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How to Turn a Church Around: Church Revitalization

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All scripture is taken from the *New International Version*, Zondervan Publishing, 1973

How to Turn a Church Around: Church Revitalization

note: the use of this guide is intended to take a brief (short conference length) run at undertaking a revitalization process; a more time-intensive process would be needed to really make an deeper impact on the future of the church

As a local church goes through its life cycles, it goes through a number of experiences. Some of these will be high points and others will not be. When considering the local church in North America, it is currently being said that over 80% of existing churches are plateaued and declining. Why? Though a simple word for a question, the answers are varied and often unique to each congregation though there might be a similar pattern among most experiencing a decline.

Chuck Swindoll says “organizations tend to lose vitality rather than gain it as time passes. They also tend to give greater attention to what they “were” rather than what they “are” becoming.”

God’s intent and strategy is for His Kingdom on earth to be generational and transferable. In Genesis 50:24 the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob made it clear that generations would be the vehicle to propagate the message of redemption throughout history. Jesus gave us marching orders in Matthew 28:19-20 and the strategy in Acts 1:8 yet many churches today are stagnate and struggling to just survive.

The local church today seems to have misplaced its purpose, its power and its plan. While many believers “know” the church’s purpose but there is a disconnection between the purpose and the actual practice and structure of a church to implement the biblical mandate.

This guide is a tool to help existing churches to rediscover their God given purpose and plan for the church of Jesus Christ today. Once the leaders and people of the local church rediscover the Biblical pattern and plan of a New Testament church then the church can develop a comprehensive plan or strategy that serves as a vehicle to achieve God’s preferred future for that church in their community.

No guide replaces the care and guidance of the Lord. Take time to pray, read God’s word, and to listen to the Lord nudge you each day and each step of His way for you.

The first step is addressed to the pastor. It addresses gaining perspective, new opportunities, developing a new vision, and putting action with dreams. These are brief starting points that the pastor can think through in leading the congregation forward in turning the church around toward a revitalized life.

The next six steps provide a brief explanation and simple activities to help the pastor, leaders, and members of the congregation personalize this experience under God's directions.

How to Turn a Church Around: Church Revitalization

Step 1: For the Pastor

Step 2: What has God done through our congregation? (for pastor and leaders)

Step 3: What is our congregation like now? (for pastor and leaders)

Step 4: Foundations for Looking to Our Future (for pastor, leaders, and members)

Step 5: Leadership for Our Future (for pastor, leaders, and members)

Step 6: Going Forward into Our Future (for pastor, leaders, and members)

Step 7: Connecting for Encouragement for Our Future (for pastor, leaders, and members)

Take others with you on this journey. Do not try to walk the path of revitalization alone. And, remember that this is not an end to the journey. You can take more time in the future to enhance and to build on the foundation that is put in place during these early months following the discussion to take journey toward revitalization. It is helpful to plan on a fuller time to re-evaluate and make longer plans twelve to twenty-four months after completing these seven steps.

Step 1: For the Pastor

This is written for the pastor of a congregation that will be leading the church toward a renewed vision which will lead to turning a church around. This guide is intended to help the pastor begin the journey for revitalization in the life of the congregation under God's direction.

Gaining Perspective

Coming to the point of recognizing that the church may intend be in state of non-growth and perhaps experiencing decline is not a point to accept for any church leader. This could be the turning point for the church and the ministry that the pastor leads with this church. Making the choice to turn a church around is not a single person task but one that is lead by the pastor along with the church. Which road your church chooses will be determined by the decisions you make during this critical time as the pastor/leader.

Scripture is full of promises that Christ made for His church, His bride. Yet, challenges or set backs can make the people of Christ feel they can not go on, or that the battle is lost. Christ said that not even the Gates of Hell could prevail against His church. (Matt. 16:18) That promise is no less true today than it was with your church when it was in its state of greatest health. Christ also promised that He would send His Spirit to empower the church to do His work on the earth. (Acts 1:8) That power has come and is here as powerful today has it has ever been. It can enable the church to accomplish her mission of reconciliation. (II Cor. 5:18)

Suggestion: Rather than dwelling on lower attendance or reduced budgets, you can help your congregation to move ahead by addressing in your sermons, involving your leaders, and challenging your congregation to move from the past by embracing your future. Your theme verse could be, "**Forgetting** what is behind and straining **toward** that which is ahead, I press on for the mark for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus." Phil. 3:13-14 Healthy churches have the ability to learn from the past and to move forward.

