

Wesleyan Covenant Association Church Revitalization Taskforce Report

September 2020

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Each person on the taskforce was selected because of their recognized fruitfulness and experience with church revitalization. We were blessed with much collective knowledge and resources. I would like to give special appreciation to each and every person for their time, contributions, and expertise.

Leah Hidde-Gregory, Facilitator - Central District Superintendent CTC

Brief Summary of the Revitalization Report

We are a church in need of revitalization. Our souls long to be a part of a God given movement that brings about a deep awakening for God's people. The United Methodist church is in decline. Even with the explosive growth found outside of the United States in Asia and Africa, the UMC has declined in overall membership every year of its 52-year existence. Revitalization imagines something new, vital, and emerging. No matter the size, location, or financial strength of the local church, the revitalization taskforce is convicted that every church can be vital agents of a Christ love and grace in the Wesleyan movement. Through the power of the Holy Spirit, we visualize a denomination with churches full of disciples of Jesus Christ making new disciples, serving God and their community, and growing in their faith.

Foundational Principals for Revitalization

- United around a Christ-Centered vision, empowered by the Holy Spirit
- Focused on outwardly multiplying, reproducing, and deepening disciples
- Authority of Scripture/Gospel is proclaimed
- Relevant for everyday life as a Christian
- Active faith sharing and evangelistic witness
- Clear discipleship process
- Pastor, Laity, and Congregations are seek regular renewal
- Rooted in historical and inherited faith
- Reclaim the Doctrine, Spirit, and Disciple of Wesleyan Heritage
- Engaged in active fellowship, outreach, and care for one another
- Understand their mission field and be outwardly focused

Strong Leadership - Priesthood of All Believers: In Paul's letter to the Ephesians, he encourages the new Christians "... *to lead a life worthy of the calling to which you have been called...*" (Ephesians 4:1). Paul makes no distinction between clergy and laity. Rather, he explains that every single baptized Christian is called to participate in the sharing the Good News of Jesus Christ with the world. In the new expression of Methodism, it is imperative that we create a culture that identifies, supports, and empowers passionate and committed leaders, both lay and clergy. These leaders need to be growing as disciples of Christ. A vital church led by less than a vital pastor is just as bad as a vital pastor leading a less than vital congregation. We understand that we cannot have one without other.

Models for Revitalization

1. **Acquisitional revitalization.** Another church acquires or fosters the existing church in need of revitalization. The church then reopens, possibly with a new name, but definitely with new leaders. Estimated success rate: 90%.
2. **Covenantal revitalization.** The existing church, led by a revitalization specialist agrees to make significant changes. The leadership signs a covenant, and the congregation affirms the covenant, agreeing to behavioral changes. Estimated success rate: 40%.
3. **Organic revitalization.** The church may try new methodologies, but resistance is common because most of the members really don't want change. The church addresses symptoms rather

than causes. Some members would rather see the church die than change. Estimated success rate: 2%.¹

Best Practices for Church Revitalization

- Congregations must be Christ centered
- Engaged in focused prayer for vitality
- Have a Clear Mission and Vision based upon Matthew 28:16-30
- Passionate worship with scripturally based sermons
- Contextual: while methods may vary, there is a realization that through the power of the Holy Spirit, every church can be vital.
- Discipleship Pathway/Process
- Micro-Communities/Small Groups
- Transformational lay and clergy leadership
- Simplified structure for managing ministries

Taskforce Recommendations:

- The revitalization in the new expression of Methodism will be Christ centered and based upon Scriptural authority, reclaiming our Wesleyan heritage, and the teachings of our inherited Christian faith. We understand the regenerative power of the living words of Scripture not only give life, but instruction in how to live life.
- The continual renewal of laity, clergy, and congregations by the new denominational structures. Living out one's calling should not be an isolated experience. While each of these individually need revitalization, there is a supernatural synergy when all three work together that not only transforms those in ministry and one's ministry setting, they transform the world one is called to live in and reach into for the sake of Christ.
- Starting where one is, but not staying there. We are absolutely committed to spreading Scriptural holiness to "the hedges and highways" of life. Three guiding Scriptures help each clergy, lay person, and congregation start where they are, and move as a disciple of Jesus:
 - Mathew 22:36-40 - The Great Commandment - Be a disciple to love God and love others
 - Matthew 28:18-20 - The Great Commission - Go and make disciples of Jesus Christ
 - Acts 1:8 - The Great Directive - start where you are, and do not leave anyone out

¹ Autopsy of the Revived Church, Thom Rainer

Proposed Next Steps: Coming from a Big Tent experience of the UMC, we believe every church entering the new denomination, will need to have some type of intentional guidance that leads to reclaiming the evangelistic mission of our Wesleyan Heritage. To that end we offer the following:

1. A portion of our taskforce continues work on the development of a curriculum for church revitalization.
 - a. Step 1: Self-guided, shared learning curriculum to be used as a preparation tool with local church boards and pastors
 - b. Step 2: Structured revitalization curriculum for local church, led by a conference trained revitalization specialist. (someone with a proven track record for revitalization).
 - c. Step 3: Development of a compelling scoreboard to determine vitality

Full Revitalization Report

What has come before...

We are a church in need of revitalization. Our souls long to be a part of a movement that might be an awakening for God's people. Revitalization imagines something new, vital, and emerging. No matter the size, location, or financial strength of the local church, the revitalization taskforce is convicted that every church can be vital agents of a Christ love and grace in the Wesleyan movement. Through the power of the Holy Spirit, we visualize a denomination with churches full of disciples of Jesus Christ making new disciples, serving God and their community, and growing in their faith.

The United Methodist Church is in decline. In fact, even with the explosive growth found outside of America in Asia and Africa, the UMC has declined in overall membership every year of its 52-year existence. The United Methodist Church is not alone. Over 300,000 American protestant churches need revitalization.² The "perfect storm" has developed for the American Church. The winds of societal change have brought about a post-Christian culture shift. For many in our American culture, the transformed life found in our Savior, Jesus Christ is merely seen as one path to the goal of "self-realization." Consistent church attendance has been relegated to somewhere behind sleeping in on Sunday mornings and little league baseball games. The faithful of our congregations are aging and we face a death tsunami that, if left unattended, will lead to the closure of many churches. We now must factor in Covid-19, which has caused much of the slow decline to move exponentially faster. This reality will lead to the abandonment of our Wesleyan Witness in some mission fields.

Congregations have been weakened by denominational battles over doctrine and discipline, which have lingered for more than 50 years. A lack of strong lay and clergy leadership has left the church at what appears to be the breaking point. Add a global pandemic into this mix, and it is easy to feel like the disciples being tossed about at sea:

³⁷ A great windstorm arose, and the waves beat into the boat, so that the boat was already being swamped. ³⁸ But he was in the stern, asleep on the cushion; and they woke him up and said to him, "Teacher, do you not care that we are perishing?" ³⁹ He woke up and rebuked the wind, and said to the sea, "Peace! Be still!" Then the wind ceased, and there was a dead calm. ⁴⁰ He said to them, "Why are you afraid? Have you still no faith?" ⁴¹ And they were filled with great awe and said to one another, "Who then is this, that even the wind and the sea obey him?" Mark 4:37-41 NRSV

Christ was not alarmed by the storm, and he did not want his disciples to be either. After experiencing the storm, facing the fear, calling on Christ and experiencing his power, the disciples are filled with awe, faith, and determination. Reaching land, Jesus steps off the boat straight back into ministry, caring for individuals and the multitudes, and his disciples walk even

² Autopsy of a Revitalized Church, Thom Rainer

more closely. Like the disciples, we too must leave what has gone before, step out of the boat we are in with awe, faith and determination; walking closely with Christ into a new expression of Methodism.

