will have conflict - especially as you begin to grow - but there is a purpose even in the conflict - so that you will know about affliction.

God builds greater spiritual authority through conflict.

Conflict and problem-solving are not synonymous.

You are the pastor - stand in the Scripture and not simply in your opinion.

Conflicts are problems to be solved.

Stop letting a small vocal minority dictate what the Church will or will not do! Nine people are usually against the work of the church . . .

Conflict is inevitable -

10 Creating a Synergy of Energy

Be bold.

Best Practices

- 1) Upon going to a church, I intentionally set aside time to listen, learn, love, and do life with people before attempting to lead them.
- 2) Begin early working on the finances of a church. Look at where the church could save money. It is difficult to help revitalize a church without money.
- 3) Spend time with leaders developing and strengthening the mission statement and then operating with it guiding your activities and budget. Every event should go through the filter of does this help us achieve our mission or if it is something we have always done and enjoyed.
- 4) Vision Day -All Church Leaders
- 5) Emphasize serving (Sermon Series - It IS Your Serve). Increase the percentage of people serving in the local church.
- 6) Appreciation Dinner/Banquet
- 7) Fix up the facility- plant flowers, paint, etc
- 8) Become active in the community
- 9) Develop a calendar with the church focusing on outreach (minimum 6-12 times a year where it is easy to invite people to church - Family Fun Fest, Friend Day, Patriotic Day, etc.
- 10) Weekly newcomers class taught by Pastor during SS.
- 11) Emphasize baptism - make it a celebration complete with invites to family members of those being baptized.
- 12) Always look for avenues for people to attend a church service. (Day School Sunday, 9/11, July 4th, softball - Sunday luncheon)
- 13) Have a Christmas Eve Service.
- 14) Church Board Quiz - focusing on new attenders
- 15) Give books to key leaders - Canoeing the Mountains
- 16) Have Small Groups focused on things people who do not attend church might like: Financial Peace University, Griefshare, DivorceCare, Parenting, and Marriage
- 17) Preach sermon series and use creative elements in worship (drama, video, etc.)
Examples: Grumpy Old Women, Placard Couple, barf bags, etc
- 18) Follow-up is a must. (Pop-In, letter, phone call, etc.)
- 19) Stay in touch with your people (Notes, Team of people calling everyone asking how we can pray for you!)
- 20) Communicate, Communicate, and communicate some more.

21) Consider launching a ministry like Celebrate Recovery.

We are going to take this mountain together!

Get your marching orders and GO! Will you be that person?

On Saturday night - think about how you can be bolder on Sunday.

Pray, Pray - If you march at the right time, God will not let you down!

March on His time.

You are called to lead the church but do not be surprised when they look at you strangely because you are providing leadership for your church.

Tim's List . . .

Create a sense of urgency

Pastoral Care and the unleashing of lay people into ministry are essential.

Greeting/Hospitality

Fellowship which leads to friendship(s)

Multiple entry points - create a flow of people (guests) into the church

- Day School Sunday
- Sports Team-Banquet
- Family Fun Fest
- Patriotic Days

Creative Worship

Message -Biblical Challenging and Relevant

We must move people from customers and consumers of the gospel to co-laborers.

Cultivate a hospitable, compassionate congregation.

Accept and enact necessary change.

Operate in light of your primary mission - making disciples - Leading People To A Christlike Life

Worry about the spiritual needs of your neighbors who are far from God.

You have got to get your mission right. Telling the Message is part of the mission!

Sharing the gospel is vital and instrumental for revitalization.

Recommended Book List

Autopsy of a Deceased Church: 12 Ways to Keep Yours Alive by Thom S. Rainer

Can These Bones Live: A Practical Guide to Church Revitalization by Bill Henard

Reclaiming Glory: Revitalizing Dying Churches by Mark Clifton

Flickering Lamps: Christ & His Church by Richard Blackaby and Henry Blackaby

Biblical Church Revitalization: Solutions for Dying & Divided Churches by Brian Croft

Church Revitalization from the Inside Out by R. D. Stuart

Anxious Church, Anxious People: How to Lead Change in an Age of Anxiety by Jack Shitama

Replant: How a Dying Church Can Grow Again by Mark DeVine & Darrin Patrick

Planting Missional Churches: Your Guide to Starting Churches that Multiply Second Edition by Ed Stetzer & Daniel Im

Replanting Rural Churches: God's Plan and Call for the Middle of Nowhere by Matt Henslee & Kyle Bueermann

Scrappy Church: God's Not Done Yet by Thom S. Rainer

Reclaimed Church: How Churches Grow, Decline, and Experience Revitalization by Bill Henard

Church Revitalization in Rural America: Restoring Churches in America's Heartland by Tom Cheyney, & John Kimball

Patient Catalyst: Leading Church Revitalization by Jack Daniel

The Replanted Church: Leading a dying church back to life by Richard S. Lawrenson III.