The hard experiences that happen in a church also have the ability to propel people and congregations forward. In the book of Genesis we see Joseph experiencing setback and setback. Amazingly, through everything Joseph kept a sense of direction and purpose. Each setback eventually led Joseph to a higher level of responsibility and authority. Finally, when the day came that Joseph could have tried to get even with his brothers and blame them for the years of slavery and prison, he did not. Instead, he recognized God's

hand bringing him through each trial. “So then, it wasn’t you who sent me here, but God.” Gen. 45:8

God was on His throne when low points hit your church. He saw in you the ability to lead your congregation through these difficult periods toward His vision for your congregation.

Suggestion:

1. Plan a series of sermons and small group bible studies to help your members discover – for themselves, God’s pattern of turning around the difficult times to times of triumph. The small group experiences around the Word can be healing for the members experiencing hurt. It will help condition the church for change toward a renewed future.
2. Provide your members practical resources and tools for assessing and dealing with personal and church spiritual health. This could include books and articles.

New Opportunities

As the pastor, God wants you to lead your congregation into the future and not to reclaim its past. Making a decision to turn around your church puts new opportunities in front of the congregation. Actions to engage new opportunities will spring from the values held by the congregation.

The values mentioned here are not absolute values such as truth, integrity, or the authority of the scriptures. Instead, these values are the ideas that a church may hold in high esteem. These values are seen in the actions and activities of the congregation. One of the opportunities from a decision to experience revitalization is that you can lead your congregation to bury unhealthy values that have kept the church from fully doing all that God has intended while embracing values that produce health.

Some churches are bound to the past and resist any attempts to introduce change. They value the status quo. A church may need to transform their value of the status quo for a new value of daily obedience.

Consider what happened in the life of Joseph. Before his brothers sold him into slavery, he valued being at home in the loving relationship with his dad. Once setback struck and he was on his own in a strange land, he was challenged to find value in his faith, in obedience, and in trusting God to bring him toward the fulfillment of his childhood dream.

There are very few opportunities in the life of a church to bury unhealthy values and replace them with values that can transform the church into the church it needs to be. Therefore, it is critical that you guide your congregation to adopt the values God has revealed to you and your people.

Not all values will change. There are certainly values that have been in the life of your congregation that should remain. The challenge is to identify the values to keep. The next step is to identify the unhealthy values and replace them with new values. Unless a new value is embraced, the old unhealthy value will stay.

List two values that your church needs to keep:

List one value that your congregation does not need to keep:

For a value that needs to be replaced, list a new value that needs to be added.

See Step 4 of the *How to Turn a Church Around: Church Revitalization* for further information related to values.

Suggestion: Generally, communicate change in values by focusing on the positive things that God is doing and not by speaking negatively about the past. Communicate the change by saying something like, “God is leading us through a time of refocusing that we can embrace to find success in seeing lives changed.” If you say, “Our church has always resisted change and today we can no longer do that,” you will engage the defense mechanisms that have been resisted needed improvements in the past.

Developing a New Vision

Refocusing has a way of making a person re-evaluate where they are and where they are going. The church should take the same opportunity – to reflect and re-evaluate where they are and where God is leading them - when God has provided a time of pause in a period of reflection. Vision for the future has three important abilities:

John 5:17 and 19 reminds us that God is always at work in His world. Just as Jesus did, the church must seek to discover where God is at work and join Him as we move forward.

Jesus said to them, "My Father is always at his work to this very day, and I, too, am working." ... Jesus gave them this answer: "I tell you the truth, the Son can do nothing by himself; he can do only what he sees his Father doing, because whatever the Father does the Son also does. John 5:17, 19 (NIV)

Accordingly, vision for the future, where God is leading us, has two important benefits:

- 1) It can help guide your congregation into productive activities. They will see the positive things that God is doing. As they move forward, they are less likely to complain or dwell on negative issues.