Revitalization Defined:

⁴² They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer. ⁴³ Everyone was filled with awe at the many wonders and signs performed by the apostles. ⁴⁴ All the believers were together and had everything in common. ⁴⁵ They sold property and possessions to give to anyone who had need. ⁴⁶ Every day they continued to meet together in the temple courts. They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts, ⁴⁷ praising God and enjoying the favor of all the people. And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved. Acts 2:42-47 NRSV

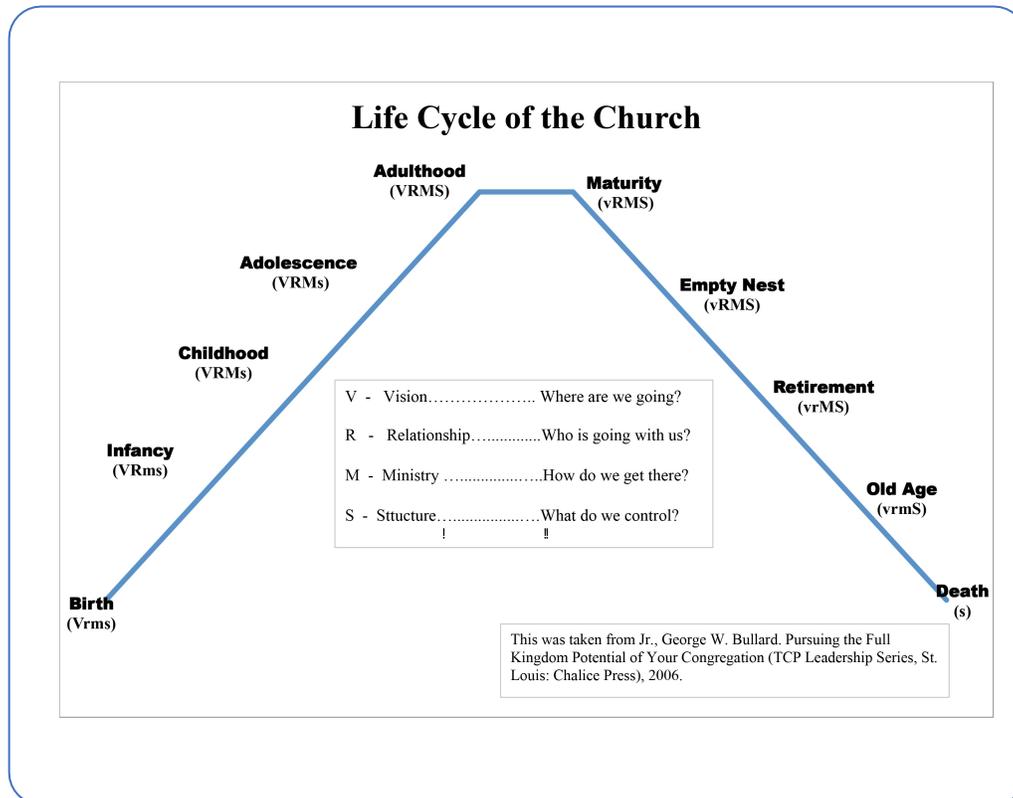
This scripture teaches how God's love reaching down through the power of the Holy Spirit and embracing the human agency of faithful people creates a vital and dynamic community of faith. These early Christians devoted themselves to teaching, fellowship, breaking bread, and to prayer. They were in awe of God and their hearts were generous. Because these early saints allowed themselves to be filled with the Holy Spirit and transformed by God's grace, "the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved."

Foundational Principals for Revitalization

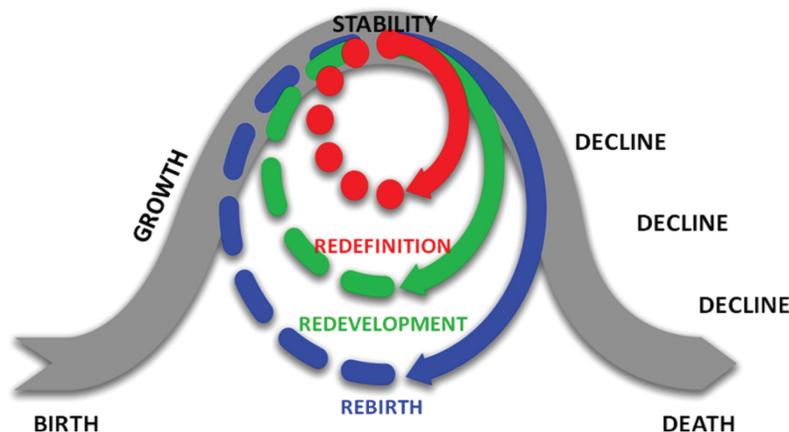
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Understanding the Life Cycle of the Church

New church-starts begin with very high vision and commitment to Christ. As the community of faith begins to grow, relationships develop, and ministries begin to bud. As the church begins to do more and more ministry, structures emerge to manage those ministries. As structure begins to grow, vision and relationship always tends to decline. The purpose of the church becomes one of maintaining the structure, and the commitment to Christ wanes.



For congregations to be revitalized, they must restore their vision by remembering their first love in Christ. They must be willing to loosen the hold of their structure, redefine their ministries, recommit to being in deep relationships with one another, and they must allow their church to be rebirthed through a deeply held vision of keeping Christ at the center of all that the congregation does. To learn more about where your church is on the Life Cycle see Appendix A.1.



Baltimore-Washington UMC Conference Graphic bwcumc.org

Being on the declining side of the graph, does not necessarily mean death. When churches recognize their need for revitalization it can be accomplished. We are resurrection people! Through holy conferencing together, visioning, prayer, and strategic planning, congregations can covenant together to make new life a reality for a congregation. This will require redefinition of church's focus; redevelopment of what and how ministries are carried out, and rebirth of vision for the church. See graphic above.

A vital church is a church that is mission centered, multiplying, reproducing, and deepening.

Mission Centered: Jesus said He would build His Church but gave His followers the task of making disciples. So, the mission of the Church must be centered on being and making disciples of Jesus. A disciple of Jesus is simply one who listens and obeys. When Jesus gave His Great Commission. He instructed us to *“go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you”* (Matt. 28:19-20 NIV). Jesus' pattern of making disciples was to invite everyone to “follow Him.” We follow Jesus by obeying His teachings. A vital church is not focused on transmitting information but teaching obedience since it is obedience that leads to transformation.

Multiplying: The goal of our mission is “all nations.” Speaking to the eleven, Jesus commanded them to go into the whole world. “All nations” in the church revitalization process includes intentionally reaching toward growing the broadest cultural and racial congregational make-up possible in that context. A vital church has a God-sized vision that is beyond human capacity and requires a partnership with the Holy Spirit that sees multiplication rather than addition.

Reproducing: A vital church is not built on innovative mission but on reproducing obedience to Jesus' teachings. However, reproduction requires constant innovation and adaptation in methods based on factors such as context and culture. A vital church is committed to the mission but is always willing to adjust the methods in order to accomplish its mission. A vital church understands the 2 Timothy 2:2 principle of reproducing faithful obedience to Jesus and

His teachings. And the things you have heard me say in the presence of many witnesses entrust to reliable people who will also be qualified to teach others. 2 Timothy 2:2

Deepening: Jesus taught that disciples are known by their love for one another. Humanity was created for relationship with God and with one another. As we grow in love for God, we cannot help but grow in love for one another. A vital church is ever deepening in holy community as faithfulness to mission expands from the core to the margins.

The Call of Clergy and Laity

In Paul's letter to the Ephesians, he encourages the new Christians "... to lead a life worthy of the calling to which you have been called..." (Ephesians 4:1). Paul makes no distinction between clergy and laity. Rather, he explains that every single baptized Christian is called to participate in the sharing the Good News of Jesus Christ with the world.

A life that is "*worthy of this calling*" is a life that bears the abundant fruit of faith, both individually and corporately. As disciples mature in our relationships with God, the grace of Jesus Christ shapes us to become more holy, reflecting His love through our lives in word and deed. The fruit of our faith is made evident through our acts of compassion, witness, and generosity. At the same time, the Church demonstrates the fruits of our faith through the growth of engaged disciples of Jesus Christ. Every member of the body of Christ lives out and shares their spiritual gifts to witness, welcome, and "build up the body of Christ, until all of us come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to maturity, to the measure of the full stature of Christ" (Ephesians 4: 12b-13). See Appendix A.3.

In this new expression of traditional orthodox Methodism, we believe that the Holy Spirit is leading us to live into a robust understanding of this call. Our growth in holiness, or sanctification, should be evident in the fruit of our faith that is measurable, both quantitatively and qualitatively. We must offer our very best to God. We encourage our clergy, laity, and the denominational leaders of this new expression to lead a life "worthy of this calling to which [we] have been called" with integrity and excellence.

