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Revitalization of Moderate Baptist Churches

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GEORGE FOX UNIVERSITY

REVITALIZATION OF MODERATE BAPTIST CHURCHES

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CERTIFICATE OF APPROVAL

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To my wife, Teresa

And

My children, Destiny, Faith, Hope, and Thomas

CONTENTS

| | |
|---|-----|
| ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS..... | v |
| ABSTRACT..... | vii |
| SECTION 1: THE PROBLEM..... | 1 |
| Introduction..... | 1 |
| Life Cycles..... | 8 |
| Moderate Baptists..... | 13 |
| Formation of the CBF..... | 14 |
| SECTION 2: OTHER SOLUTIONS..... | 22 |
| Church Growth Movement..... | 23 |
| New Church Plants..... | 25 |
| The Emergent Church Movement..... | 27 |
| Simple Church..... | 30 |
| Small Groups..... | 32 |
| The Missional Church Model..... | 35 |
| SECTION 3: THE THESIS..... | 40 |
| Biblical Foundation for Revitalization..... | 40 |
| Vision..... | 46 |
| Bureaucracy and Leadership Structure within The Church..... | 50 |
| Community..... | 56 |
| Cause..... | 61 |
| Fresh Expressions..... | 64 |
| Budget..... | 67 |
| Conclusion..... | 69 |
| SECTION 4: ARTIFACT DESCRIPTION..... | 74 |
| SECTION 5: ARTIFACT SPECIFICATIONS..... | 76 |
| SECTION 6: POSTSCRIPT..... | 78 |
| BIBLIOGRAPHY..... | 80 |
| APPENDIX: ARTIFACT..... | 89 |

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ABSTRACT

This dissertation examines church revitalization in Moderate Baptist churches that are experiencing decline. It looks at various models and principles that can be addressed by church leadership to help revitalize a congregation. Section 1 describes the problem of decline in church attendance since the 1950s. It looks at the natural Life Cycle of church. Special attention is paid to Moderate Baptists, especially the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship and its formation and separation from the Southern Baptist Convention. Section 2 examines the problem. The problem of decline in churches has existed for numerous years. This has led to new innovations and attempts to fix the issue of decline. This section examines some of these ways by researching various movements that have begun in the church. Some of these movements are viable ways to help in church revitalization. Section 3 examines additional principles that can be utilized by Moderate Baptist churches to combat decline and experience revitalization. Sections 4 and 5 describe the creation of the webinar and how the webinar will be an effective tool for church leaders to guide their congregations in the revitalization process.

SECTION 1: THE PROBLEM

Introduction

Today, there are numerous denominations within Christianity in the United States. Baptists in the U.S., numbering 28 million adherents in over 95,000 congregations, are the largest Protestant denomination in the nation.¹ There is a Baptist congregation in not only every state, but every county within the United States. They are not only the largest denominational body within the United States, but the most diverse. They range in size from the Southern Baptist Convention with millions of members and tens of thousands of churches to the General Six Principle Baptists, which have only one remaining small church.² Today, each one of the Baptist denominations is experiencing decline in attendance, much like Mainline Protestant denominations.

While Christianity still remains the majority religion in the U.S., it is on the decline (78.4% in 2007 to 70.6% in 2014). Concurrently the “Nones”—a group that consists of atheists, agnostics, and a group I found amusingly labeled as “nothing in particular”—have increased by nearly seven percentage points to make up 22.8% of the population.³

The religious landscape of America is changing at a rapid rate compared to previous years.

This isn’t just affecting the least-churched areas of the U.S. such as the Northeast and the Pacific Northwest. Churches are declining in the “Bible Belt” also. Churches all

¹ Albert W. Warden Jr., *The Twelve Baptist Tribes in the USA: A Historical and Statistical Analysis* (Nashville, TN: Fields Publishing Inc., 2007), 11.

² Albert W. Warden Jr., *The Baptist Style for a New Century: Doing Diversity Baptist Style: Major Variations* (Brentwood, TN: Baptist History and Heritage Society and the William H. Whitsitt Baptist Heritage Society, 2001), 1.

³ Chris Cox, “The Decline of the American Church, Boy Meets World,” Next Sunday, May 14, 2015, accessed May 14, 2015, <http://www.nextsunday.com/the-decline-of-the-american-church-boy-meets-world-me/>.

over the United States are dying. “Every year more than 4,000 churches close their doors compared to just over 1,000 new church starts.”⁴ The church is losing ground each year, despite the new church plants emerging around the United States. Even people who previously have been committed to church are leaving, never to return. Recent studies have called these former church members “The Dones.”⁵ What is causing the mass exodus from established churches in the United States? Their Causes are numerous.

This decline in attendance is not something new. Many denominations have been experiencing decline since the mid- to late 1960s. Roozen and Hoge write, “Attendance data by denomination from 1966 to 1975 shows recent declines are not characteristic of all denominations. Baptist attendance over this period shows no change, but decreases are found among Methodist, Lutherans, Presbyterians, and Episcopalians.”⁶

Now Moderate Baptists are also considered a declining denomination. There are massive church buildings all across America that have difficulty paying their electric bills and keeping up with building repairs due to lack of funding because of declining attendance.

The attitude of commitment towards the church is shifting. Today, the church is just one among many interesting and attractive options in our world. With the mobilization of people and more discretionary income available to them, churches are in competition with the many recreational and attraction-based industries of our society.

⁴ Jimmy Dorrell, *Dead Church Walking: Giving Life to the Church That Is Dying to Survive* (Colorado Springs: IVP Books, 2011), xi.

⁵ Thom Schultz, “The Rise of the Dones,” Holy Soup, November 12, 2014, accessed November 14, 2014, <http://holysoup.com/2014/11/12/the-rise-of-the-dones/>.

⁶ Dean R. Roozen and David A. Hoge, eds. *Understanding Church Growth and Decline, 1950-1978* (New York: Pilgrim Press, 1979), 26.

Globalization has transformed how people interact with the world, and technology has changed the way we interact with culture.⁷

Numerous social forces have influenced generations of churchgoers. The diversity of ethnic backgrounds and the religious landscape of the country has changed tremendously and continues to change, which makes setting aside a specific day for sacred religious practices obsolete. This allows other activities such as sports, recreational activities, work and other events to infringe upon Sunday, which in turn affects attendance of church members. The changing economy over the last 50 years to include increasingly more shift labor makes regular Sunday morning attendance a challenge for many.⁸ The televangelist and clergy sex abuse scandals have caused a lack of respect for and distrust towards clergy and the institutional church. Churches also tend to react to the culture today instead of influencing the culture like the Church has done in the past. Rood says,

The church needs to find a new role in contemporary Western culture. In our post-modern, post-Christian, post-denominational Western world, churches find themselves post-relevant. Many view the church as no longer having a defining voice of morality, truth, or absolutes. It is seen as an antiquated community with irrelevant ideas and practices, existing only for the benefit of its own members.⁹

People long for the spiritual; they just don't seem to find what they are longing for in the institutional Church. The questions that plague many religious leaders today are: Can the Church turn this decline around? Can a church, having experienced decline,

⁷ Lars Rood, "Where Are the Twenty-Year-Olds? Tool for the Church to Connect and Retain a Generation" (MDIV diss., George Fox Evangelical Seminary, 2008), 8-9.

⁸ Josh Packard, Ph.D., and Ashleigh Hope, *Church Refugees: Sociologists Reveal Why People Are Done with Church but Not Their Faith* (Loveland, CO: Group Publishing, 2015), 13.

⁹ Rood, 8.

be revived? If so, what are some of the ways to transform these declining giants into life-giving structures again? Where do we start in the journey?

One of the major problems causing this exodus is that churches are losing sight of the Great Commission given in Matthew 28.

Then the eleven disciples went to Galilee, to the mountain where Jesus had told them to go. When they saw him, they worshiped him; but some doubted. Then Jesus came to them and said, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore 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. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.”¹⁰

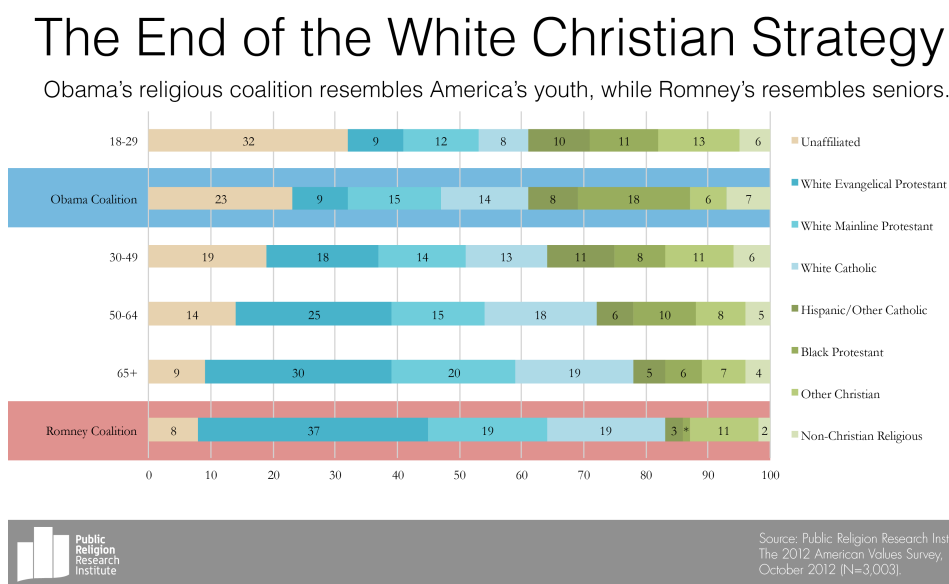
This is an important command to the church because it was a part of Jesus’ parting words to those he loved before he ascended to the Father in heaven, and there are very similar words in Acts 1:8. When churches lose sight of this command, they tend to become inwardly focused. When a church becomes focused internally instead of externally, it becomes guarded; the church becomes overprotective of programming, structures, and “sacred cows.” They become more concerned with the preferences and needs of the members than with spreading the “good news” to others. When the church focuses on its members internally, it forgets one of its primary functions: ministering to those outside of the church walls and to the community of which it is a part.