2) Vision sets the priorities and defines the values that help the congregation say, “yes” when it needs to say yes and say, “no” when it needs to say no.

These statements can be seen in the power that a dream or vision had in the life of young Joseph. God had given him the vision that one day He would do a great work through him. Joseph held on to this dream during extremely difficult times.

First, vision kept Joseph moving even though he was a slave. Joseph knew that God had a great plan and therefore he applied himself to every situation. Second, the Bible records nothing of Joseph’s anger or bitterness while a slave or in prison. He doesn’t point fingers and even when he meets his brothers he responds in love. Why? Because he was working from his vision that told him God was in control. Third, Joseph made great choices in difficult situations. He refused the advances of Potiphar’s wife even though he was a young man, away from home, and no one would know. Joseph did this in part because he had a larger vision of what God was going to do with his life, and he was not willing to trade that for temporary pleasure.

Effective leaders communicate a clear vision so that those who follow can be about the business of refocusing. Vision is stated clearly so that the members can know what they need to do in order to bring vision toward fulfillment. Vision has elements of the total big picture with the overall destination and it also shares the bits and pieces of here is what we need to do today. For pastors of churches, vision needs to come from God’s heart and be communicated in positive, optimistic, terms.

Communicating Your Vision:

Many pastors are long on vision and short on the ability to communicate the vision in terms that move people to action. After a decision to lead your church through a revitalization process you can not afford to make that mistake.

As you begin to create a new vision, you will gain a new passion to see some things accomplished through your ministry and the ministry of the church. As you have thought of some of those things, write them down now.

- 1. _____
- 2. _____
- 3. _____

The current context has given your church some unique challenges. Those challenges may be in facilities, finances, or fruitfulness. What vision has God given you for complete restoration to church health? Write it down.

Suggestion: The revitalization of a church requires visionary leadership. To accomplish this schedule time with your leaders making clear the vision you have already identified. Together, map a dream that can be vividly communicated. Have one or more intentional times where the church members can embrace and own the vision/dream that God is giving to the church family together. Finally, develop a short phrase that captures the vision that can be easily understood, remembered, and repeated by every member.

Warning: Some ministers communicate a vision in terms of buildings, programs, or financial goals. These are necessary tools, but they are a means to transforming lives in your neighborhood, community, county, state, nation, and the world. Check the vision you have listed. Will it fulfill the great commission? Will it contribute to touching every person in every place with the gospel of Jesus?

Putting Action with Dreams

Before setting off on any journey you need to know how you will get there. Will you take a plane or drive a car? In leading your church through a revitalization process, your values define the vehicle that will propel your church to where it needs to go. Next, you have to know where you are going. In the ministry of revitalization, that is done through discovering a clear vision of where God intends for your congregation to go. Now, you need a map so you can begin the journey.

Returning to Joseph, his life turned around once a plan was birthed in his heart to save the people of Egypt; and ultimately the family of Israel. Pharaoh entrusted Joseph with the administration of the entire nation. Pharaoh may have felt he was being good to Joseph, but God was blessing Joseph for his faithfulness and was restoring him after years of heart-break.

Imagine where Joseph would have ended up if he had simply interpreted Pharaoh's dream without going the next critical steps of having a plan to save the Egyptians from starvation. Your situation is far different from Joseph's situation, but the principal is the same. A vision is only as good as the plan that brings the vision to life.

Developing a plan to lead the church through a revitalization process is a challenge. The only thing certain is that the situation is always changing once you begin. However, it can and must be done. To develop plans for refocusing the church use the following guidelines:

- Keep your vision in focus.
- Make sure your short-term goals connect to the vision.

Things that must be achieved will require a person to be responsible to carry out supporting activities. There will be short-range, medium-range, and long-range goals to be developed over time to bring your congregation from where it is to where it needs to be.