Revitalization for Pastors in the New Expression

In the new expression of Methodism, it is imperative that we create a culture that identifies, supports, and empowers passionate and committed clergy who are themselves growing as disciples of Jesus Christ. Understanding that ministry can be challenging, and that times are changing at warp speed, vital churches need vitalized pastors. We understand that we cannot have one without other. A vital church led by less than a vital pastor is just as bad as a vital pastor leading a less than vital congregation. Vital Pastoral leadership includes:

- A vital relationship with Jesus, empowered by the Holy Spirit (one cannot give what one does not have)
- To lead example (one cannot teach / lead what one will not do)

- Passionate about prayer (oneself, a prayer team, etc.)
- Lead from their giftings (one must understand oneself, and one's gifting, and how to build around that based on other's gifting)
- Pastor the community through the local church (the local church is not the goal, but the instrument / team to reach the world as parish)
- Must equip but to equip the people of God to do the work of God (Eph 4:11)

Revitalization for Laity in the New Expression

The current structures within many churches are based upon professional clergy models. In some models, we see the clergy leader on the top of a pyramid, with staff below and, the laity at the base. In this model, the laity can sometimes feel ill-equipped to do the ministry of the church-- feeling a seminary degree or religious training is necessary to fully serve God. This can lead some who would be excellent lay leaders to become patrons of the church and not active disciples who can make other disciples for Christ. These models deny the vital role laity play in building God's Kingdom. The early Methodist tradition had engaged laity who were active in the spread of the Good News. Laity evangelized their communities, ministered to the congregation, and maintained the church, while circuit riding pastors traveled across Europe and America dedicated to multiplying the message of the gospel by reaching the lost, forming disciples and teaching the Scripture. The new expression of Methodism needs to fully equip and empower laity and to live into their role as a priesthood of believers.

A Revitalized laity will:

- Embody the idea and actions of a priesthood of all believers
- Have a clear commitment to keeping Christ at the center of the church and vision for being and making disciples of Jesus Christ
- Seek to being shaped and equipped for ministry to their community and the world.
- Open themselves up to the work and leading of the Holy spirit
- Be commitment to relationship, holding one another in the tension of love and accountability
- Open to looking deeply at structure, traditions, and ministries that perhaps served the church better in a different time. Having a Willingness to change
- Seek to build up the body of Christ by operating with complete transparency
- Be a Christian influence in the mission field through their life and service to the community from core to margins

Revitalization for Denominational Leadership in the New Expression

As pastors are deployed to revitalize churches, they do not work in a vacuum and so there are some dynamics that are critical to the success of a pastoral appointment that leads to revitalization. These include:

- Denominational leaders need to be committed to long-term pastorates

- Denominational leaders must be willing to understand and support the pastor through the stages of conflict, decline and disruption that is a natural part of revitalization
- Denominational leaders need to be committed to strategic missional appointments for the need of mission, not just the need of the clergy or the desires of the congregation

Models for Revitalization

4. **Acquisitional revitalization.** This approach is both radical and largely successful. Another church acquires or fosters the existing church in need of revitalization. Sometimes the doors of the existing church are closed for a season. The church then reopens with a new name and new leaders. The success rate is high because both foundational issues are addressed: leaders and behaviors. Estimated success rate: 90%.
5. **Covenantal revitalization.** The existing church, led by an objective person (often an outsider), agrees to make some significant changes. The leadership sign a covenant, and the congregation affirms the covenant. In other words, the existing members and leaders agree to behavioral changes. Estimated success rate: 40%.
6. **Organic revitalization.** This approach is the most common taken today. The church may try new methodologies and approaches. But resistance is common because most of the members really don't want change. The church addresses symptoms rather than causes. Some members would rather see the church die than change. Failure rates are high because neither of the two foundational issues is addressed. Estimated success rate: 2%.³

The Revitalization Taskforce recognizes that “acquisitional revitalization” is the most effective and expedient type of revitalization but is not an option for many of our congregations for various reasons. Therefore, we are basing our “best practices” upon the idea of a Covenantal revitalization. One where an objective party leads a congregation to a new understanding of what it means to be church and to live as a community of faith. We believe each conference should have clergy trained in coaching churches (not under their charge) through the revitalization process.

Best Practices for Church Revitalization

In presenting these best practices, we hold the following assumptions and convictions:

- Churches that need revitalization, were at some point in their life and history vital congregations
- Every church, no matter its size, level of decline, location, or demographic can be a vital instrument of Christ love and grace in their mission field
- Church revitalization is contextual with numerous factors determining the application of best practices
- It is through the power of the Holy Spirit that we experience vitality as a congregation

³ Thom Rainer

Best Practices in Action

- **Christ Centered with the faith of Resurrection People:** The work of revitalization, first and foremost, is a work of the Holy Spirit.
- **Engaged in Prayer as a Community of Faith.**
 - We cannot underestimate the importance of prayer. John Wesley said, “God does nothing except in response to believing prayer.” Understanding the spiritual dimension of revitalization is fundamental to becoming a more missional church. For this reason, prayer should be considered a prerequisite to the work of revitalization.
 - Forming focused prayer groups within the church, seeking God’s vision for the ministry context; seeking God’s guidance on living into that vision.
 - Seeking unity of the mind of Christ. This does not mean agreeing about everything but, seeking to love one another and keep Christ central to the actions of the Church.
- **Understand the Roadblocks** in your context: What are the things keeping your church from being vital? What are the attitudes, fears, and doubts that are causing the church to decline?
 - Congregation centered on something other than Christ
 - Comfort/Resistance to change
 - Lack of knowledge
 - Despair and defeatism; evangelistic apathy
 - Perception that programs are ends instead of a means
 - Looking for the magic bullet
 - Lack of awareness of the community
 - Lack of prayer
 - Pastors who won’t lead
 - Failure to consider being fostered/acquired by a larger church
 - Lack of accountability for laity and clergy
 - Not welcoming of new people or ideas
 - Lack of vision
- **Have a Clear Mission and Vision:** Every revitalized church has a strong sense of mission and vision. The mission for every church is defined in the Great Commission (Matt. 28:19, 20). The mission of the church answers the question of purpose: Why does your church exist? The vision of the church is how are going to accomplish that mission. What does success look like? Churches that successfully revitalize are mission focused. Mission and vision statements are not just papers in a file somewhere but are the guides for everything that the church does.⁴
 - Pastors must have a strong commitment to the primary mission of the church. The pastor must be committed to preaching, teaching and modeling a life of relational obedience to Jesus. Wesley’s admonition still holds today that pastors have nothing to do but to “save souls.” A pastor must be committed to historic

⁴ Resource: Andy Stanley, *Visioneering: God’s Blueprint for Developing and Maintaining Vision*

evangelism that leads to a life of personal and social holiness. There must be a solid commitment to the primacy and authority of Scripture.

- Laity will have a clear understanding of the vision and mission of the church. Working with one another to create Christ Centered ministries and outreach.
- This involves confronting and eliminating anything contrary to the vision which is unhealthy. Then creating and sustaining a healthy culture through teaching, preaching, and modeling healthy culture.
- **Commitment to Welcoming.** Every church believes it is welcoming, but what they really mean is that they are welcoming to people who are just like them. Becoming a welcoming church is one of the first and easiest things that a church can do to begin the process of revitalization. Churches that become more welcoming, have grown simply by reaching those who walk through the front door.⁵
- **Biblically grounded preaching and Holy Spirit filled Worship:** Revitalized congregations have stirring, relevant, warm, engaging and welcoming worship service. Preaching offers the grace of the full gospel and are Biblically grounded. Through worship people discover the grace of God in their lives. They discover their own strengths, gifts, competencies for life, or their calling. They hear God' inviting them to be helpful with some specific concrete mission. They learn some possibility for renewing or restoring the whole of their life. They find hope.⁶
- **Contextual.** According to Thomas Bandy, churches should understand their local context. What are the top three groups in your community that you are trying to reach? What kind of worship do those top three groups want to experience? Is that type of worship authentic for your congregation? It's no good trying to be a cowboy church when your church is a mainline church. It's not authentic.⁷
- **Breathe life into their communities/mission fields.** In almost all declining churches, there is a significant gap between who is in the church and the community which it serves. In general, in the UMC churches are older and less diverse than their community. How can we reach those people in our community? Attractional ministry has its place, but on any given Sunday, church isn't even on the register for most unchurch people. We must find ways to engage the people in our community where they are. We call this a missional mindset. Having a missional mindset means moving outside the walls of the church building and into the community. We come alongside of those in our community in order to engage them wherever we find them, even if they never set foot inside the walls of our church. In many cases, revitalization can begin with someone or a group in the church seeing a need in their community with a group on the margin and then meeting that need.
- **Discipleship Pathway/Process.** The overwhelming majority of declining churches do not have a clear process for discipleship. Having a discipleship program, Sunday School, or even small groups is not a substitute for a clear discipleship pathway. The first question that we must ask is, "What kind of disciples are we trying to make?" What does right

⁵ Resource: Bob Farr, Doug Anderson, and Kay Kotan. *Get Their Names: Grow Your Church by Building New Relationships*.