These are interesting but exciting times in the life of the church. The Public Religion Research Institute published a nested graph called “The End of a White Christian Strategy” that struck fear into the hearts of many white Protestant pastors. This was a graph to show how the vote was broken down in the election process of Barack Obama versus Mitt Romney. This graph has some telling information for Protestant

¹⁰ Matt. 28:16-20.

churches, especially white Protestant churches. The graph shows that the percentage of Christians decreases as each age category goes down. It also shows the “Unaffiliated,” those who claim no religious identity, rises as age goes down. One can see this information in Figure 1, below.¹¹

Figure 1: The End of the White Christian Strategy



Many people see this as a threat to the future church, but it could show a great opportunity for evangelism. The world is a different place since Martin Luther stated: “To gather with God’s people in united adoration of the Father is as necessary to the Christian life as prayer.”¹² People’s view about church continues to change.

The culture is changing more rapidly now than it had prior to World War II and the Church has had a hard time keeping up with these changes. Sometimes walking into a church today it is like stepping into a time machine and going back to the 1950s. Many

¹¹ “The End of a White Christian Strategy,” Public Religion Research Institute, November 12, 2012, accessed September 28, 2014, <http://publicreligion.org/research/graphic-of-the-week/the-end-of-the-white-christian-strategy/>.

¹² Martin Luther, “Short Quotes by Martin Luther,” Praying the Gospels, accessed October 12, 2014, <http://www.prayingthegospels.com/martin-luther-quotes-2/short-quotes-martin-luther/>.

churches look exactly like they did then, even though more than six decades have passed. Churches have also been slow to embrace the technology that people are accustomed to using in their daily lives. Some churches are still using fax machines instead of email, or mailing out newsletters instead of utilizing the Internet, websites, and apps. Churches are getting so caught up in guarding or protecting the past that they are not able to be present or able to look toward the future. Mann tells of many cultural trends that have contributed to the decline in church membership as well:

After World War II, three enormous changes in American society converged: the baby boom, the emergence of the “automobile suburbs,” and the Great Migration of African-Americans into the northern cities (a shift that had been in progress since the beginning of the 20th century). The suburban population, mainly white, doubled between 1950 and 1970. During that same period, the total population of the United States increased by one-third—a net gain of about 50 million people.¹³

During this population boom, many mainline denominations experienced tremendous growth, which seems to have been short-lived. The population continued to rise after this, but church attendance began to decline. Something shifted in people’s thought processes beginning in the 1960s.

There were many events that began to shape the distrust of authority. The civil rights protests caused problems throughout the United States, especially in the South, and in turn shaped our society. These protests changed everything from service in the military to desegregation in schools. It was time for a change, but many people liked the way that things had been before. Numerous leaders were assassinated during these years, including John F. Kennedy and Martin Luther King, Jr. The U.S. fought in war, and had rumors of war, as well. There were hippies protesting the government and women fighting for equal

¹³ Alice Mann, *Can Our Church Live? Redeveloping Congregations in Decline* (Durham, NC: Alban Inst, 2000), 14.

rights. President Nixon was involved in the Watergate scandal and had to resign. The decade also led America to new heights. “On July 20, 1969, with hundreds of millions of television viewers watching around the world, Neil Armstrong became the first human to walk on the surface of the moon.”¹⁴ This was the decade of change, and it was also the decade that the Church started to experience decline.

Innocence was lost, people didn’t trust the government, and that seemed to trickle over to a lack of trust in religious authorities as well. The decline began in the 1960s and, with very few exceptions, decline continues today among all Protestant denominations. “By 1990 these denominations had lost between one-fifth and one-third of the membership they claimed in 1965 and the proportion of Americans affiliated with them had reached a twentieth-century low.”¹⁵ There have been numerous studies done on the fact that churches have declined in attendance and membership, but no definite conclusions have been drawn. The decline seems to be Caused by a combination of factors that may be external or internal to the church.

However, the decline could also be due to the lack of commitment to the religious structure from the individual person. This lack of commitment could be Caused by the fall of the nuclear family. Today, one-third of American children, a total of 15 million, are being raised without a father. Nearly five million more children live without a

¹⁴ “Decades of Change 1960-1980,” II P Digital, April 5, 2008, accessed December 12, 2013, <http://iipdigital.usembassy.gov/st/english/publication/2008/04/20080407123655eaifas0.7868769.html#axzz2nJmo8Hxv>

¹⁵ Benton Johnson, Dean Hoge, and Donald Luidens, “Mainline Churches: The Real Reason for Decline,” First Things, March, 1993, accessed December 2, 2013, <http://www.firstthings.com/article/1993/03/001-mainline-churches-the-real-reason-for-decline>.

mother.¹⁶ In the home today—if it is a two-parent family—usually both parents work, and there is not much discussion about religious matters in the home. For society to be successful, children need both parents in their lives, and parents need to be vocal and discuss religious matters with their children. Vincent DiCaro, vice president of the National Fatherhood Initiative, blames this trend for many of society’s ills. He claims the way to deal with poverty, drugs, crime, and other hot-button cultural issues are to strengthen the two-parent family. Deal with absent fathers, he says, and the rest follows.¹⁷ Parents as well as the church need to continue to share the stories of Christ and speak of the truths of the Bible to children.

Life Cycles

In 2013, 83.8 percent of U.S. households reported computer ownership, with 78.5 percent of all households having a desktop or laptop computer, and 63.6 percent having a handheld computer.¹⁸ Computers are productive tools most people use on a regular basis. When a computer starts getting pop-up ads, or its processing speed slows down, it could indicate that the computer is infected with a virus. When it takes a more than a minute to load the home screen after turning on the computer, this can be a sign of a hard drive corruption. When a computer freezes while trying to accomplish a task, this is usually a sign that a disk clean up or defragmentation is needed. These all serve as warning signs to a more serious issue that will come if they are not addressed.

¹⁶ Kirsten Anderson, “The Number of U.S. Children Living in Single-Parent Homes Has Nearly Doubled in 50 Years: Census Data,” Life Site News, January 4, 2013, accessed June 11, 2015, <https://www.lifesitenews.com/news/the-number-of-children-living-in-single-parent-homes-has-nearly-doubled-in>.

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ Thom File and Camille Ryan, “Computer and Internet Use in the U.S.: 2013,” Census.gov, November, 2014, accessed October 13, 2015, <https://www.census.gov/history/pdf/acs-internet2013.pdf>.

Likewise, “the Human body gives many advanced warning signs of disease. There is a sudden pain, blurred vision, the upset stomach, the tiny lump.”¹⁹ Just like people, or computers, churches also have warning signs when illness is about to occur. It is important to act at the onset of these signs to prevent major damage or death.

Management experts Peter Lorange and Robert T. Nelson list some of the “early warning signs” for large corporations, and these may be applied to churches and Christian organizations: excess personnel, tolerance of incompetence, cumbersome administrative procedures, disproportionate staff power, replacement of substance with form, scarcity of goals and decision benchmarks, fear of embarrassment and conflict, loss of effective communication, and outdated organizational structure.²⁰

These same symptoms are likely to be prevalent in a church that is experiencing decline. Churches should be looking for any signals of decline in their organization so they can address the problem before it goes too far. “The unique danger to Christian Organizations is that many of the warning signs are ignored because of misdirected applications of spiritual virtues. Needed accountability and confrontation are avoided because people fear that they will appear to be unloving, unforgiving, unkind, or impatient.”²¹ Our society is so politically correct today that many people have lost the backbone to address issues when they come up in religious institutions and churches.

The church is characterized in the New Testament as a living organism, designed to function very much like the human body with its intricate interrelationship of many

¹⁹ Leith Anderson, *Dying for Change* (Minneapolis, MN: Bethany House Publishers, 1998), 158.

²⁰ Peter Lorange and Robert T. Nelson, “How to Recognize—And Avoid—Organizational Decline,” *Sloan Management Review* (Spring 1987): 43-45, quoted in Leith Anderson, *Dying for Change* (Minneapolis, MN: Bethany House Publishers, 1998), 158.

²¹ Anderson, 160.

parts and functions.²² As a living organism, it goes through a life cycle just like any other living organism. Steve Ayers, pastor at Hillvue Heights in Bowling Green, Kentucky, knows this very well. He began preaching at a church that was almost non-existent in attendance and has revitalized it to be a thriving 4,000-plus member church in Kentucky. He did a lot of symbolic rituals to show the people they were starting over and creating something new. One of those rituals was burning the original bylaws. Ayers felt like this was a way to show a clear visual of the past being let go and something new rising out of the ashes. He began the transition process immediately upon being voted in as pastor of Hillvue. It has been very successful, with continual change and transition taking place. Ayers stated, “Sometimes there has to be a crucifixion before there can be a resurrection.”²³ This proved very successful for Ayers at Hillvue, and could be a great way to begin a revitalization process.

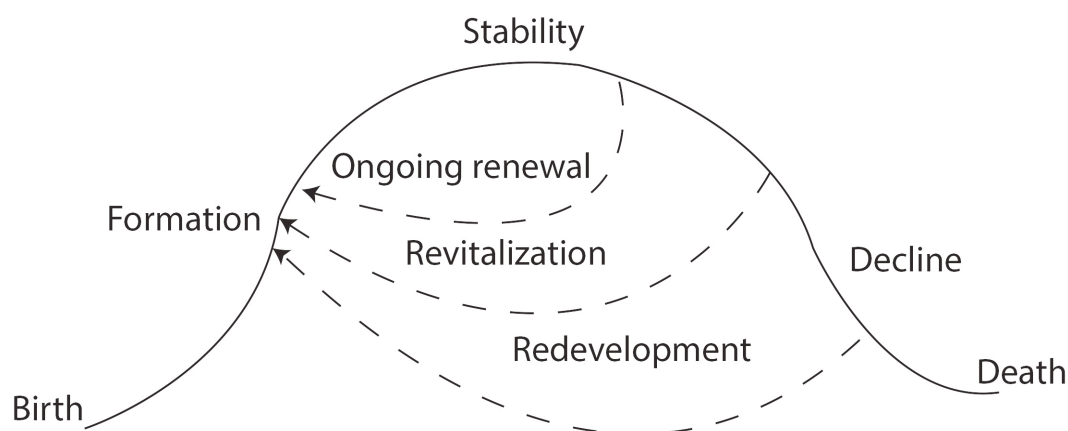
Are there options for a Church other than total death and a new beginning? Alice Mann seems to believe so. In her book *Can our Church Live?*, Mann discusses the life cycle of churches as a bell-shaped arc with birth, formation, stability, decline, and death as seen in Figure 2, below.²⁴

²² Robert Smith, “The Living Church,” Ray Stedman, August 11, 1996, accessed July 11, 2015, <http://www.raystedman.org/leadership/living.html>.