Realistic targets will be needed, but flexibility must be maintained due to the state of frequent changes that might happen as you go through the refocusing experience.

Include in your refocusing efforts all functions that a congregation needs to stay spiritually healthy: worship God, evangelize the lost, disciple believers, serve others, make prayer a priority, and fellowship with one another.

Communicate the plans. When the membership does not know the plan, they sit unengaged in the process of change and the church repeats the same mistakes it did prior to the undertaking of the revitalization process.

Once you have worked to develop a short range plan, begin long range planning. Planning is never completed, as the church reaches completion of one goal, be prepared with another. By keeping goals and objectives in front of the members, you will prevent the ministry from growing stale. As the people are a part of the planning process, they will know what they need to do in order to help the church reach her goals.

Suggestion: Enlist leadership to help in the development of the church's medium to long range planning. Share a vision of what God has shown the future can be. Use word pictures to establish goals that the members will own. When congregational leadership develops the plan with you, they are more likely to see the importance of taking the journey, lead others to take the journey, and share the load in the journey. Be prepared for long, lonely trip if you hand down a map and say, "This is where we are going."

Putting the Pieces Together

God has chosen you to lead your congregation through this revitalization process. The leadership decisions you make during this time can determine whether your church emerges from this stronger, able to experience a sense of real revival, or defeated by failure to experience renewal. It may help you to know that throughout church history, a suffering church has always been a more effective servant than one that never experienced any type of pain.

Steps 2 through 7 of *How to Turn a Church Around: Church Revitalization* can serve to guide you, your leaders, and your members through some simple steps to begin the journey together in refocusing the congregation. Make a commitment today to walk together with God and with others to a new chapter in the story of your congregation.

Steps 2 and 3

*Look to the LORD and his strength; seek his face always.
Remember the wonders he has done, his miracles, and the
judgments he pronounced, 1 Chronicles 16:11-12 (NIV)*

Pastors and church leaders that are facing the symptoms of non-growth and decline often focus on survival tactics which often only provide temporary relief if at all. Out of this, frustration, confusion and tiredness may begin even more evident. Yet, in the presence of such a situation, God is still able to provide a foundation for refocusing of life within the church. These few steps can help a congregation begin to move forward under God's strength and guidance.

Step 2: What has God done through our congregation? (for pastor and leaders)

God commands His people to remember what He has done as encouragement for them in the midst of their situation. Take time to recall what God has done in the past through the congregation. Give Him thanks as you remember. Note the impact of your congregation on the lives of people.

Significant impact of the congregation _____

Members Recall

The pastor or key leader should interview two or three members of the congregation who were either present at the beginning of the congregation or have heard about the beginning of the congregation. Ask the selected members to tell the story of the beginning of the congregation as they know it. Listen to the pictures each one describes in their story. Write down any word pictures that were described. Write down a common theme or purpose that might have been expressed.

Remain in me, and I will remain in you. No branch can bear fruit by itself; it must remain in the vine. Neither can you bear fruit unless you remain in me. John 15:4 (NIV)

Step 3: What is our congregation like now? (for pastor and leaders)

Congregations need to take a look at themselves from time to time. They need a realistic picture of who they are. The following items will help the congregation understand itself.

Main Values

Values are foundational to everything we do. Values are more about deeds than words. The main values should be able to be expressed in terms of acceptable and unacceptable behavior. They are convictions about how a church operates, not doctrinal statements about what it believes. Values impact the way a congregation acts. For example, if relationship is a value, that will impact the way the congregation organizes, plans, and seeks to develop others. Potential main values that some congregations have identified are listed at the end of this document.

What main values have guided our behavior as a congregation?

Purpose

The purpose for a congregation describes why they exist. It gives direction for what they do. What was the purpose for your congregation in the past?

Present Leadership

Leaders are essential for any organization. Who are our available leaders now?