⁶ Twelve Keys to an Effective Church, Kennon L. Callahan

⁷ Resource: Thomas Bandy, *Worship Ways: For the People Within Your Reach*.

look like in terms of Christian discipleship? For Methodists, that could be Wesley's "Marks of a Methodist."⁸

- **Micro-Communities/Small Groups:** Small Group Ministry is not new to the Methodist movement. John Wesley began with the Holy Club which grew into class meetings and band meetings. The fuel that grew the Methodist movement was this act of discipleship in community. No matter the size of the congregation there needs to be small groups formed for searching the scriptures, prayer, accountability, and fellowship. New groups should form regularly with easy starting and stopping points. Some groups will remain together for years, but sometimes, people are more comfortable with an 8-12-week commitment. Offering these small groups online is an excellent way to capture those with busy schedules.
- **Transformational leadership.** The role of transformational leadership in revitalization cannot be overstated. Revitalization often begins with one person who gets a vision for what a revitalized congregation could do in their community. In the church, we have often given lip service to servant leadership while embracing a corporate style of leadership. The classic book is by Robert K. Greenleaf, *Servant Leadership*.⁹
- **Simplified structure.** Many declining churches are saddled with bloated committee structures. In these churches, the administrative council becomes merely an accountability group that spends all its time reading reports. It is difficult to change and adapt to changing situations. New ideas die on the vine.
 - Many churches are discovering the benefits of adopting a single board model of church governance. The single board does all the committee work of the finance committee, trustees, staff pastor relations committee, and other committees. This frees people up from committee work to be involved in ministry work. Many churches are also adopting a team approach for their ministry work. Nobody wants to be on a committee. But most people want to be involved on a team that is getting the work of ministry done.¹⁰
- **Compelling Scoreboard¹¹:** Best Practices much have measurable outcomes. Given the diversity of our congregations and their contextual realities, we believe that determining those metrics should be done by each congregation individually. We suggest the following metrics as possible measurable variables.
 - Worship Attendance
 - Tithing (Number of giving units)
 - Contributions
 - Number of people actively involved in discipleship
 - Number of people actively involved in mission
 - Number of New guests
 - New guest follows up
 - Professions of faith
 - Number of children and youth

⁸ Steven Harper, *Five Marks of a Methodist*.

⁹ Lovett H. Weems, *Leadership in the Wesleyan Spirit*.

¹⁰ John Edward Kaiser, *Winning on Purpose: How to Organize Congregations to Succeed in their Mission*.

¹¹ McChesney, Chris, et al. *The 4 Disciplines of Execution: Achieving Your Wildly Important Goals*

- Measure the five items of membership
- Number of ministries outside of your walls
- Narrative of witness (Narrative is backed up numbers) Stories of transformation
- Existence of a prayer ministry? How many people engaged? Attendance at prayer meeting?

Summary

Revitalization is bringing life to dying churches. New church starts are very important to the life and the health of the church universal, however we cannot overlook our existing churches and the potential they have through the power of the Holy Spirit working in and through them.

We can find an example of how the Apostle Paul sought to revitalize the church of Corinth in his two letters to that community of faith. If you study Corinth, you will see there are similarities to the church today. It was a combination of false teaching, immorality, division, and infighting. When faced with these issues in Corinth, what did Paul do? He didn't say, "Those people are hopeless. They're a mixture of false believer and proud, stubborn religious people. You don't want those people in your church anyway." then commission Timothy to go and plant a new church in Corinth. Instead, Paul pleaded with them. He came to see them again and again. He rebuked them and instructed them, and he bore with them... he loved them. In short, he worked to reform the church of God which was Corinth.¹² As we transition into the new expression of Methodism, we will need to do much of the same thing, not giving up on what has gone before us and encouraging those doing the work, reminding the people of God's love, presence and commission to the church.

Taskforce Recommendations:

- The revitalization in the new expression of Methodism will be Christ centered and based upon Scriptural authority, reclaiming our Wesleyan heritage, and the teachings of our inherited Christian faith. We understand the regenerative power of the living words of Scripture not only give life, but instruction in how to live life.
- The continual renewal of laity, clergy, and congregations by the new denominational structures. Living out one's calling should not be an isolated experience. While each of these individually need revitalization, there is a supernatural synergy when all three work together that not only transforms those in ministry and one's ministry setting, they transform the world one is called to live in and reach into for the sake of Christ.
- Starting where one is, but not staying there. We are absolutely committed to spreading Scriptural holiness to "the hedges and highways" of life. Three guiding Scriptures help each clergy, lay person, and congregation start where they are, and move as a disciple of Jesus:
 - Mathew 22:36-40 - The Great Commandment - Be a disciple to love God and love others
 - Matthew 28:18-20 - The Great Commission - Go and make disciples of Jesus Christ
 - Acts 1:8 - The Great Directive - start where you are, and do not leave anyone out

¹² The Bible's Burden for Church Revitalization, Bobby Jameson

Proposed Next Steps: Coming from a Big Tent experience of the UMC, we believe every church entering the new denomination, will need to have some type of intentional guidance that leads to reclaiming the evangelistic mission of our Wesleyan Heritage. To that end we offer the following:

2. A portion of our taskforce continues work on the development of a curriculum for church revitalization.
 - a. Step 1: Self-guided, shared learning curriculum to be used as a preparation tool with local church boards and pastors
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 - c. Step 3: Development of a compelling scoreboard to determine vitality

Appendix A: Church Revitalization Tools

A.1 Understanding Your Church's Life Cycle Worksheet

By Dale Roach, Church Consultant

Timeline

The best place to start in understanding your fellowship is to follow the timeline of your church.

- When was your Church born?
- How long has it been around?
- Do you have any statistical information on attendance?
- What are the membership stats?
- Do you know the conversion rates (How many have joined? How many have left?)
- How has the fellowship had a loss of members (left the church, died, or just quit coming)?
- Have finances decreased in the past 5 years.

This information will be necessary to have a clear understanding of the “life of a congregation.”

Growth Line

Have you ever graphed the membership and growth statistic of your fellowship?

Do you have any idea how many people attended your church –

- twenty years ago
- ten years ago
- five years ago
- one year ago?

This type of information will help a congregation understand themselves.

Life Cycle of Churches

1. Birth Stage

When was your congregation started? Why was your congregation started?

Was your church

- a “split” from another church?
- a mission?
- a new church?

Understanding why your church was started will give you a great idea as to what made up the character of your fellowship.

2. Growth Stage

This stage is a time in the life of the church when changes and expansion are taking place. What have been the growth patterns of your fellowship?

Have you been growing?

- numerically?
- spiritually?
- as a missionary church?

Have your visions and your goals for your fellowship shown a definite purpose? Are you growing at all?

3. Comfort Stage

This stage is when things seem to settle down for the church.

This is the stage where a congregation has lost their desire for new visions and goals.

Everyone seems happy with the way things are. This is the starting point for church decline.

4. Plateau and Decline Stage

This period is the stage where a church finds themselves in trouble.

In a declining congregation, attendance begins to decrease, the vision is lost, and surviving is what it is all about.

5. Survival Stage

This is a time in the life of the church when “keeping your head above water” is a well-known phrase.

How much longer will it be before the fellowship turns the light switch off for the very last time?

6. Living Dead Stage

This congregation is dead, and they don’t even know it.

They have become spiritual zombies.

Even if a strong pastor with great vision and an energetic personality comes along, it is virtually impossible to bring this fellowship up and out of their grave.