²³ Steve Ayers, phone conversation with author, Griffin, GA, November 25, 2013.

²⁴ Alice Mann, *Can Our Church Live? Redeveloping Congregations in Decline* (Durham, NC: Alban Inst, 2000), 9.

Figure 2: Renewal, Revitalization, Redevelopment



This chart shows loops back to the formation stage of three different points in the life cycle.

At each stage in the life cycle of the Church it can circle back to the formation stage and revitalize into a stable system. If a church can continually keep their focus and vision sharp and stable, they can recover from many illnesses. It seems many churches are too slow to change, which hastens their death.

According to the bell shaped arc, when a church reaches stability it should continually return to the formation stage, which results in renewal.²⁵ If they continue past the stability stage and go over the arc toward decline, the step is a little more drastic. A church would need to move into a revitalization phase so it can return to the formation process again. If a church has ignored all of the warning signals and continues on the arc past decline toward death, even more drastic measures are needed.²⁶ They should basically go back to the drawing board and redevelop, or experience a resurrection. A

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ Ibid.

church has to be able to dream again, or they will dwindle down to an eventual death. No church has ever begun with the intent to die. Churches begin with excitement and usually out of a need or desire to reach the community in which they begin. Sometimes beginnings are due to people getting angry with a previous church's leadership and a rift develops which in turn leads to a split, but these occasions are rare.

When a congregation forms, they usually have passionate reasons. Congregations want to reach a certain people and they answer the question, "Why will we exist?" Mann says,

The moment of birth gives way immediately to a period of formation, when the congregation's basic identity is established. During this time the congregation develops its own tacit answers to three powerful questions:

1. Who are we (especially at a faith level)? 2. What are we here for? 3. Who is our neighbor?²⁷

When a church begins to lose sight of these beginning questions, it experiences decline due to no longer knowing the answers. If the church is not willing to continually ask the question of why they exist, they will lose sight of their mission and the reason they began.

Sometimes people will go to extremes to prevent illness. Angelia Jolie had a double mastectomy to prevent breast cancer, even though she may have never contracted the disease. "Jolie revealed she underwent a preventive double mastectomy in February 2013 after doctors discovered she carried the 'faulty gene' BRCA1 and had roughly an 87 percent risk of contracting breast cancer."²⁸ Likewise, sometimes it is just as important for a congregation to go through a radical operation to prevent death.

²⁷ Mann, 3.

²⁸ Alyssa Toomey, "Angelina Jolie's Double Mastectomy: Surgeon Says Actress 'Waited to Find The Perfect Timing,'" E online, August 16, 2013, accessed November 12, 2013,

Americans expect excellence in the products they purchase and in the churches they attend. “The average American has become accustomed to quality: slick productions in television and movies; shiny clean malls; and businesses seeking to improve their product and services.”²⁹ Many people who grew up in church are accustomed to the church being behind the times and not up to date with culture, but those who did not attend church while growing up expect more. Even though churches cannot compete with the multi-billion-dollar entertainment industry, churches can embrace it and utilize it as a tool to reach people for Christ. Worship services can and should be exciting if they are about exhorting the name of Christ. White identified five elements of atmosphere in growing churches: celebrative, friendly, relaxed, positive, and expectant.³⁰ Most people are hungry for powerful and exciting worship. People are longing for an encounter with God. People want to know God is present and feel the power of God in their lives. Churches may not have a multi-billion-dollar budget, but they can make changes that will be positive influences within the church and in turn they will affect the culture around them. Even though churches should not be just entertainment, it is important for people to enjoy their experience at a church if they are expected to return.

Moderate Baptists

Baptists are different from most other denominations in that they do not have just one founder. Some scholars claim Baptists come from Zwingli’s Anabaptist Movement and other scholars disagree.

<http://www.eonline.com/news/449797/angelina-jolie-s-double-mastectomy-surgeon-says-actress-waited-to-find-the-perfect-timing>.

²⁹ Thom S. Rainer, *The Book of Church Growth* (Nashville, TN: B&H Academic, 1998), 228.

³⁰ James Emery White, *Opening the Front Door: Worship and Church Growth* (Nashville, TN: Convention Press, 1992), 19-20.

Scholars suggest varying degrees of Anabaptist influence on the earliest Baptist. Some believe the Anabaptists had a direct impact on those who founded the world's first Baptist congregation around 1609, evident in their views of the centrality of Christ, Christian discipleship, believer's baptism, congregational church government, and related doctrines.³¹

Other scholars feel that the influence of Anabaptists on Baptists wasn't as great. They believe there may be some common ground between the two groups, but many Baptists tried to put separation between themselves and the Anabaptist movement.³²

John Calvin and his theology of Calvinism had an impact on early Baptist life and it is making a comeback among more conservative or fundamental Baptists today. Baptists also can't deny the influence of Dutch theologian Jacob Arminius and his theology of Arminianism on Baptist life.

There are numerous theological differences among Baptists that contribute to their diversity.³³ This paper is specifically geared toward Moderate Baptist churches in decline. The following section will specifically examine how and why the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship (CBF), a center-to-left theological branch of Baptists, decided to break ties with the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC), comparing and contrasting some of the beliefs that differ between the SBC and the CBF.

Formation of the CBF

When the Southern Baptist Convention was formed in 1845, the founders issued the following statement: "We have constructed for our basis no new creed; acting in this

³¹ Bill J. Leonard, *Baptist Ways: A History* (Valley Forge, PA: Judson Pr., 2003), 12.

³² Leon McBeth, "Baptist Beginnings," Baptist History and Heritage Society, accessed December 30, 2015, <http://www.baptisthistory.org/baptistbeginnings.htm>.

³³ "Some Information On the Differences in Southern Baptist Life," Baptist Banner, accessed December 30, 2015, <http://www.baptistbanner.org/Homepage%20archive/Some%20Differences.htm>.

matter upon a Baptist aversion for all creeds but the Bible.”³⁴ Baptists that form the SBC and CBF traditionally have not been a creedal people. Creeds can be used dogmatically to show authority. If a person doesn’t hold to a certain set of beliefs then the creed could be used against them for disassociation. Baptists have followed “confessions of faith,” which is usually a consensus of beliefs, but they are not used to enforce conformity. The confession of faith for a large majority of churches in the SBC and CBF is the Baptist Faith and Message (BFM). If a church is a part of CBF, the moderate group, it tends to hold the 1963 BFM as their guide. If a church is a part of the SBC, the fundamentalist group, it tends to follow the guidelines of the 2000 BFM.

Dr. Walter Shurden, a Baptist historian and spokesman, suggests the SBC wasn’t formed because of theological issues or because of theological unity. He states: “The unifying reality was missionary, not doctrinal, in nature.”³⁵ It wasn’t an easy task to unify Baptists of the South under the umbrella of the SBC. Baptists are a diverse group and the Baptists of the South were made up of four different traditions. Each tradition, the Sandy Creek Baptist, the Charleston Baptist, the Georgia Baptist, and the Tennessee Baptist, had differences in theology and doctrine but came together under the SBC umbrella for functional reasons. Baptist Historian H. Leon McBeth echoed Shurden’s thoughts with this statement:

The famed Southern Baptist unity in the past has been more functional than theological. Southern Baptists have banded together to minister in missions, evangelism, and Christian education. So long as they emphasize functional

³⁴ Rob James and Gary Leazer, eds., *The Takeover in the Southern Baptist Convention a Brief History* (Macon, GA: Baptists Today, 1994), 2.

³⁵ Walter B. Shurden, *The Southern Baptist Synthesis: Is It Cracking?* (Brentwood, TN: Baptist History and Heritage Society, 1981), 7-8.

ministry, the “rope of sand,” as one called it, holds; when they switch from function to doctrine, unity is threatened.³⁶

Unfortunately, this view has changed with time. The SBC had a very wide net for many years because of the belief in church autonomy. This is a principle that the Baptist faith was founded upon and many Baptists today still believe is very important. Basically, autonomy means that the local church governs itself without any outside control from another body or individuals other than the authority of Jesus Christ. That is why some Baptist churches ordain women pastors and have women deacons while others do not. Within Baptist churches, there are differing views on scripture and a wide spectrum of thought on homosexuality. The SBC was at one time a loose-knit group of churches working together with some common goals. Differences in theology did not matter as long as Jesus was their authority.

In 1979, there were a few Baptist leaders who began working behind the scenes to change this loose-knit group.³⁷ Paige Patterson and Judge Pressler wanted to take the SBC back to its historical values. This takeover became known as the Fundamentalist Takeover.³⁸ By 1988, there was no place for Moderates in the SBC because its leaders held an opposite view. In February 1988, four SBC presidents who had been elected by the takeover movement from 1979 to 1987 declared, in a formal statement, their commitment to “doctrinal unity in functional diversity.”³⁹ These leaders were declaring that strict doctrinal unity was more important than cooperating with others in mission and

³⁶ H. Leon McBeth, *The Baptist Heritage* (Nashville, TN: Broadman Press, 1987), 685.

³⁷ Rob James et al., *The Fundamentalist Takeover in the Southern Baptist Convention a Brief History*, 4th ed. (Washington: Wilkes Publishing Company, 2006), 4.

³⁸ Ibid.

³⁹ Ibid., 22.

functional efforts. This collision of visions between Moderates and fundamentalists for control of the SBC ended up causing many churches to look for other opportunities to continue partnerships in accomplishing common goals and functions.

This fundamentalist takeover of the SBC ostracized numerous Moderates who considered themselves conservatives. To them this felt like the Israelites wandering in the desert. In the years between 1979 and 1989, many Moderates felt like the pendulum would swing back left, or at least to the middle instead of far right. After ten years, the takeover had already affected every major board within the SBC.⁴⁰ There were no Moderates left in leadership positions, and many of the moderate personnel of the International and North American Mission Boards were forced to retire.⁴¹ Each of the SBC Seminaries “cleaned house” from the President down throughout the faculty. Any beliefs that did not match the fundamentalist theology were not tolerated among the SBC.