Pastor and other ministers _____

Deacons _____

Teachers, adults _____

Teachers, youth _____

Teachers, children _____

Teachers, preschool _____

Who We Are

Describe your congregation (language used in worship, estimated average age, typical educational level, type of residence, other) _____

Trends Before Taking on the Revitalization Process

Consider the previous three years of your congregation. In the areas listed below, was your congregation decreasing or increasing? (1 is decreasing a lot and 5 is increasing a lot)

Membership	1	2	3	4	5
Additions by baptisms	1	2	3	4	5
Worship attendance	1	2	3	4	5
Giving	1	2	3	4	5

Strengths – Weaknesses – Opportunities - Threats

Substantial power is generated as a congregation discovers and claims its strengths. Weaknesses must be realistically identified for a clear picture of the church, but they must not become the focus. Opportunities are occasions for growth that God places before congregations. Threats are dangers that can sidetrack a congregation from taking advantage of the opportunities that God sends its way.

Given our present circumstances as a congregation, what are our:

Strengths _____

Weaknesses _____

Opportunities _____

Threats (or dangers) _____

State of the Congregation

How would you as the pastor or key leader describe the present state of the congregation (beyond status of buildings and finances)?

Summary

What are two things the congregation can celebrate?

1) _____

2) _____

What is one challenge that faces the congregation (not including buildings or finances)?

Steps 4-7

*But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.
Acts 1:8 (NIV)*

It is time for the leaders to look toward the congregation's future. The leaders and congregation need to answer the question, "What does God want our congregation to be and do next?" These few steps will guide you to consider significant issues for the future strength of the church.

The apostle Paul suffered many hardships and setbacks. He described these personal hardships in his second letter to the church in Corinth.

Five times I received from the Jews the forty lashes minus one. ²⁵ Three times I was beaten with rods, once I was stoned, three times I was shipwrecked, I spent a night and a day in the open sea, ²⁶ I have been constantly on the move. I have been in danger from rivers, in danger from bandits, in danger from my own countrymen, in danger from Gentiles; in danger in the city, in danger in the country, in danger at sea; and in danger from false brothers. ²⁷ I have labored and toiled and have often gone without sleep; I have known hunger and thirst and have often gone without food; I have been cold and naked. ²⁸ Besides everything else, I face daily the pressure of my concern for all the churches.
2 Corinthians 11:25-28 (NIV)

Paul continued on to reach his world for Christ in spite of the hardships. Your congregation will benefit from your leadership at this point.

Step 4 – Foundations for Looking to Our Future (for pastor, leaders, and members)

Values impact the way a congregation acts. Values are more about deeds than words. The main values should be able to be expressed in terms of acceptable and unacceptable behavior. They are convictions about how a church operates, not doctrinal statements about what it believes. For example, if relationship is a value, that will impact the way the congregation organizes, plans, and seeks to develop others. A few potential main values that some congregations have identified are listed at the end of this document.

Congregations usually have five to seven values that are important for them. What main values should guide our congregation's behavior for the next one or two years, based on

our understanding of the members? Also, list two possible actions or behaviors for each main value listed. _____

The **Vision** for a church is a picture of the church’s preferred future as the leadership understands God wants it to be. The focus is on what the church is to be in the future. What is God’s vision for our congregation as we look one and two years into our future?

Will there be a significant change in the people who make up the community around our congregation over the next twelve and twenty-four months? Whom should we focus upon? _____

Communication is always essential. How can our congregation communicate our main values and vision to one another and to others? _____

Evangelism efforts do not happen accidentally. Congregations and leaders must be equipped and be intentional in their evangelism. How is our congregation going to make evangelism a priority? _____



*It was he who gave some to be apostles, some to be prophets, some to be evangelists, and some to be pastors and teachers, to prepare God's people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ.
Ephesians 4:11-13 (NIV)*

Step 5 – Leadership for Our Future (for pastor, leaders, and members)

The work of those who were gifted to equip others was to prepare God's people for doing works of service. As God's people serve others, the result is building up the body of Christ . The building up of the body is twofold:

- (1) Those within the body are becoming more mature and more stable in their faith and thus more Christ-like.

(2) Due to their maturing character, God’s people will do the works of service through ministry and witness to those outside the church.