Is There Any Hope?

It is not impossible for the Lord to do great and marvelous things in any fellowship.

After all, the scripture teaches that the Lord Jesus gives sight to the blind, heals the leper and gives life to the dead.

The key for a church to have a vibrant life is when Jesus is Lord, and the Holy Spirit is driving the church to a healthy future. If this is not taking place, then the best of leaders cannot do anything to help.

Where is your church on the lifecycle?



A.2 Nine principles derived from the Doctrine, Spirit, and Discipline of the Wesley Revival

Contributed by Scott Pattison

PRINCIPLES OF RENEWAL AND REVITALIZATION

A. Holding Fast to Doctrine

1. Principle One: God's Grace is Free for All and to All

- a. "For God So Loved the World"
- b. "The World Is Our Parish"

2. Principle Two: Fidelity to Historical Christianity

- a. Sermons, Notes, Hymns, Articles, and Minutes
- b. The Essence of These Methodist Standards
- c. An Accurate Map is Essential for the Journey

3. Principle Three: God's Grace is Experiential and Processive

- a. Experience of Justifying Faith
- b. Grown in Daily Life
- c. Guide to Life and Action

B. Holding Fast to the Spirit

1. Principle Four: Rooted in Scripture / Empowered and Guided by the Holy Spirit

- a. Foundation of Scripture
- b. Guided and directed by the Holy Spirit

2. Principle Five: All Christians Fulfilling the Great Commandment

- a. To Love God Deeply
- b. Love Neighbor Practically

3. Principle Six: Reach out Extensively and Missionally

- a. Understand Context: Treat One's Ministry Setting Like a Missionary
- b. Adaptive to Environment and Ministry Setting

C. Holding Fast to Discipline

1. Principle Seven: Set Practices with the Goal in Mind

- a. The Destination Determines the Way
- b. Daily Practices Create the End Product

2. Principle Eight: Faith is Nurtured and Honed in Community

- a. Faith is Personal but Communal
 - i. Community of Faith
 - ii. Community in Which One Lives
- b. Body Life: Accountable Discipleship

3. Principle Nine: Reinforcing Practices

- a. Leadership Development of the Common Person
- b. Weekly Meeting and Face-To-Face Encounters With One Another
- c. Constantly Attend on All the Ordinances of God
- d. Music .
- e. Concerned About Distractions (Wealth, Isolated Faith, etc.)

A.3 APEST™ DESCRIPTIONS

<https://www.alanhirsch.org/tests>

APOSTLES extend the gospel. As the “sent ones,” they ensure that the faith is transmitted from one context to another and from one generation to the next. They are always thinking about the future, bridging barriers, establishing the church in new contexts, developing leaders, networking trans-locally. Yes, if you focus solely on initiating new ideas and rapid expansion, you can leave people and organizations wounded. The shepherding and teaching functions are needed to ensure people are cared for rather than simply used.

PROPHETS know God's will. They are particularly attuned to God and his truth for today. They bring correction and challenge the dominant assumptions we inherit from the culture. They insist that the community obey what God has commanded. They question the status quo. Without the other types of leaders in place, prophets can become belligerent activists or, paradoxically, disengage from the imperfection of reality and become other-worldly.

EVANGELISTS recruit. These infectious communicators of the gospel message recruit others to the cause. They call for a personal response to God's redemption in Christ, and also draw believers to engage the wider mission, growing the church. Evangelists can be so focused on reaching those outside the church that maturing and strengthening those inside is neglected.

SHEPHERDS nurture and protect. Caregivers of the community, they focus on the protection and spiritual maturity of God's flock, cultivating a loving and spiritually mature network of relationships, making and developing disciples. Shepherds can value stability to the detriment of the mission. They may also foster an unhealthy dependence between the church and themselves.

TEACHERS understand and explain. Communicators of God's truth and wisdom, they help others remain biblically grounded to better discern God's will, guiding others toward wisdom, helping the community remain faithful to Christ's word, and constructing a transferable doctrine. Without the input of the other functions, teachers can fall into dogmatism or dry intellectualism. They may fail to see the personal or missional aspects of the church's ministry.

Appendix B: Laity Revitalization Subcommittee Report

Mark Castleberry, Central Texas Conference, West District
 Elizabeth B. Chryst, First Dunnellon UMC, Florida
 Rev. Garry Ingraham, Director, Transforming Congregations, AZ
 Rev. Jeffery A. Raker, West Ohio Conference, Extension Appointment
 Janet Sligar, Norcross First UMC, GA
 Raleigh R. White, IV, MD, FUMC, Temple, TX
 Gary Woodson, Mt. Moriah UMC, White Hall Virginia

When we think of the current Methodist church these days, we tend to think of a leadership structure, starting with the Pastor (ordained) then the educated religious and finally there is the laity. This thinking can land the laity in a lesser role since they are neither ordained nor members of educated religious. Yet in the Methodist tradition, especially in the early days, the laity have had a much larger role. They typically served and maintained the church, ministering to the congregation, while the Pastors traveled across America as circuit riders dedicated to multiplying the message of the gospel by reaching the lost, forming discipleships and teaching the Scripture. This paper hopes to revitalize the role of the laity in the new Methodist church. We hope that it will be useful for churches that wish to fully equip and empower laity as they seek to make disciples of Jesus Christ.

How do you know or identify the need for a stronger or a revitalized laity in your church? If your church leadership answers “no” to two or more of these questions then God may be calling for a revival in your church, especially within your laity.

- ✓ *Does the Pastor recognize the value of laity?*
- ✓ *Does your church structure entrust all of its ministries to the laity who have been trained through a discipleship training program?*
- ✓ *Does your church embody strong relationships and work in cooperation with the Pastor and its laity and staff?*
- ✓ *Does your church have leadership roles within your laity for at least the three major age groups: youth, late 20's-40's and 50's-60's plus?*
- ✓ *Is the church laity centered and not Pastor-centered? The role of Pastors is to support, train, and send laymen into the world and in the field of ministry.*

What are the best traits or characteristics of a revitalized Laity?

- Christ centered and grounded in prayer. A thirst for scripture!
- Strong in the Wesleyan theology
- Committed-intentional to serving Christ
- Able to proclaim the Gospel inside and outside the church
- Lives Christ in their own life
- Able to teach and grow disciples
- Able to ask people to accept Christ
- Knows the Holy Spirit

- Is a good partner and works well with teams
- Can speak to hard topics through the lens of their life of transparency (James 5:16, 1 John 1:7)
- Willing to share out of personal failure (such as sexual failure) and God's restorative work
- Exercises good self-care and spiritual discipline
- Knows and maintains good healthy personal boundaries
- Has staff in place to help accomplish the mission but not to do the ministry

What are the best practices for a revitalized Laity?

- Clear sense of purpose-understands the mission of the church
- Able to accept and/or help to retool the church if needed. Letting go of traditions that exist for tradition sake
- Works well with Pastor/entire team & will resource w/other like-minded 501©3s
- Able to identify toxins within the church and problem solve
- Conveys well that ALL voices in the church are important
- Able to recognize people's spiritual gifts and nurture them
- Able to nudge people out of their comfort zones
- Willing to answer doubters
- Operates with complete transparency
- Has some community influence to offer local mission opportunities

What are the best applications for a revitalized Laity?

- Be a beginner, shadow other Laity to learn the role
- Display a self-effacing, humble persona so as to not be intimidating
- Be a self-starter when necessary
- Can represent and speak for laity at district/leadership meetings
- Be clear in your role and responsibility, stay in your lane
- Willing to develop a leadership/laity pipeline-grow the laity
- Able to ask hard questions
- Form task forces to assist w/church or community issues
- Connect with neighbors/community

How do you know you are successful in your laity revitalization? How can it be measured?

- New or renewal of professions of faith-number of baptisms
- Increase in discipleship training
- Increase in missions both local and international
- Increase authority of the laity
- Growth in laity team members
- Growth or start-up of small groups
- Increase in calls for ministering inside and outside of the church
- Growth in attendance

- Increase in giving
- Increase reliability on laity not the Pastor

How can laity combat denominational schism, apathy, and global church leadership neglect?