In 1989 and 1990, Daniel Vestal, a moderate representative, was nominated for President of the SBC. After back-to-back losses to fundamentalist nominees, Vestal called upon Moderates to meet and explore what their options for the future would be. This meeting took place August 23-25, 1990, in Atlanta, Georgia. Vestal was expecting a few hundred representatives to show up for the meeting, but more than 3,000 people arrived. Vestal opened the meeting with these words: “We’re here to help, not hurt; to heal, not wound; to unify, not divide; to focus on the future, not the past. We’re here to encourage each other, learn from each other, pray for each other and listen to the voice of

⁴⁰ Ibid., 42.

⁴¹ Ibid., 42-43.

God through each other.”⁴² Vestal was trying to heal the hurt many Moderate Baptists were feeling. They felt like the SBC had been stolen from them, and there was a lot of emotional baggage involved in this move from the SBC among Moderate Baptists.

On May 9, 1991, the CBF was officially born when 6,000 Moderate Baptists, representing 1,556 churches in 39 states, attended the first General Assembly in Atlanta, Georgia.⁴³ There has been no looking back for the CBF since it began. They put their leadership structure in place at the first meeting and have been adding churches to their fellowship through the years. As of today, the national organization has over 1,800 churches and thousands of individuals, along with 18 state and regional organizations, more than 750 endorsed chaplains and pastoral counselors, nearly 50 ministry partners—including partnerships with 14 seminaries and theology schools—and 125 field personnel serving in more than 30 countries around the world.⁴⁴ The CBF does not consider itself a denomination and its ecumenical approach allows cooperation with many different organizations that can provide resources and services to its cooperating churches. The CBF began under negative circumstances. It has become a great organization, but many of the older pastors and members still reminisce about the glory days of yesteryear when everyone worked together in the SBC. When an organization is living and organic it continues to change and it looks toward the future. Many times the CBF and its churches continue to look toward the past, or live in the past, which causes them to experience

⁴² Daniel Vestal, “The History of the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship,” in *The Struggle for the Soul of the SBC*, ed. Walter B. Shurden (Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 1993), 260.

⁴³ Pamela R. Durso, *A Short History of the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship Movement* (Brentwood, TN: Baptist History and Heritage Society, 2006), 4.

⁴⁴ “About-Cooperative Baptist Fellowship,” Cooperative Baptist Fellowship, accessed April 2, 2015, <http://www.cbf.net/identity/about-us/>.

decline. The CBF has made great strides as an organization, but often its churches seem to look down their bureaucratic noses on others who do not practice religion the way they believe religion should be practiced. The infighting among denominations over worship style and seemingly minute differences in theology continues to cause harm to the church and hasten its decline.⁴⁵

The church has continued to focus on programing through the years instead of relationships. Relationships build community and community is very important in the lives of people. Even though society is individualistic, people want to feel connected and as if they belong to one another. If churches choose to nurture this attribute they can be a natural conduit for community. Culture has changed—everything has changed in the last fifty years—but many churches are doing the same thing they did then, and are asking the question, “Why are we not growing? It worked before.”

Culture has changed, even if the church has not, and many people have become disenchanted with the same old church programs, Sunday School, revivals, pipe organs, and Wednesday Night prayer meetings. No matter how we try to dress these habits up with a few cosmetic changes, or paint the sanctuary and hang up some hip new banners, we will fail to reach a growing segment of the population.⁴⁶

Many times Moderate Baptists get stuck in the mentality of “that’s the way we have always done it.” This is detrimental to the life of the church because it creates a backlog of irrelevant programing. If there is not a purpose behind a program that is edifying to God then there is no reason for the church to continue the program.

⁴⁵ Thom Rainer, “Eight Reasons People Are Leaving Denominational Churches for Non-Denominational Churches,” Thom S. Rainer, April 22, 2015, accessed October 11, 2015, <http://thomrainer.com/2015/04/eight-reasons-people-are-leaving-denominational-churches-for-non-denominational-churches/>.

⁴⁶ Jimmy Dorrell, *Dead Church Walking: Giving Life to the Church That Is Dying to Survive* (Colorado Springs: IVP Books, 2011), 124.

Many churches are looking for a gimmick to attract people to worship. Worship is the pinnacle of what most churches participate in together. Most of the resources and budget go to make the worship experience extraordinary, keep the building and grounds in good working order, and to pastoral salaries. Many churches in decline are having to make choices financially to stay in operation, instead of being able to dream dreams and have renewed visions about reaching people outside of the church.⁴⁷ They are having to cut staff and work on a shoestring budget because they are haunted by their past success and built monstrosities for buildings they are continually having to maintain. There are many churches that are on life support; they may not be dead yet, but are in serious decline.

The problem with this situation is the sickness in church is a gradual process and the church members may not recognize the symptoms before it is too late. Usually there is one of two reactions by the church. Either they make minimal changes that won't really help to transform their health or they continue to ignore the problem.⁴⁸ There is no longer any time to waste among Moderate Baptist churches. It is time for the focus to shift away from within the church and the needs and desires of its members. There is need for a major overhaul, a change of focus to the external. Moderate churches can no longer have the attitude of "people will come" to the church; instead, they should focus on where people are. This entails a change of perspective toward those outside of the church, to

⁴⁷ Thom Schultz, "The Shocking Truth about Church Budgets," Holy Soup, August 6, 2013, accessed September 9, 2015, <http://holysoup.com/2013/08/06/the-shocking-truth-of-church-budgets/>.

⁴⁸ Dorrell, 130.

those who are referred to as the Nones and the Dones.⁴⁹ Moderate Baptists can't continue to do things the same way as always or churches will continue to decline.

It is time to reach local communities again, to see the needs within the churches' community and help to minister to and meet those needs. Church is a place where community is fostered and people do life with one another in love and support, a place where open dialogue about theology takes place and words are put into action. The problem of decline in the Moderate Baptist church is complex and multifaceted. It is time for the church to refocus and revitalize.

⁴⁹ Jeff Brumley, "You Have Met the 'Nones.' Now Meet the 'Dones,'" Baptist News Global, November 8, 2014, accessed September 11, 2015, <https://baptistnews.com/culture/item/29535-new-term-recognizes-christians-who-are-simply-done-with-church>.

SECTION 2: OTHER SOLUTIONS

There have been numerous attempts through the years to revitalize churches. A solution can be successful for a church but that doesn't mean it will be successful for all churches. Some churches have adopted programming or models that were being implemented by a church that was experiencing growth. The church would try to apply those generic principles to their cultural setting, which usually ended in disaster.¹ A model that works in a megachurch in California usually will not work in a small church in rural Georgia. Some of the principles may cross over, but there are no cookie-cutter models that will work church-wide. Leaders in megachurches have made millions of dollars on claims of "do what we do and experience the same results" in their bestseller books.²

Some church leaders believe a "megachurch" is the only way to reach a community, and others feel like small churches that meet in homes are the best way. Some leaders promote worship geared toward "the seeker," or non-Christians looking for God, while others feel it is best to design worship around equipping those who are believers within the church.³ Some churches feel like marketing is very important. They would suggest the church have sleek brochures, graphics, mission statements, and campaigns to get the name of their church in the community, while others do little to no

¹ Rick Warren, *Purpose Driven Church: Growth Without Compromising Your Message and Mission* (Grand Rapids: MI: Zondervan, 1995), 64.

² Jaweed Kaleem, "Best Paid Pastors Make Hundreds of Thousands to Millions of Dollars Annually," Huffington Post, January 19, 2012, accessed November 11, 2015, http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2012/01/19/best-paid-pastors_n_1214043.html.

³ A. Spreeman, "Is Church for Seekers or Saints," Berea Research, September 16, 2015, accessed September 20, 2015, <http://berearesearch.org/is-church-for-seekers-or-saints/>.

marketing and still experience growth. Many churches have a target person in mind that they are trying to reach, while others intend to reach everyone and no one specific.⁴ Churches have set about revitalizing their bodies in numerous ways, with varying amounts of success.

Church Growth Movement

One of the movements that began to combat decline in churches was the Church Growth Movement. The Church Growth Movement within the U.S. began around 1955 with a book written by Donald McGavran called *The Bridges of God*.⁵ This book chronicled his experience in India as a missionary and led him to study what caused churches to grow and what were hindrances to its growth in India. He basically came up with a best practices approach to church growth, and churches and denominations began to implement his strategies within the U.S. and in global missions. The explosive growth of suburban megachurches throughout the '80s and '90s is arguably another offshoot of its effect.⁶ McGavran's study of mass movements affected the way churches looked at evangelism. Peter Wagner, a well-known church growth practitioner, believed people rarely made a decision to follow Christ alone. He felt if one person followed Christ it set off a chain reaction and if the circumstances were right numerous people—entire groups—would decide to follow Christ.⁷ Churches can examine the book of Acts and the early church to see where thousands were added to the church daily (Acts 2:41, 2:47,

⁴ Warren, 171.

⁵ Thom S. Rainer, *The Book of Church Growth* (Nashville, TN: B&H Academic, 1998), 33-34.

⁶ Matthew McAfee and Barry Raper, "Donald McGavran and the Church Growth Movement," The Helwys Society Forum, accessed September 17, 2015, <http://www.helwysocietyforum.com/?p=4621>.

⁷ C. Peter Wagner et al., *Church Growth: State of the Art* (Wheaton, IL: Tyndale House Pub, 1986), 22.

5:14). This idea has also led to some congregational manipulation in the past and present. Many evangelist and megachurches have “counselors” placed throughout the audience, and at the time of invitation these counselors move to the altar. When this movement happens, it can trigger emotions within those in the congregation causing them to move forward, much like the mass numbers that move at a Billy Graham crusade.⁸

The major danger of the Church Growth Movement was to get caught up in numbers as the only way to gauge church health. It is imperative we understand that growth statistics are just one indicator of a healthy church. True success is being obedient to what God has called us to do and realizing that although we are responsible to serve, we are not responsible for the results.⁹

The numbers game seems to have carried over from the Church Growth Movement and affects numerous churches today. Numbers are important because churches need people in the pews to pay the bills, but people’s lives being transformed to the likeness of Christ is of the utmost importance. Emphasizing numbers alone placed a lot of weight on using the right methods, strategies, and different modes to attract people. Wagner urged churches to discard ineffective strategies and to be pragmatic in their methods.¹⁰ Wagner suggests that the source of one’s church growth method is threefold: cultural, historical, and theological. He promotes this approach as a “soft” scientific method involving the mining of sociological data gathered by closely observing churches

⁸ Carey Hardy, “A Close Look at Invitations and Altar Calls,” Bible Bulletin Board, accessed September 12, 2015, <http://www.biblebb.com/files/MAC/SC03-1050CDNotes.htm>.