Church leaders and volunteers give their attention to either an inward direction within the church or an outward direction into the community. A healthy congregation develops leaders for both inward and outward directions. There is a tendency for leadership in a congregation to become more inwardly focused over time. A congregation must plan and be intentional to keep the outward evangelistic focus as healthy as its inward focus.

Leaders of growing congregations invest time in equipping, supporting, motivating, delegating, and multiplying themselves among others. They view their role as helping members identify their gifts and involving them in appropriate ways.

Congregations are wise to anticipate coming challenges. They prepare for this through equipping future leaders for the work of ministry. Two general questions present leaders will need to address as they look to the near future of the next 12 and 24 months are:

- Are we equipping workers in preparation for growth?
- Are we training people for the right things?

Use the following chart to list the leadership roles needed, any leaders who presently fill those roles, and names of potential leaders where needed.

Leadership Role Needed	Present Leader(s) Name	Potential Leader(s) Name

Equipping of future leaders should consider the following issues:

1. What are our expectations for church leaders? _____

2. How can we effectively mobilize and equip God's people for service? _____

3. How can we enlist and equip the leadership needed for the next level? _____

4. What kind of leaders are we developing? (inward or outward directed) _____

... Everyone who competes in the games goes into strict training. They do it to get a crown that will not last; but we do it to get a crown that will last forever. Therefore I do not run like a man running aimlessly; I do not fight like a man beating the air. 1 Corinthians 9:24-26 (NIV)

Step 6 – Going Forward into Our Future (for pastor, leaders, and members)

The Christian life is about being more Christ-like in character and about obeying the Lord as He directs life. Congregations must also deal with what they will be and what they will do. A congregation must deal with their next steps for it to move toward greater strength. Yet, what is done today is also laying the foundation for the next 12 to 24 months of your future.

Simple, intentional plans help congregations go forward in an organized manner. For example, a journey across the state will cover many miles and pass many mileposts. Some mileposts will hardly be noticed as they are passed. Other mileposts will represent essential actions for the completion of the journey. These essential mileposts could include where you need to stop for food or gas or where you need to change highways. Plans for moving toward a vision need to include the major “mileposts” to be reached.

Effective plans have identifiable targets that are:

- Consistent with vision and values
- Realistic in terms of time projections and sequence
- Concrete with specific tasks and person responsible

Completions of identifiable targets are times for celebration and thanksgiving.

Use the following questions to identify one or more targets that the congregation needs to reach within each area over the **next 12 to 24 months**.

1. What should our renewed congregation be and do about **prayer**? *Praying as families? Home prayer groups? Church small groups? Prayer walking our neighborhoods?*

2. What should our renewed congregation be and do about **worship**? *Give thanks for God’s daily provisions? How does worship glorify God and become the means by which new peoples can encounter God?*

3. What should our renewed congregation be and do about **evangelism**? *Who needs training to share their faith? Where do we connect with the lost in our communities?*

4. What should our renewed congregation be and do about **Bible Study**? *What do we study? Who can lead the Bible Studies? Where can we do studies in other places beyond our church facilities? How do we invite others to come?*

5. What should our renewed congregation be and do about **fellowship**? *How do we make our fellowship an open experience for all? Where do we find other venues beyond our facilities to experience fellowship that engages the unchurched?*

6. What should our renewed congregation be and do about **stewardship**? *When do we emphasize stewardship of time and money?*

7. What should our renewed congregation be and do about **missions**? *What on-going ministry is needed? Where can we send a missions team?*

As iron sharpens iron, so one man sharpens another. Proverbs 27:17 (NIV)

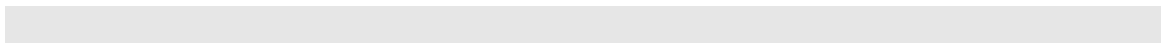
Step 7 - Connecting for Encouragement for Our Future (for pastor, leaders, and members)

Many pastors, church leaders, and spouses find themselves isolated and lonely in “normal” situations. This can increase in times of stress. The problems church leaders are facing can cause high levels of frustration and burnout. People feel “frazzled” at the end of the day. An effective way to address this is through relationships. Intentional relationships produce positive impacts in a person’s life and ministry. Relationships also

provide accountability and encourage success. Support from others who are on a similar journey helps those in ministry to keep their focus on Jesus Christ.