- Pray for the conflict often
- Operate with total transparency
- Begin & maintain open and honest conversation about the global church leadership conflict(s)
- Encourage constant communication with church leadership. No black-out periods or times of silence or light communication. This breeds confusion and suspicion
- Encourage a variety of laity. Helps the congregation find commonality and brotherhood/sisterhood

Appendix C: Clergy Revitalization Report

Rev. Dr. Leah Hidde-Gregory, Central Texas Conference
 Rev. Scott Pattison, Indiana Conference
 Rev. Jill Jackson-Sears, North Texas Conference
 Rev. Wade Killough, Central Texas Conference
 Rev. Steve Martinez, North Texas Conference

Understanding that ministry can be challenging, and that times are changing – vital churches need vitalized pastors. We understand that one cannot have one without the other. A vital church led by a less than vital pastor is just as bad as a vital pastor leading a less than vital congregation. One must understand that one can “create” the other, just as easily as the other way around. In this new expression, we seek to have vital churches, and vital pastors matched in such a way that the synergy of a vital pastor, serving vital congregations. This will once again bring a transformation the people called Methodist once knew as “our past,” now can become a current reality. We understand this may not be an immediate reality, and that we are accustomed to the current “wineskin.” There will be a transition period for all (this will have both good and challenging moments - e.g. “muscle memory,” “wound memory,” deferred hope, lost trust, effects of betrayals, etc.). Moving at the “right” pace will be not only essentially critical, it will also be challenging. We understand that both churches and pastors carry some sort of pain and wounds, and that a transition period is not only wise, but considered essential into living in the “new normal” of the new expression. We know that supporting the pastors and churches in this transition is just as important now and through, as what the “next” may be!

We believe that vital pastors will serve in such a way that the local congregations they serve will either continue to be, or become, vital congregations. We also understand the metrics may seem similar, one must think of the clergy as person / leader and the congregation as system and culture. It is easy to apply metrics for one, onto the other - but that may not always be appropriate. We seek to start with a revitalized / vitalized pastor / clergy. Then we will look at revitalized / vital congregations. They work in tandem, but must be understood as separate, but working together partnerships.

- The pastor needs a vital relationship with Jesus, empowered by the Holy Spirit (one cannot give what one does not have).
- The pastor needs to be a lead example (one cannot teach / lead what one will not do).
- The pastor needs to be about prayer (oneself, a prayer team, etc.)
- The pastor leads from one’s gifting (one must understand oneself, and one’s gifting, and how to build around that based on other’s gifting)
- The pastor is pastoring a community through the local church (the local church is not the goal, but the instrument / team to reach the world as parish)
- The pastor is not to “do it alone”, but to equip the people of God to do the work of God (Eph 4:11)

Best Practices

- Opportunities for revival and gathering of clergy families periodically throughout the year. New Room type experience.
- Clergy Support and Accountability Groups
- APEST – Gift Based approach to ministry
- Plans and policies in place for a Matthew 18 mediation for conflict resolution
- Denominational Discipleship Process that can be adapted for individual context
- Clearly defined pastoral expectations, understanding:
 - The role of the pastor
 - The job description of the pastor
 - The authority of the pastor
- Healing Weekends/Sabbaths, a time for:
 - Lamenting the pain caused in the church
 - Forgiving others and self
 - Practicing Patience, waiting upon the Lord
 - Making connections
 - Solitude
 - Plans for Reengagement

Appendix D: Large Church Revitalization Subcommittee Report

Rev. Dr. Kevin Baker, Oakdale Church, Maryland

Rev. Tim Carson, Estero United Methodist Church, Florida

Rev. Dr. Andrew Cooney, Bethany United Methodist Church, Maryland

Rev. Dr. Mike Morgan, Marion First United Methodist Church, Iowa

While the term “revitalization” may not have been the one we selected for this work, we know it is one we corporately understand. Because the revitalization of a church is more an “art” than a science there is no one size fits all prescription, but we discerned the following categories will regularly be a part of the renewal.

I. Definitions: The revitalization of a church implies a vision for a vital church. While we did not seek to offer an exhaustive definition, we are offering the following descriptors.

A vital church is a church that is mission centered, multiplying, reproducing, and deepening.

Mission centered: Jesus said he would build his Church but gave his followers the task of making disciples. So, the mission of the Church must be centered on making disciples of Jesus. A disciple of Jesus is simply one who listens and obeys. When Jesus gave his Great Commission he instructed us to “*go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you.*” (Matt. 28:19-20 NIV) Jesus’ pattern of making disciples was to invite everyone to “follow him”. We follow Jesus by obeying his instructions. A vital church is not focused on teaching information but teaching obedience since obedience is what leads to transformation. So a church that is mission centered is a church that, under the all-encompassing authority of Jesus, seeks to introduce obedience to Jesus’ teaching that results in allegiance to (baptism) and growing love for Jesus and the reproduction of this process inclusively to all Nations.

Multiplying: The goal of our mission is “all Nations”. Speaking to the 11, Jesus commanded them to go into the whole world. “All Nations” in the church revitalization process includes intentionally reaching towards growing the broadest cultural and racial congregational make up possible in that context. A vital church has a God-sized vision that is beyond human capacity and requires a partnership with the Holy Spirit that sees multiplication not addition.

Reproducing: A vital church is not built on innovative mission but on reproducing obedience to Jesus’ teachings. However, reproduction requires a constant innovation in methods based on factors such as context and culture. A vital church knows her mission but is always willing to adjust her methods in order to accomplish her mission. A vital church understands the 2 Timothy 2:2 principle of reproducing faithful obedience to Jesus and his teachings.

Deepening: Jesus taught that disciples are known by their love for one another. Humanity was created for relationship with God and with one another. As we grow in love for God, we cannot help but grow in love for one another. So, a vital church is ever deepening in holy community as faithfulness to mission expands.

Revitalization: Revitalization is the process of bringing a church back into vitality based on the above understanding. Revitalization implies that a church was once vital and takes into consideration that this is a process that requires intuitive leadership, pressure over time, and the power of the Holy Spirit. Since the power for revitalization comes from God the first priority in any work of revitalization is prayer.

II. Practices: Below are some of the primary players and practices required to allow for revitalization to be successful.

Pastoral Leadership: The senior pastor is perhaps the most significant person outside of the Holy Spirit necessary for successful revitalization. The following are characteristics of effective revitalization pastoral leadership:

- Strong commitment to the primary mission of the church. The senior leader must be committed to preaching, teaching and modeling a life of relational obedience to Jesus. Wesley's admonition still holds today that pastors have nothing to do but to "save souls". A senior leader must be committed to historic evangelism that leads to a life of personal and social holiness. There must be a solid commitment to the primacy and authority of Scripture.
- A leader not a chaplain. Chaplains seek to care for people in their current circumstances. Leaders seek to care for people by directing them into better patterns of behavior and circumstances.
- A relational leader. Revitalization is a leadership process that requires "disappointing people at a pace they can absorb"¹³ therefore the successful revitalization leader will be adept at creating and sustaining relational connections with people.
- A commitment to creating health. Vital churches have a healthy, mission centered culture, therefore the successful senior leader will understand and work to create an increasingly healthy church culture. This involves confronting and eliminating unhealth and creating healthy culture through teaching, preaching and modeling healthy culture. This will create chaos at various times and in various levels.
- A commitment to courage. Transitioning a church will produce conflict, therefore the successful revitalization pastor will be a person of courage, willing to enter into conflict for the sake of the mission that models healthy conflict while maintain missional integrity.
- The senior leader must be committed to staying for the long haul in order to see the congregation through the instability, chaos and temporary declines that often accompany revitalization.
- The senior leader must be able to tolerate significant levels of risk and must learn how to "fail forward"¹⁴.
- The senior leader needs a strong support/accountability team who are committed to mutual honesty, vulnerability, and encouragement. This team cannot be assigned must be developed.
- The senior leader needs an evangelical/biblical worldview. Wesley said, "the world is my parish" and the revitalization process requires a leader who is able to understand and interpret all of life in light of God's redemptive plan for creation.
- Revitalization requires an intuitive leader who can take good theology and theory and turn it into a clear vision and reproducible practice.