⁹ Richard Krejcir, “Statistics and Reasons for Church Decline,” Church Leadership, accessed November 12, 2015, <http://www.churchleadership.org/apps/articles/default.asp?articleid=42346&columnid=4545>.

¹⁰ Wagner et al., 75.

and their contexts.¹¹ The idea behind this movement is any church can grow if they study church growth, talk about it, pray about it, and follow the correct method. It is easy to lose sight of the fact that disciple making is a spiritual work and isn't guaranteed just because one uses certain programming or methods. However, Baptists have been primarily a church built upon programming to attract and make disciples, many times applying a certain method or program blindly to the church because it worked in another context.

New Church Plants

Another way the problem of decline in churches is being addressed is through new church plants. "Not only have denominations created departments that financially support church planting, the church planters have the blessings of the denomination's leadership, which often helps them gain access to established local churches to seek financial sponsorship."¹² The idea behind this phenomenon is rather than spend the money and energy to revitalize a congregation that is in decline, begin a new work. A major plus of beginning the new work is the church will not have to be strapped financially due to aging buildings and structures which can allow financial freedom to dream about reaching those where the church is planted. New church plants have to be careful not to become strapped financially due to paying high rents and reaching a younger population who don't have as much means of supporting the church via tithes. Another reason denominations choose to plant churches is the enormous difficulty in revitalizing a struggling church. There are usually numerous reasons why a church is in

¹¹ Ibid., 75-76.

¹² Ed Stetzer, "Rethinking Church Plant Funding," Christianity Today, January 26, 2015, accessed April 12, 2015, <http://www.christianitytoday.com/edstetzer/2015/january/rethinking-church-plant-funding.html>.

decline and some of those traditions may be important to those who are currently in the pew therefore making them uninterested in changing their perspective. This can make needed change to reverse decline long and treacherous. Wagner said, “Remember this simple fact: It’s easier to have babies than to raise the dead! Not that all existing churches are dead, or even that most of them are. Most can and should be brought to life by the power of the Holy Spirit. Still the most exciting part of the hospital is the maternity ward.”¹³ The church planting movement came out of the Church Growth Movement that was begun by McGavran. This movement has been seen as a vital way to wake up the “sleeping giant” called church. Church planting is being used as a primary evangelistic tool among many denominations.

Perhaps most important, studies show a consistent difference between old and new churches. George Hunter of Asbury Theological Seminary says, “Churches after 15 years typically plateau. After 35 years, they typically can’t even replace those [members] they lose. New congregations reach a lot more pre-Christian people.” Those who study churches say established congregations tend to turn inward, no matter how hard they try to resist the trend. But new churches must look outward to survive. Richard Harris, vice president of NAMB’s church-planting group, says that established SBC churches report 3.4 baptisms per 100 resident members, whereas new churches average 11.7. It’s not hard to conclude that more new churches would lead more people to Christ.¹⁴

Many church planting groups such as ARC and Acts 29 will help church planters begin the process of planting a church. They will provide practical training and a best practices approach that has worked for numerous of their church plants. They will also contribute to the new church financially for the purpose of beginning a new work if the church becomes a member of their association. These groups take starting new churches

¹³ C. Peter Wagner, *Church Planting for a Greater Harvest: a Comprehensive Guide* (Ventura, CA: Wipf & Stock Pub, 2010), 25.

¹⁴ Tim Stafford, “Go and Plant Churches of All Peoples,” *Christianity Today*, September 27, 2007, accessed September 17, 2015, <http://www.christianitytoday.com/ct/2007/september/36.68.html>.

seriously and want church planting to be a part of the new churches' DNA. They expect that at least 10 percent of every offering, including a church's first offering, will go toward church planting.¹⁵ Church plants tend to be homogenous groups made up of niche audiences. This seems to be a strange approach since our society is so ethnically diversified, but it seems to work for many church plants. People tend to be comfortable worshiping with others who are similar to them socially and economically, and have similar educational backgrounds. Church plants are simpler in structure and can usually function in a more streamlined manner than older established churches.¹⁶ Church plants that are simple in structure seem to be a good fit for our complex and busy society.

The Emergent Church Movement

Emergent movement theologian Tony Jones defines the emergent church as the “specifically new forms of church life rising from the modern, American church of the twentieth century.”¹⁷ The emergent movement began as a new model to reach people in a postmodern culture. Dan Kimball, author of *The Emerging Church: Vintage Christianity for New Generations*, explains that the Emerging Church is a mindset that measures its success missionally.¹⁸ He claims that the Emerging Church is hard to define and is not a model to follow, but that it is more of an attitude or conversation that produces disciples

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ Roger N McNamara and Ken Davis, *The Y-b-h Handbook of Church Planting (Yes, but How?)* (Grand Rapids, MI: Xulon Press, 2005), 109.

¹⁷ Tony Jones, *The New Christians: Dispatches from the Emergent Frontier* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2009), xix.

¹⁸ Dan Kimball, *The Emerging Church: Vintage Christianity for New Generations* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan/Youth Specialties, 2003), 14.

who will transform the church and culture.¹⁹ The Emerging Church movement began by Christians wanting to rethink Christianity; instead of doing program-driven church in a modern context, they were trying to figure out ways to speak to the postmodern culture.

In the twenty-first century, society finds itself in the postmodern, or even post-Christian, era in the United States.²⁰ Religion has been exchanged for spirituality and relative truth. “In our global, pluralistic atmosphere, everything is a matter of personal preference.”²¹ Religion has become an option and is no longer an integral part of people’s lives. People have become religiously and biblically illiterate. “A recent LifeWay Research study found only 45 percent of those who regularly attend church read the Bible more than once a week. Over 40 percent of the people attending read their Bible occasionally, maybe once or twice a month. Almost 1 in 5 churchgoers say they never read the Bible—essentially the same number who read it every day.”²² God has become made in man’s image because man doesn’t know what God’s image is any longer. God is whatever works for the individual.

The two major models of church from the modern era—Traditional and Contemporary—have a hard time meeting the needs of millennials and this postmodern generation. The emergent church was started to reach this segment of society.²³ The people the Church reached with its “seeker sensitive” approach in the modern era did not

¹⁹ Ibid., 14.

²⁰ Becky Garrison, *Starting from Zero with \$0: Building Mission-Shaped Ministries on a Shoestring* (New York: Seabury Books, 2010), 1.

²¹ Ibid., 59.

²² Ed Stetzer, “The Epidemic of Bible Illiteracy in Our Churches,” Pastors.com, July 20, 2015, accessed August 4, 2015, <http://pastors.com/the-epidemic-of-bible-illiteracy-in-our-churches/>.

²³ Jimmy Long, *Emerging Hope: A Strategy for Reaching the Postmodern Generations* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Connect, 2004), 54.

work on those of the postmodern world. The emergent church wanted to rethink Christianity to make it more than just a stylistic fad, but to help it become a lifestyle. Emerging Churches were directing people to authenticity and to community, going back to the “roots” of Christianity or to “vintage Christianity” practices.²⁴ The emergent church became a safe place for people to ask questions and seek answers in community. But what really is the Emerging Church? Eddie Gibbs and Ryan Bolger explain the Emerging Church with nine statements in their book *Emerging Churches: Creating Christian Community in Postmodern Cultures*. The first three are core values and the others are common practices among the Emerging Church:

Emerging Churches are communities that practice the way of Jesus within postmodern cultures. This definition encompasses nine practices. Emerging Churches (1) identify with the life of Jesus, (2) transform the secular realm, and (3) live highly communal lives. Because of these three activities, they (4) welcome the stranger, (5) serve with generosity, (6) participate as producers, (7) create as created beings, (8) lead as a body, and (9) take part in spiritual activities.²⁵

This definition could be used to describe numerous contemporary churches around the nation, even though they may not identify as being a part of the Emerging Church movement. The movement has experienced success in exploring ways that the church can reach people today. Even among its critics, the Emerging Church has some great attributes that people are longing for. If a person disagrees with their theological stance they have to realize that the aspect of community within the emergent church, and their missional stance for reaching their community, is amazing.

²⁴ Del Birkey, *The House Church Book: Non Emerging New Testament Prototype* (Scottsdale, PA: Del Birkey, 2009), 9.

²⁵ Eddie Gibbs and Ryan K. Bolger, *Emerging Churches: Creating Christian Community in Postmodern Cultures* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2005), 44.

Simple Church

Contemporary churches usually are not as complex as traditional churches. Most contemporary churches have a strategic process that they follow. Rainer and Geiger explain simplicity of church this way:

A simple church is designed around a straightforward and strategic process that moves people through the stages of spiritual growth. The leadership and the church are clear about the process (clarity) and are committed to executing it. The process flows logically (movement) and is implemented in each area of the church (alignment). The church abandons everything that is not in the process (focus).²⁶

Most contemporary churches have a clear purpose statement. It is usually a simple statement that directs people towards a common goal. This fosters movement and creates focus. These are vital elements of a successful contemporary church. Traditional churches are complex in structure due to longevity of life. They have numerous programs, many times too many, which can be a struggle for the church to keep going. Since they are so complex, calendaring can be very complicated in a traditional church. Usually in a contemporary church there is a streamlined process for all of the ministries. Even though the ministries are different, they are looking forward and focused on the same end result.

People are drawn to simplicity because life is so complicated. “As the world is getting smaller and smaller (globalization through technology), things are getting more and more complex. In the midst of all of the noise, all of the rush, all of the change, all of the busyness, and all of the uncertainty, people long for simplicity.”²⁷ It seems that successful churches have a process designed to achieve spiritual growth. According to

²⁶ Thom S. Rainer and Eric Geiger, *Simple Church: Returning to God’s Process for Making Disciples* (Nashville, TN: B&H Books, 2011), 67-68.

²⁷ Ibid., 15.