Each church leader should identify two church leaders from other churches for informally giving encouragement and receiving encouragement on a monthly basis.

Each wife of a church leader also should identify two other wives of other church leaders whom they can meet with at least monthly for prayer and mutual encouraging.



POTENTIAL MAIN VALUES

Accountability	Excellence	Harmony	Relevance
Community	Excitement	Helpfulness	Risk
Compassion	Fairness	Honesty	Stability
Conformity	Faithfulness	Loyalty	Team
Control	Family	Money	Tradition
Cooperation	Flexibility	Participation	_____
Democracy	Growth	Patience	_____
Effectiveness	Hard work	Relationships	_____

Evaluation and Long-Range Planning

The congregation should plan on a time for evaluating their progress and developing a long-range plan. This provides a look at where they are as a congregation and where they need to go. The pastor and key leaders can walk through a guided evaluation and planning for their church. This could take place ten to fourteen months after completing these seven steps. The Phase Three event may be lead by a state convention and/or North American Mission Board team. Consider inviting a denominational leader experienced in church health to lead you through this evaluation process.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES FOR THE REVIVALIZATION PROCESS

Church Survey

Please answer each question and only fill the survey out once. Thank you for your help.

1. Age:

- 15-19 20-24 25-29 30-34 35-44 45-54
 55-64 65 - up

2. How long have you attended this church regularly?

- less than 1 year 1-3 years 3-5 years
 5-10 years more than 10 years

3. Membership:

- Member Non-member

4. How long have you been a Christian?

- less than 1 year 1-3 years 4-5 years
 5-10 years more than 10 years

5. How far do you travel to church?

- less than one mile 1-3 miles 3-5 miles
 5-10 miles more than 10 miles

6. Why did/do you attend/join this church?

Assessment

1. What receives the most attention/importance?

- worship
- children
- evangelism
- missions
- leadership
- youth
- fellowship
- church buildings
- Bible study
- singles
- young adults
- Sunday School
- visitation
- outreach
- prayer
- discipleship
- senior adults
- _____

a. What does our church budget reflect?

b. What does our church bulletin reflect?

2. Describe the top three strengths of our church.

3. What does our church do well at?

4. What do we struggle to do well?

5. What does the community say about us?

20 Questions to Determine Your Church's Health

Here's a tool to help you think about your church's health. For each question circle the number that best applies to your church – with 1 meaning, “We haven't thought about it yet,” and 5 meaning, “We are in excellent shape in this area.”

- 1. Do we have a clear and common vision? 1 2 3 4 5**

Biblical, widely known, and owned by our people, articulated with clarity and redundancy by leadership.

- 2. Is there purposeful direction in our activities? 1 2 3 4 5**

Our leadership concentrates on focused and purposeful programming rather than “We've always done it this way.”

- 3. Is the Word of God seen as the basis of authority? 1 2 3 4 5**

There is an attempt to get beyond our local prejudices and traditions to biblical truth. Our classes and groups have the Bible as the center of our curriculum.

- 4. Do our public celebrations inspire true worship? 1 2 3 4 5**

The music and sermons glorify Christ. The emphasis is more on content than style. The cross and life in Christ are emphasized. There is a sense of reverence for God in His holiness.

- 5. Does our church present a positive gospel message? 1 2 3 4 5**

Sin is faced squarely, but there is an emphasis on grace and forgiveness. Our corporate times leave people with something to help them face the week ahead.

- 6. Is there a balance between evangelism and edification? 1 2 3 4 5**

Spiritual maturation is as important as numerical growth. People are being added to the church by conversion growth, then disciplined in doctrine, spiritual formation, and ministry skills.

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7. Does corporate prayer saturate the life of our church? 1 2 3 4 5

Prayers that include adoration, confession, thanksgiving, and intercession are modeled in public services by the leadership. Special corporate prayer services are called for during the year.