¹³ <https://bolsinger.blogs.com/weblog/2010/04/disappointing-leadership-the-core-competency.html>

¹⁴ John Maxwell, "Failing Forward"

- III. Staffing for Revitalization:** Staffing becomes a critical issue in the larger church and especially as a church is in the process of revitalization. Most larger churches are “staff led” and so “getting the right people in the right seat on the bus”¹⁵ is critical for effective revitalization.
- The staff plays a major role in training and deploying the laity of the church to accomplish the mission. Staff do not do the ministry, they raise-up, train, deploy and coach increasing numbers of lay people to live out the ministry in their own lives.
 - There is a need for the staff to reflect the diversity of the community and be united in vision and mission.
 - Healthy revitalized churches do not have “silo’s” so staff own their area of responsibility without creating competition between different areas of the ministry.
 - Staff changes always bring some level of disruption, but senior leaders may need to make several changes and some quickly. In a larger church it only takes one problem staff person to derail or delay effective revitalization efforts.
 - Staff must be more committed to where the church is going than where it has been.
- IV. Laity’s role in revitalization:** Revitalized churches are committed to the “priesthood of all believers” and therefore the laity play a critical role in the revitalization of the church.
- Laity must own and lead the mission of the church with their hearts and hands.
 - Laity must become the primary vehicles through which the church’s mission is accomplished under the guidance and leadership of the staff and governance structure.
 - Laity must be more committed to the mission of the church than the survival of the church.
 - Laity must be proactive in pastoral transition. This includes investing richly in the selection of the new pastor and making sure s/he very thoroughly aware of the vision and mission of the church.
- V. Denominational Leadership:** As pastors are deployed to revitalize larger churches, they do not work in a vacuum and so there are some dynamics that are critical to the success of a pastoral appointment that leads to revitalization.
- Denominational leaders need to be committed to long-term pastorates
 - Denominational leaders must be willing to understand and support the senior leader through the stages of conflict, decline and disruption that is a natural part of revitalization.
 - Denominational leaders cannot betray the trust of the senior leader by giving way to triangulation and other practices that breach the trust needed to navigate the difficult waters of revitalization.
 - Denominational leaders need to be practitioners of revitalization themselves.
 - Denominational leaders and senior pastors must work to stay in step with one another and continue to build trust in one another.
 - Clear expectations are always best.
 - A more effective “leadership pipeline” that sees effective pastors ascend to positions of leadership who can raise up, encourage, and even mentor the next generation of leaders would be preferred.
- VI. Local Church Governance:** While there is perhaps no one model of church governance that is best there are some characteristics that need to be present for a successful revitalization.
- Governance structure should be lean. The larger the church the smaller the governance size. “we want people on mission not in meetings”.

¹⁵ James Collins “Good to Great”

- Governance members must also be more committed to the mission of the church than the survival of the church
- Governance must be flexible and able to make decisions in a timely manner.

VII. Metrics of Revitalization: While measuring meaningful growth in the church is difficult, the following will serve as a guide for evaluating revitalization progress.

- The first key to measuring revitalization progress is a commitment to measuring it.
- Measuring attendance and giving are not reliable metrics for revitalization in the short-term.
- Determining lead measures is critical and then ensuring that these lead measures are communicated clearly and tracked regularly is critical.
- Metrics around extraordinary corporate prayer¹⁶ are essential since corporate prayer precedes revitalization.
- How often are the members of the congregation having “spiritual conversations” with unchurched and de-churched people is another possible lead measure.
- “Shema Lifestyle”¹⁷ occurrences are another possible lead measure.

VIII. Self-Care: The work of revitalizing a large church is challenging, painful, and requires a lot from within a leader as well as a support system outside the leader. Within, a leader must have a deep prayer life, grit, tenacity, a balance of an open ear and thick skin, an ability to vision and communicate that vision. Leading deep change can be emotionally draining work that can take its toll if it is not well managed. A wise leader will count the cost of this kind of change and take significant steps to prepare for it. The following are some recommendations:

- Seek out coaching. Ideally the coach has led a large church. That relationship should be clearly defined and largely private. The work should help the leader to produce a refined version of the vision and plan as well as a place to problem solve difficult areas. The coach should also help the leader with their particular blind spots.
- Cultivate deep friendships with like-minded pastors. These are people to lean on, pray with, and ask questions. Ideally these are relationships that have naturally developed, and it is a place where the leader can be vulnerable and open.
- Do not be afraid to seek counseling. Ideally these counselors work from a biblical worldview and can help process, heal and grow emotionally and spiritually.
- Practice spiritual disciplines of regular prayer, bible reading, and spiritual conversations with others—especially outside the church you lead. This may involve having a spiritual director.
- Identify and practice regular habits that de-stress. That may be exercise, entertainment, social gatherings outside the church, a sabbath, etc.
- Work as a team with your family. The family of the leader should understand and support this season of work.

¹⁶ Extraordinary corporate prayer is above and beyond what has been experienced. The average time in prayer that believer’s in developing countries that are experiencing rapid discipleship growth is 2 hours per day.

¹⁷ A “Shema Lifestyle” taken from Deuteronomy 6:4-9 is a lifestyle “shema actions” consisting of serving others through prayer, healing, meeting needs as a way to present the Kingdom of God which opens the door to “shema statements” that Glorify God and introduce others to the King who loves them.

Appendix E Small Church Revitalization Report

Small Church Subcommittee:

Steve Martinez, North Texas Conference

Billy Tingle, Louisiana Conference

Carl Bengel, Iowa Conference

Mark Ellcessor, Indiana Conference

Meghan Riegerix, Missouri Conference

Walt Unterberger, Eastern PA Conference

Church revitalization is defined elsewhere in this document. First, we assume that churches needing revitalization have once been vital. Second, we recognize that there are fundamental differences between small, medium, and large churches. Third, we assume that churches which have declined over the years can be revitalized. Fourthly, we assume that the experts on revitalization are those who have successfully experienced revitalization – pastors and lay persons of revitalized churches.

Holy Spirit. The work of revitalization first and foremost is a work of the Holy Spirit. Since it is a work of the Holy Spirit, that means that revitalization is possible no matter how dry the spiritual bones of the church. (Ezek. 37:1-10). Resource: Howard Snyder, *Signs of the Spirit*.

Prayer. We cannot underestimate the importance of prayer. Understanding the spiritual dimension of revitalization is fundamental to becoming a more missional church. For this reason, prayer should be considered a prerequisite to the work of revitalization.

Mission and vision. Every revitalized church has a strong sense of mission and vision. The mission for every church is defined in the Great Commission (Matt. 28:19, 20). The mission of the church answers the question of purpose: Why does your church exist? The vision of the church is how are going to accomplish that mission. What does success look like? Churches that successfully revitalize are mission focused. Mission and vision statements are not just papers in a file somewhere, but are the guides for everything that the church does. Resource: Andy Stanley, *Visioneering: God's Blueprint for Developing and Maintaining Vision*.

Radical hospitality. Every church believes it is welcoming, but what they really mean is that they are welcoming to people who are just like them. Becoming a welcoming church is one of the first and easiest things that a church can do to begin the process of revitalization. Churches that become more welcoming, have grown simply by reaching those who walk through the front door. Resource: Bob Farr, Doug Anderson, and Kay Kotan. *Get Their Names: Grow Your Church by Building New Relationships*.

Passionate worship. Most people's first experience with a church is in the context of the worship service. With COVID19 restricting our ability to meet in person, that first experience could be online. Whether it's online or in person, people are seeking a worship experience that is passionate.

What passionate worship looks like will vary according to a church's local context. For example, in the context of rural north Texas, traditional type worship services are the norm.

Even when the church offers contemporary Christian music, the service itself is most likely a traditional worship service.

According to Thomas Bandy, churches should understand their local context. What are the top three groups in your community that you are trying to reach? What kind of worship do those top three groups want to experience? Is that type of worship authentic for your congregation? It's no good trying to be a cowboy church when your church is a mainline church. It's not authentic. Resource: Thomas Bandy, *Worship Ways: For the People Within Your Reach*.

Risk taking mission and service. In almost all declining churches, there is a significant gap between who is in the church and the community which it serves. In general, in the UMC churches are older and less diverse than their community. How can we reach those people in our community? Attractional ministry has its place, but on any given Sunday, church isn't even on the register for most unchurch people. We must find ways to engage the people in our community where they are. We call this a missional mindset. Having a missional mindset means moving outside the 4 walls of the church building and into the community. We come alongside of those in our community in order to engage them wherever we find them, even if they never set foot inside the walls of our church. In many cases, revitalization can begin with someone or a group in the church seeing a need in their community with a group on the margin and then meeting that need.