Jason Lyle, the pastor of Open Range Church, contemporary churches continually try to move people to the next level in their relationship with Christ.²⁸ Open Range has a simple process. People usually enter their church through worship. After they have been attending a while, they are moved into a small group. After they have been in a small group they are placed into a ministry area to serve according to their spiritual gifts. This is the common practice at Eagles Way Church, and many of the other contemporary churches that were examined during the research process.²⁹ When a person is serving in a ministry or mission, it is the hope that they are more mature in their faith. A byproduct of maturity is a desire to serve and make a difference in others' lives for the name of Christ. It seems that traditional churches, which are struggling, do not have clear processes to achieve maturity in believers. Their programs are complex and cluttered.³⁰

The model of church that we find in Scripture is pretty simple. Scripture tells us in Acts 2:42: "They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer."³¹ The early church was a simple community of people that loved Christ and wanted to spread the good news about him to all people. They took Christ's commandments of loving God and loving others seriously. They were able to focus their efforts on devotion to Christ. Activity for God can be the greatest enemy of devotion to him; this is why we need to try and prune the activity branches, so God has

²⁸ Jason Lyle, interviewed by author, Griffin, GA, February 10, 2014.

²⁹ Will Doss, interviewed by author, Griffin, GA, March 11, 2014.

³⁰ Rainer and Geiger, 63.

³¹ Acts 2:42 NIV.

all of our time and attention.³² Sometimes it seems as if contemporary and traditional churches have lost sight of what Christ has told us to do as the most important commandment. A paraphrase of the Scripture found in Matthew 22 is to love God and to love others.³³ When a church loses sight of these two priorities found in Scripture they become complex and eventually will experience burnout and decline. Simple church is a practice that many established churches have been able to implement and a way that church plants have been able to attract people to their congregations.

Small Groups

Throughout the years, churches have had various types of small group ministries. One of the most popular small group Bible study ministries throughout numerous churches is Sunday School class. These types of small groups are more common in older established churches rather than new church starts. It is very common today for churches to have other forms of small group Bible studies that meet. Many groups do not meet on Sundays; they meet on various days and times throughout the week. Also, these groups don't necessarily meet at the church building. Many small groups meet in workplaces, homes, restaurants, coffee shops, parks, etc. The options are endless. Groups can be based on topics, interest, affinity, age, or other ways in which people connect with one another. Small groups can be one aspect that supports spiritual growth in churches.³⁴

³² David, Browning, *Deliberate Simplicity: How the Church Does More by Doing Less* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2009), 102.

³³ Matt. 22:37-40 NIV.

³⁴ Ed Stetzer, "Successful Discipleship in Small Groups," Christianity Today, November 3, 2014, accessed November 14, 2015, <http://www.smallgroups.com/articles/2014/successful-discipleship-in-small-groups.html>.

People stay at churches because of relationships.³⁵ A large, exciting worship gathering may initially attract people, but they will not stay connected to a church unless they have become connected to others. Logan wrote, “Interestingly some growth writers argue that the ‘front door’ of worship is already closing and the church of the coming decades will reach the un-churched through the side door of small groups.”³⁶ There are numerous doors for people to enter the church, but the best way is through a relationship. Small groups are more relational than a worship service. Small groups are also great for keeping up with people who are attending a church. Sometimes people can get lost in the shuffle as a church grows and small groups can help to attach them to the church and keep them connected. It is easier for one leader to keep in touch with eight to ten people rather than one person keeping up with one hundred or more people. If we are able to break that one hundred down into ten groups of ten, it is easier to notice when someone misses church and follow-up can happen as needed.

Small group leaders are extensions of the senior leadership within a church. When leaders “give away ministry” or equip impassioned people to lead, great things can take place. We can look at Jesus’ ministry as an example of how small groups can help a church grow. Jesus focused on eleven disciples. Those eleven disciples began the church. After Pentecost, the church exploded to over 3,000 people and it became too large for the eleven to handle, so they began to appoint deacons. Deacons were not a board of directors like they are in many churches today; they were people who carried on the daily

³⁵ Carey Lodge, “Leadership Conference 2014,” Christianity Today, May 6, 2014, accessed November 14, 2015, <http://www.christiantoday.com/article/htb.leadership.conference.2014.people.come.to.church.for.many.reasons.they.stay.for.one.friendship/37220.htm>.

³⁶ Robert E. Logan, *Beyond Church Growth* (Old Tappan, NJ: Revell, 1990), 66.

ministries of the church. This process continued as the apostles planted churches across Asia Minor.

For churches to be healthy, each person must participate. The Apostle Paul stated: “Just as a body, though one, has many parts, but all its many parts form one body, so it is with Christ. For we were all baptized by one Spirit so as to form one body whether Jews or Gentiles, slave or free, and we were all given the one Spirit to drink.”³⁷ The best way to connect each person to the body of Christ is through relationships with one another. A way for these relationships to happen is through small groups. Looking at the book of Acts it can be seen the church grew tremendously during this period of time. Acts 2:47 states, “And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved.”³⁸ What would have happened to the early church if it would not have shared the gospel through preaching and meeting in homes? If they had kept the good news to themselves, the movement of the church would not have grown. It probably would have shriveled and maybe even died. The church today faces a similar situation. Are small groups the only way to reach people for Christ? No, but they can be an effective way if the church is willing to look outside of its walls.

A group of people, meeting together weekly, can start to pray for a few non-Christian friends, knowing that they will want these friends to eventually join their small group and come to church. Sooner or later, if the group is serious, the prayers will start to work. The potential convert will be invited to the group and, surrounded by love, will respond with faith.³⁹

³⁷ 1 Cor. 12:12-13 NIV.

³⁸ Acts 2:47 NIV.

³⁹ Jeffrey Arnold, *The Big Book On Small Groups*, rev. ed. (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Connect, 2004), 170.

The culture today needs healthy relationships, and small groups can provide an avenue for this. When a person prays for someone they grow to love him or her. It changes the person praying and it changes the person who is being prayed for. Usually within a small group, relationships form where people feel wanted, needed, and cared for. Small groups can change lives. “Once word get out that lives are being changed, others will want to join in small groups and this leads to church growth.”⁴⁰ Small groups and Sunday School have been effective in the past at reaching people for Christ and sustaining growth in churches. It is still a viable tool today.

The Missional Church Model

There are many different concepts of and definitions for a Missional Church. Missional churches are churches that do more than a few mission trips or mission experiences every now and then. In a missional church, mission is the centerpiece of the church; everything within the church revolves around the mission that is found in Acts 1:8. “Mission means sending and is the central biblical theme describing God’s action in human history. This sending is embodied and lived out in the missional impulse. It is the outward movement rooted in God’s mission that compels the church to reach the lost.”⁴¹

The old attractional model of church doesn’t seem to work well with the millennials, unaffiliated, or Dones today. The attractional idea of having great music, gifted speaking, great programing, and great events, or being the greatest attraction in

⁴⁰ Jeffrey Arnold, *Starting Small Groups: Building Communities That Matter* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1997), 113.

⁴¹ Alan Hirsch with Darryn Altclass, *The Forgotten Ways Handbook: A Practical Guide for Developing Missional Churches* (Grand Rapids, MI: Brazos Press, 2009), 87-88.

town, isn't working as well today because our society for the most part is mobile.⁴²

People can go to other events by large corporations and in larger venues that churches cannot compete with due to budget restraints. It is hard for a church of 150 with a \$300,000 budget to compete with a corporate sponsor financial budget for large events. An option is to go back to the basics of what the church is called to do.

The missional church sends people out to be incarnational throughout the community. Just like Christ was the incarnation of God in the flesh, we are to be his incarnation to the world.

By living incarnationally we not only model the pattern of humility set up in the incarnation, but we also create space for mission to take place in organic ways. Mission becomes something that fits seamlessly into the ordinary rhythms of life, friendships, and community. Incarnational ministry essentially means taking the church to people rather than bringing people to the church.⁴³

The church can no longer have a "come to me" attitude; rather it has to have an attitude of go dwell among, and with, the culture in which it is planted. The church becomes a part of a person's lifestyle. A missional church isn't a place to go; it affects a person's being and affects a person holistically.

If cultural solidarity with the Palestinian communities of his day was a necessary aspect of Christ's mission, the same principle applies to us. Moreover the early Christians did not remain culturally static, but quickly translated the gospel out of the original language of the culture of Jesus, as the church was planted into non-Jewish cultures. The gospel can only be proclaimed in a culture, not at a culture.⁴⁴

⁴² Paul Williams, "Missional or Attractional—Who Cares?," *Christian Standard*, March 31, 2012, accessed November 10, 2014, <http://christianstandard.com/2012/03/missional-or-attractional—who-cares/>.

⁴³ Alan Hirsch with Darryn Altclass, *The Forgotten Ways Handbook: a Practical Guide for Developing Missional Churches* (Grand Rapids, MI: Brazos Press, 2009), 89.

⁴⁴ The Mission Shaped Working Group, *Mission Shaped Church: Church Planting and Fresh Expressions of Church in a Changing Context* (London: Church House Publishing, 2004), 87.

This has been a problem of the church for years. It has separated itself from the culture instead of emerging into and shaping the culture, and it seems as if the church has lost its voice in the culture today.

Culture today needs to know Christ and the church has the responsibility of doing whatever it needs to do to help people hear, see, and experience the gospel. Today people tend to rally around a cause or a step to take action. An example in recent years was the ALS Ice Bucket Challenge. People would take the challenge to dump ice or ice water on their heads and challenge others to do so. This raised awareness for ALS and people donated to the ALS Foundation to help fund research. “The viral phenomenon known as the ‘Ice Bucket Challenge’ not only raised awareness but also money for the ALS Association. More than \$15.5 million was raised in a month, compared to \$1.6 million during the same time-span last year.”⁴⁵ People get excited about contributing to a cause that will impact lives and make a difference.

The missional church movement is a way for the church to permeate the community and make an impact in the lives of people. God’s intention when man inhabited the Garden of Eden was for man to experience heaven on earth. God had a relationship with humans in the garden; he walked among them in the “cool of the day.”⁴⁶ However, man made a mistake and disobeyed God and allowed sin to enter the world, which damaged man’s relationship with God. God has been trying to restore that relationship and the kingdom on earth ever since. People play a part in that restoration by incarnating Christ unto the world.