8. Is there concerted effort to bring individuals to maturity? 1 2 3 4 5

The overall thrust of the public services, classes and groups is to help people become mature in Christ.

9. Do we really reach out to people who visit? 1 2 3 4 5

Our people work to make guests feel at home. There are systems whereby people are led into a group or class.

10. Is our church aware of the world at its door? 1 2 3 4 5

We are having appositive impact on our neighborhood and city.

11. Are we actively pursuing fulfillment of the Great Commission? 1 2 3 4 5

Our services reflect concern for the unreached peoples of the world. Missions has a high public profile.

12. Do we develop leaders? 1 2 3 4 5

We involve people in training, both formal and informal. There are structures for discipling existing leaders.

13. Do our leaders take their responsibilities seriously? 1 2 3 4 5

Our leaders hold themselves responsible when asked about current or past wrongs. Leaders are elected on the basis of character first and giftedness second.

14. Does our church have appropriate structures and exercise wise administration? 1 2 3 4 5

There is a clear understanding of the role of the pastor, the board, the staff, the congregation, and the denomination. We think strategically.

15. Do our congregants have a sense of community? 1 2 3 4 5

Despite personal differences there is an under girding sense of unity. We are family. Many linger after a service in order to visit.

- 16. Do we practice accountability and exercise integrity?** **1 2 3 4 5**
Believers understand that commitment to membership demands accountability. The practice of discipline is spelled out in writing.
- 17. Do we practice redemptive love?** **1 2 3 4 5**
We follow Jesus' teaching in Matt. 18:15-18 in attempting to free people who are ensnared in sin, with the goal of restoration.
- 18. Is confession openly practiced?** **1 2 3 4 5**
 Most people seem willing to confess wrongs to God and to one another in an appropriate way. This is a safe place to confess our sins.
- 19. Do we network with other congregations?** **1 2 3 4 5**
 We work in harmony and participate with our denomination on a district and national basis. We share our resources with local congregations.
- 20. Do we live as people of hope and expectation?** **1 2 3 4 5**
 We are convinced we are making a difference in our community.
 We communicate to people their ultimate hope is not in the now but in the return of Christ.

Scoring

Total your circles numbers following the twenty categories.

85 – 100	You are a healthy church.
70 – 84	You are well on the road to health.
55 – 69	Don't stop now; you have things working for you.
40 – 54	You need some work, but you've begun - what will be your next step?
Below 40	Yours is not a very healthy church. Don't give in to despair. It's time for the leaders to humble themselves before God and seek renewed direction for this church.

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Vision Audit

1. What is the current stated mission of the church?
2. What value does the church provide to its community?
3. What is the character of the community in which the church operates?
4. What is the church's unique position in that community?
5. What does it take for the church to succeed?
6. What are the values and the culture that govern behavior and decision making?
7. What are the operational strengths and weaknesses of the church?
8. What is the current strategy and can it be defended?
9. Does the church have a clearly stated vision? If so, what is it?
10. If the church continues on its current path, where will it be in a decade? How good would such a direction be?
11. Do the core leaders know where the church is headed and agree on the direction?
12. Do the organizations, structures, decisions processes, information systems and personnel support the current direction of the church?

Adapted from *Visionary Leadership*, Burt Nanus

Suggested Books

Anderson, Leith	<u>A Church for the 21st Century</u>
Barna, George	<u>The Habits of Highly Effective Churches</u>
Blackaby, Henry	<u>What the Spirit is Saying to the Church</u>
Cook, Arnold	<u>Historical Drift</u>
Cymbala, Jim	<u>Fresh Power</u>
Kotter, John P.	<u>Leading Change</u>
Kneisel, Harvey	<u>New Life for Declining Churches</u>
Malphurs, Aubrey	<u>Ministry Nuts & Bolts</u>
Mims, Gene	<u>The 7 Churches Not in the Book of Revelation</u>
Quick, Kenneth	<u>Healing the Heart of Your Church</u>
Southerland, Dan	<u>Transitioning – Leading Your Church Through Change</u>
Warren, Rick	<u>Purpose Driven Church</u>