Intentional Faith Development. The overwhelming majority of declining churches do not have a clear pathway for discipleship. Having a discipleship program, Sunday School, or even small groups is not a substitute for a clear discipleship pathway. The first question that we must ask is, "What kind of disciples are we trying to make?" What does right look like in terms of Christian discipleship? For Methodists, that could be Wesley's "Marks of a Methodist." Resource: Steven Harper, *Five Marks of a Methodist*.

The second question we must ask is, where do we want to go? That is, what does a discipleship process look like in our context. For example, Discipleship Ministries has thought up the acronym, H.O.P.E. for the four phases of discipleship. Hospitality is "Reaching out and receiving new people. We welcome new people into the congregation. Offer Christ is "Offering opportunities to make a commitment to Christ." This usually occurs within in the context of the worship service. Purpose is "Growing in faith through participation in the means of grace." People find purpose through intentional faith development. Engagement is "Helping transform the surrounding community." We involve people in risk-taking mission and service. People can come into the church through at any of these points. But the ultimate goal is to involve 100% of the congregation in these four parts of the discipleship pathway. Resource: Thom Rainer and Eric Geiger, *Simple Church: Returning to God's Process for Making Disciples*.

Transformational leadership. The role of transformational leadership in revitalization cannot be overstated. Revitalization often begins with one person who gets a vision for what a revitalized congregation could do in their community. In the church, we have often given lip service to servant leadership while embracing a corporate style of leadership. The classic book is by Robert K. Greenleaf, *Servant Leadership*. Resource: Lovett H. Weems, *Leadership in the Wesleyan Spirit*.

Simplified structure. Many declining churches are saddled with bloated committee structures. In these churches, the administrative council becomes merely an accountability

group that spends all its time reading reports. It is difficult to change and adapt to changing situations. New ideas die on the vine.

Many churches are discovering the benefits of adopting a single board model of church governance. The single board does all the committee work of the finance committee, trustees, staff pastor relations committee, and other committees. This frees people up from committee work to be involved in ministry work. Many churches are also adopting a team approach for their ministry work. Nobody wants to be on a committee. But most people want to be involved on a team that is getting the work of ministry done. Resource: John Edward Kaiser, *Winning on Purpose: How to Organize Congregations to Succeed in their Mission*.

Appendix F: Medium Church Subcommittee

Vital Congregations with Singular Focus on Making Disciples of Christ

- Professions of Faith
- Clear Discipleship Pathways
- Disciples making other Disciples
- Transformation beyond information

Attributes of Revitalization

- Strong sense of purpose and vision
- Understands their mission field and who they are. They live out of the knowledge seeking to be fruitful.
- High value on being fruitful
- Outwardly focused, not inwardly focused: Ministry and mission is based upon God's vision
- Speaks life into the community
- Grows the kingdom and not just the local church
- Acts 2:42 shaped congregation
- Pastor is not a hired hand, but a leader
- Develops disciplined leaders that can make disciples of Christ

Foundational Principals

- Authority of Scripture/Gospel is proclaimed
- Teaches people how to live everyday life as a Christians
- People are regularly being asked into a life with Christ
- They have a clear discipleship process
- They know the power and presence of the Holy Spirit
- Prayer for God's vision... not their own
- Strong lay ministry that is renewed and revitalized regularly
- Pastor is revitalized, retrained, and renewed regularly
- Rooted in historical and inherited faith

Appendix G: Ethnic/Multi Cultural Subcommittee

Subcommittee:

Rev. Emmanuel Afful

Rev. Fred Bates

Rev. Yong-Shil “Kim” Ethridge

Jay Xiong

PRINCIPLES OF REVITALIZING MULTI-ETHNIC CHURCH

1. **Embrace Dependence [on the Holy Spirit]:** The multi-ethnic church cannot be built by the means and methods of men only. It is purely the work of the Holy Spirit.
2. **Intentionality:** Multi-ethnic ministry does not happen naturally with methods that may work for a monocultural church. Intentionality promotes accommodation of differences and help create synergy. It would help in the creation of vision and mission that serves the nature of the ministry. It also promotes attitudinal changes for vital multi-ethnic ministry.
3. **Empower Diverse Leadership:**
 - a. Get the picture of God’s vision.
 - b. Diversity on the outside and inside.
 - c. Leadership training and development for members from different cultural or ethnic background.
4. **Develop Cross-Cultural Relationship:**
 - a. Valuing cross-cultural relationships.
 - b. Authentic communication.
 - c. Fellowships and Partnerships.
 - d. Developing an organizational identity, as well as an individual affinity for one another.
5. **Pursue Cross-Cultural Competence:**
 - a. Be a student through learning.
 - b. Launch out into the different cultural and/or ethnic environment.
 - c. The Jesus Example: Philippians 2:6-8; Hebrew 4:15
 - d. Pressing on to Maturity:
 - i. Cultural Destructiveness: One way of being. Differences become barriers.
 - ii. Blindness: People are basically alike, so what works for one should work for all.
 - iii. **Cultural Awareness:**
 1. **Openness:** Ability to welcome others in your presence to make them feel safe. Luke 15:2. Openness is grounded in God; hospitality is extending grace to others. Matthew 25:31-40.

- a. **Skills for openness:** attribution theory—we quickly and unconsciously think negatively about others when they don't measure up to us or our expectations. John 7:24
- b. **Practice positive attribution:** Philippians 2:3. Not being naïve.
- c. **Restriction on openness:** Don't misconstrue openness with religious and moral relativism, especially, when relativistic opinions and concepts contradict or undermine the historic and orthodox doctrine enshrined in scriptures.

2. Acceptance:

- a. Communicating respect for others.
- b. The ability to communicate value, worth, esteem, grace, compassion, love and honor to another person. Romans 15:7.
- c. Acceptance began with God. **Acceptance is NOT approval.**
- d. Do not look down on others.
- e. Creating space for the expression of diversity.
- f. Valuing contribution from different backgrounds.
- g. Celebrate ministry achievement of the various ethnicities within the church.

3. Trust: Building confidence in relationships so that both parties will believe that the other will not intentionally hurt them but will act in their interest.

4. Learning:

- a. **About other:** It yields facts and help us adjust our expectations.
- b. **From others:** It yields understanding and moves us into strong, enduring, and trusting relationships.
- c. **With Others:** Authentic partnerships are formed where each person probes deep into the other, bringing interdependence and growth and cultural sensitivity.

5. Serving: Becoming like Christ to others.

We must, also, not rule out the possibility of establishing homogeneous units within the larger church. This would serve well, the first generation immigrants who find it difficult to assimilate into the larger society due to language and other barriers. In this homogenous units, worship could be contextualized.

EVANGELISM IN MULTI-CULTURAL/ETHNIC ENVIRONMENT

Since most multicultural communities have low economic strength and resources, evangelism could best be approached from Gospel-Social Intervention Approach.

- Choose church member(s) from the community to be evangelized to be part of the team. (Their presence on the team serves as a natural bridge between the team and the community.)
- Scout for the needs of the community that could be met by the church.
 - After-School programs
 - ESL Classes
 - Provision of clothing, shoes, and other basic home goods. Eg furniture, electronics, etc.
 - Food pantry ministry at the church or within the community.
 - Primary Health Care ministry: This could be organized on quarterly basis to provide free primary health care for locals.
 - Establish Job Center at the church or community: Teach people job interview skills, resume writing, career development, etc.
 - Teach basic financial management (Financial Peace University, etc).
 - Establish other type of meetings where resource persons could teach locals how to live successfully in the nation.
 - Donations of school supplies to kids and teachers.

These are routes to build relationship with the community, and create openness for the church into the community. The evangelism team should look for ways to attach the Word to all these above social intervention (local mission) programs. **DO NOT SERVE THE PEOPLE WITH SOCIAL INTERVENTIONS WITHOUT SHARING THE WORD WITH THEM IN RECEIVABLE WAYS.**

- Where possible, tracts and other evangelism literature could be translated into different languages in the community. This would promote appeal and understanding of content.
- Training of locals to evangelize their own people on one-on-one or one-to-group basis.

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