⁴⁵ Bo Koltow, “What’s Impact of ‘Ice Bucket Challenge’ On ALS?,” 69 News WFMZ, August 9, 2014, accessed November 3, 2014, <http://www.wfmz.com/news/whats-impact-of-ice-bucket-challenge-on-als/27619180>.

⁴⁶ Gen. 3:8 NIV.

The people of God are chosen by him for the sake of the world. Their lives are given meaning and direction by God's call: he charges them to live for his glory and participate in his redemptive work. He gives them the task as his covenant partners, to mediate his blessing to the nations.⁴⁷

Churches are to be a blessing of God through its people unto the community.

Missional churches are more than just Sunday and Wednesday gatherings. They are communities of believers who are entrenched in making a difference in the lives of people by sharing their lives with others. They are churches that are impacting the world relationally through sitting around the table, breaking bread, sharing life together.

Missional churches are not afraid to take a risk; they engage the culture where it is currently.

Some missional church experiments in Europe are intriguing. Since most of Europe is post-Christian, it is interesting to see how churches in that area are utilizing the missional concept with success. Vintage Church located in the Paris, France area does missional church by incorporating the acronym BELLS. Each letter stands for an action reminder for the group to do in the community.

“B” is “to Bless.” Each person in the church tries to bless at least three people each week.” “E” is “to Eat.” They try to make an effort to eat with others, maybe a meal or a cup of coffee, three times a week. The first “L” is for “Learning.” It strives to be a learning community by sharing books, resources and scripture. The second “L” is “Listen.” They encourage each person in the church to take at least one hour of quiet time each week to focus and listen to God. “S” means “Sent.” Wherever they go they are mindful they are sent by God to be his agents.⁴⁸

⁴⁷ Michael W. Goheen, *A Light to the Nations: The Missional Church and the Biblical Story* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2011), 191.

⁴⁸ Ryan K. Bolger, ed., *The Gospel After Christendom: New Voices, New Cultures, New Expressions* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2012), 81.

This sounds like a community that people would love to be a part of. There are some internal focal elements but for the most part they are looking to those around them, and how they can make a difference for the gospel of Christ.

As we can see, there is no simple definition for the missional church. It seems to be a conglomeration of externally focused perspectives to further the gospel. This model has experienced success in helping churches to revitalize and find ways to reach the community in which the church resides.

SECTION 3: THE THESIS

Biblical Foundation for Revitalization

There is biblical evidence that a church can be revitalized through prayer and the work of the Holy Spirit. It can turn the bell arc curve of decline upside down and experience growth again. A common denominator in growing churches is that they have immersed themselves in prayer. They pray for their leadership, they pray for their members, they pray for the people in their community. Every decision the church makes is bathed in prayer. These churches are praying over everything from their vision to their decisions. Randy Maxwell in the book *If My People Pray*, says, “The early church did not grow because of programs or talents; they grew because of prayer and the Holy Spirit.”¹ “Too many church leaders look for programs to fix problems that are far beyond a single issue. As an illustration, an outreach program won’t work well if the real problem is bad preaching and boring music.”² The church and its people begin to rely on their own confidence in talents and abilities instead of relying upon Christ who guides the church. Prayer helps people to place their focus on and trust in Christ rather than themselves.

The church should begin any change process with prayer. All change processes are difficult and those going through and leading change should practice 1 Thessalonians 5:17: “Pray without ceasing.”³ Prayer has to undergird the revitalization process. “The most critical key to any church working in Church Revitalization and Renewal is prayer.

¹ Randy Maxwell, *If My People Pray: An Eleventh-Hour Call to Prayer and Revival* (Boise, ID: Pacific Pr. Pub. Assn, 1995), 31.

² Chuck Lawless, “Reasons ‘Programs’ Don’t Work in Churches,” www.chuchlawless.com, October 31, 2015, accessed November 6, 2015, <http://chucklawless.com/2015/10/reasons-programs-dont-work-in-churches/>.

³ 1 Thess. 5:17 NKJV.

Prayer is the foundation for beginning any new direction a church might take! It anchors the future and the past by drawing participants closer to the Lord.”⁴ Whenever a church begins to revitalize, there is a spiritual battle that will take place. Looking at scripture, there are many references to leaders praying before going into battle or before making difficult decisions. Joshua sought God before he attempted to battle Jericho. Esther, before she approached King Xerxes, which could have cost her life, asked the people to pray and fast for three days. Before Jesus chose his disciples, he spent time in prayer; the list goes on and on. When people go before Christ with their prayers they are trusting him with the outcome. Scripture tells us in 2 Corinthians 10:3-4 that people can demolish the things that hold their life and the church back from progress through times of prayer. “For though we live in the world, we do not wage war as the world does. The weapons we fight with are not the weapons of the world. On the contrary, they have divine power to demolish strongholds.”⁵

In life we see what we are looking for and we often miss what we don’t expect to see. Whenever a person purchases a new car they begin to notice others driving the same car. It wasn’t noticeable to them before they owned the same car. In the same way, “Prayer keeps us looking. Prayer keeps the burden fresh. It keeps our eyes and hearts in an expectant mode.”⁶ Prayer helps us to see where God is working and leads us to join in his work. “Prayer sensitizes us to subtle changes in the landscape of our circumstances.

⁴ Tom Cheney, “A Practical Prayer Plan for Church Revitalizers/renovate-National Church Revitalization Conference,” www.renovateconference.org, November 11, 2013, accessed September 6, 2015, <http://renovateconference.org/prayer-church-revitalizers>.

⁵ 2 Cor. 10:3-4 NIV.

⁶ Andy Stanley, *Visioneering: God’s Blueprint for Developing and Maintaining Vision*, annotated ed. (Nashville, TN: Multnomah Books, 2005), 31.

When God begins to move we are apt to recognize it.”⁷ Prayer is vital in recognizing God moving in the church revitalization process.

Sometimes God’s timing and a person’s timing are different. God’s timing is perfect; he may answer a prayer immediately, or it could be days, weeks, months, or even years. People are able to wait upon the Lord and trust his timing through prayer. In Luke 18:1, Jesus tells the disciples a parable with the theme of teaching us to always pray and not give up. The Psalmist in chapter 77 tells us to remember the works God has done, and to meditate upon them. The Bible goes on to say how God performs miracles and loves to display his power among believers. We can look at Elijah. Elijah had to pray one time when fire came down from heaven on Mt. Carmel.⁸ It took Elijah praying three times to raise the widow’s son from the dead.⁹ He had to pray seven times before God sent rain on the earth during a time of drought.¹⁰ Looking at Elijah, people can see that he had to learn to trust God’s timing and not give up on his prayers even when God didn’t answer them immediately. Just as Elijah was persistent, so should the church be when praying to God before and during the journey of church revitalization.

Prayer is a powerful tool that so many Christians underutilize. Scripture tells us if people have faith and believe God will answer prayers, then he will. Mark 11:24 states, “Therefore I tell you, whatever you ask for in prayer, believe that you have received it,

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ 1 Kings 18:38 NIV.

⁹ 1 Kings 17:21 NIV.

¹⁰ 1 Kings 18:44-19:8 NIV.

and it will be yours.”¹¹ Scripture tells us in James when we lack wisdom to ask also. James 1:5-6 states, “If any of you lacks wisdom, you should ask God, who gives generously to all without finding fault, and it will be given to you. But when you ask, you must believe and not doubt, because the one who doubts is like a wave of the sea, blown and tossed by the wind.”¹² People have to have faith in their prayers or they are petitioning God in vain. Philippians 4:6-7 reinforces this idea. “Instead of being worried about anything, instead in prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God.”¹³

Pray for church revitalization by looking at God’s faithfulness to the church in the past to know he will be faithful to the church in the future. People need to remember God is able, he is willing, and he cares about his church. It is said in John 14:13-14 that God will be faithful to people’s prayers to show his glory to the world. All a person has to do is ask in the name of God. “And I will do whatever you ask in my name, so that the Father may be glorified in the Son. You may ask me for anything in my name, and I will do it.”¹⁴

In John 15:7 Jesus said, “If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you, ask what you will and it will be done for you.”¹⁵ Whenever a church is seeking to revitalize it first needs to begin with prayer and trusting God to guide them in the process.

¹¹ Mark 11:24 NIV.

¹² James 1:5-6 NIV.

¹³ Phil. 4:6-7 NIV.

¹⁴ John 14:13-14 NIV.

¹⁵ John 15:7 NIV.

The Holy Spirit plays a vital role in church revitalization. This can also be seen in scripture. “This is the word of the Lord to Zerubbabel: ‘Not by might nor by power, but by my Spirit,’ says the Lord Almighty.”¹⁶ Both Maxwell’s comment discussed previously from *If MY People Pray* and scripture confirm that programs are not the key to growth; prayer and the Holy Spirit are the keys. Many denominations do not teach the people of the church about the Holy Spirit, which is a huge mistake. The Holy Spirit is known by many names that speak of the attributes toward us as Christians and towards the church. The Spirit is known as the Comforter, Counselor, Advocate, Guide, Indweller, Intercessor, Revealer, Spirit of Truth, Spirit of God, Teacher, Witness, Spirit of Life, and many others.

No church can grow without help from the Holy Spirit. This is seen in Ezekiel chapter 37 when the Holy Spirit leads Ezekiel into the valley of dry bones. God asked Ezekiel: “Son of Man, can these bones live?”¹⁷ This question is pertinent to the church in decline. Most Moderate Baptist Churches are older, established churches that have grown, peaked, and now are on a slow decline toward death. Can there be transformation or revitalization in this decaying and dying church?

Again he said to me, “Prophesy to these bones, and say to them, O dry bones, hear the word of the Lord. Thus says the Lord God to these bones: Behold, I will cause breath to enter you, and you shall live. And I will lay sinews upon you, and will cause flesh to come upon you, and cover you with skin, and put breath in you, and you shall live; and you shall know that I am the Lord.” So I prophesied as I was commanded; and as I prophesied, there was a noise, and behold, a rattling; and the bones came together, bone to its bone. And as I looked, there were sinews on them, and flesh had come upon them, and skin had covered them; but there was no breath in them. Then he said to me, “Prophesy to the breath, prophesy, son of

¹⁶ Zech. 4:6 NIV.

¹⁷ Ezek. 37:3 RSV.

man, and say to the breath, Thus says the Lord God: Come from the four winds, O breath, and breathe upon these slain, that they may live.”¹⁸

This text from Ezekiel is a perfect parable of how God is speaking about revitalization and how an ineffective context can become effective.¹⁹ The Holy Spirit can accomplish great things through people if we will allow the Spirit to use him to his full potential. These verses speak directly to revitalization of the spiritual life of the people of Israel but can be applicable to the revitalization of Christ’s bride, the Church.

The church needs to hear the “word of the Lord” from prophets today just as the Israelites needed to hear the “word of the Lord” through the prophet Ezekiel. God’s word is active and living and it stirs the soul. When people hear the word of the Lord, this stirring that takes place, this rattling of bones, is through the breath of God or through the Holy Spirit. It is clear from this passage: first, “in order for an ineffective church to become an effective church, it will need leadership and administration such as Ezekiel who will prophesy life into the body of the congregation.”²⁰ By hearing the word of the Lord, the body comes back together and becomes a sustainable work. Romans 10:17 tells us, “Faith comes by hearing and hearing by the word of God.”²¹ This act of hearing by the church through the Holy Spirit goes back to spending time in prayer. People can hear from God only when our relationship is in tune with his design. The word of God brings breath to the bones, or life by the Holy Spirit to the body, and the Holy Spirit or breath of

¹⁸ Ezek. 37:4-10 RSV.

¹⁹ Kevass J. Harding, *Can These Bones Live? Bringing New Life to a Dying Church* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 2007), 4.

²⁰ Ibid., 5.

²¹ Rom. 10:17 NIV.

God brings life to the church. The church must be led by the Holy Spirit; then it will have a clear compelling vision for its future.

Vision

Moderate Baptist churches have been established since the denomination Baptist was formed. Many of them were the first Baptist churches in their community. Through time and the transition of leadership in the church, the church has experienced numerous visions. With each compelling vision, there were new ministries and activities put into place at the church. When these ministries continue to compile and stack up and become clutter, they can become decomposing piles of compost that need to be used for new life. Baptist churches, like most churches throwing out programming once it has begun. Not all old programming is ineffective, but when it becomes ineffective it can become clutter and distracting to the vision before the church.²² There comes a time when an established church needs to look at its ministry areas and see if they are contributing to the overall vision of the church. If the program or ministry is not contributing to the successful vision of the church, it is time to streamline; this may include cutting out unnecessary programs and ministries that do not correspond with the goals and vision of the church.

The vision of the church needs to be clear and precise so people understand exactly what they are being asked to do as a church. Visions require constant attention.²³ Each church's vision should be unique to their context and whom they are trying to minister to. The most practical advantage of a vision is that it sets the direction for the

²² Thom Rainer, "Seven Reasons Churches Are Too Busy," www.thomrainer.com, January 28, 2015, accessed June 6, 2015, <http://thomrainer.com/2015/01/seven-reasons-churches-busy/#>.

²³ Stanley, 16.

organization. It serves as a road map and simplifies decision making.²⁴ There are no cookie-cutter versions of vision for churches. Sweet reinforces this point in *Aqua Church*. He states: “Visions in the Bible were gifts of God. They most often were divine revelations to a prophet. Visions were sent by God—not by marketers or consultants or demographers. And at times eyesight was bad and ‘there were not many visions.’” (1 Samuel 3:1)²⁵ Moderate Baptist churches need to take their blinders off from the past successes and quit identifying with their past successes to dream for the future. Moderate Baptist churches fail to reach their full potential in our culture today because they spend too much energy remembering the past.

Our society is so fast-paced that the only constant in our world is change. Many people want to keep the church the same as it was in the past because the past is safe; they already know what is going to happen. People are so dis-shelved due to the rapid change in our world that they think of church as a safe place, as a sanctuary of the past memories and accomplishments. In one of the advances for the DMIN program at George Fox, Leonard Sweet redefined what sanctuary should mean to the church. Instead of sanctuary being a place that is safe, a place where we can hide from the dangers of the world, a sanctuary needs to be defined as a safe place to take risks.²⁶ That is brilliant. To take this theme a little further, a sanctuary is a sacred, safe place to take risks, to dream dreams, and to cast visions for the future of the church. Safeness, or dwelling in the past, can bring about complacency and complacency leads to decline.

²⁴ Ibid., 11.

²⁵ Leonard Sweet, *Aquachurch* (Loveland, CO: Group Pub Inc., 1999), 130.

²⁶ Leonard Sweet, “Cambridge Advance” (lecture, All Saints Church, Cambridge, UK, June 21, 2014).

Aubrey Malphurs, in his book *Planting Growing Churches for the Twenty-first Century* writes, “People can’t focus on fog! As someone once said, ‘If you aim at nothing, you will hit it every time!’” He further states, “[Vision] is the ministry compass that helps a congregation and the leaders navigate through the ocean of decision.”²⁷ When a church has a clear, precise vision, it creates a road map or, at the minimum, a direction for the church to follow. The people have a common goal to work toward.

Scripture tells us “Where there is no vision the people perish.”²⁸ Most pastors in Moderate Baptist churches are focused on the present. There are sermons to prepare, sick to visit, buildings to upkeep, staff to supervise, and many other menial tasks that keep our eyes on the present instead of looking toward a future vision. A church needs to make time to dream dreams larger than the past or present and decide upon a clear, distinct process to implement the vision that has been given to them. Anything that moves us toward the realization of the vision gets a green light; everything else is approached with caution.²⁹

In *Aqua Church*, Sweet shares a story pertaining to vision about a man named Virgil. Virgil had been blind since the age of five and had regained sight at the age of fifty, but he still did not know how to see. Sweet said: “All of the nerves and impulses are there, but they are mentally blind. Their habits, their behaviors, are still those of their earlier life; they have unstable judgment of space and distance.”³⁰ This could be a

²⁷ Aubrey Malphurs, *Planting Growing Churches for the 21st Century: A Comprehensive Guide for New Churches and Those Desiring Renewal*, 3rd ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2004), 234.

²⁸ Prov. 29:18 KJV.

²⁹ Stanley, 11.

³⁰ Sweet, 131.

metaphor for the Moderate Baptist church. These churches still have the resources needed to implement a vision for their church and community but they are blind to the needs that surround them. Based on their actions, it seems they tend to like it that way. They continually grasp at ideas and programming to continually fall short of the vision that God has for them to reach their community. A church experiencing decline needs a new and clear vision that affects the community.

The church needs to develop a vision that not only meets the needs of the people in the church, but it also has to have an external focus. God is continually at work within our world; the church should identify where he is working and partner with Him.³¹ A church cannot experience revitalization by beginning a new phase of self-preservation; it needs to actively seek a compelling vision for the future of the church within its ministry context. This is only done by being aware of the surrounding communities' needs and having other leaders dream with staff leadership dreams of the future. A God-ordained vision will be in line with what God is up to in the world.³² The world we are living in is changing constantly, but God still provides divine visions for his people. There will always be a correlation between what God puts on the heart of a church to do and what he is up to in the world at large.³³ Our job as the church is to recognize his work in the world today and to help our vision line up with his master plan.

³¹ "A Conversation with Leonard Sweet" (video), 2015, 00:1:59, accessed September 30, 2015, <https://vimeo.com/123209530>.

³² Stanley, 25.

³³ Ibid., 26.

Bureaucracy and Leadership Structure within The Church

One can look at the current presidential candidates for 2016 and see many of the front-runners have no previous governmental experience. Why is that? There is distrust among people concerning bureaucratic red tape. Moderate Baptist churches have become bureaucratic. There are committees upon committees to accomplish the simplest of task. People who attend church today don't want to have sermons preached to them about morality and how they should live; they are not looking for more words about the poor, the oppressed, or the injustices of our world. People want to see the church making a difference in the community through the gospel.

Most working adults can give at least one example of a time when getting things accomplished at work was slowed by bureaucracy and red tape. Multilevel decision-making processes slow productivity and can be a source of frustration for workers who are simply trying to do their job.³⁴ Society as a whole does not like a top-down style of leadership. People resist authoritative bosses and leadership that commands control. It seems that people want to participate in the decisions if those decisions affect their future. This is a cultural shift the church is also experiencing. That is why congregationally led churches can be ideally arranged to experience growth, but sometimes the layers of leadership and bureaucratic process to get anything done does not allow for congregational participation except for a small minority of those in control. Creating more structure (bureaucracy) won't fix organizational problems, unless that structure is

³⁴ Patricia Lotich, "Get Things Done by Removing Church Bureaucracy," Share Faith Magazine, August 10, 2015, accessed September 8, 2015, <http://www.sharefaith.com/blog/2015/08/removing-church-bureaucracy/>.

created to support communication needs.³⁵ People outside of the church are afraid of the monstrosity that it has become. They believe that the church leaders will try to control them by dictating how and when they should pray, what their faith should look like, and how to think, dress, and act.³⁶

In the past, church members were content in guiding the direction of the church through annual business meetings, but today it seems that people want to have a regular voice in the directional processes of the church. A majority of pastors would disagree with this analysis because they can't get people to attend church conferences on any given month.³⁷ This leaves pastors feeling that people are apathetic and do not care to have a say in the happenings of the church. People may not be showing interest in the process because they feel like they do not have any voice or influence in the decisions. There needs to be an easy participatory process.

It is understandable how churches get involved in the bureaucratic nightmare. Many times when churches attempt to accomplish various tasks they allow leadership to help in the process by forming a committee for the task. This empowers the committee to work on the task and present their findings to the church. This process usually takes time, and sometimes the energy that was present in the beginning is no longer present toward the time of implementation due to the drawn-out process. Tony Jones in *The New Christians: Dispatches from the Emergent Frontier* describes bureaucracy in churches

³⁵ Jenni Catron, "Do You Need More Bureaucracy?," Church Leaders, accessed November 8, 2015, <http://www.churchleaders.com/pastors/pastor-articles/166104-jenni-catron-need-more-bureaucracy.html>.

³⁶ Dan Kimball, *They Like Jesus but Not the Church* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2007), 75.

³⁷ Thom Rainer, "Is It Time to Rethink Church Business Meetings?," Thom S. Rainer, February 18, 2015, accessed December 30, 2015, <http://thomrainer.com/2015/02/time-rethink-church-business-meetings/>.

and denominations as beginning for the good of the institution but eventually it can choke out innovation and progress. He says: “Invariably, the scaffolding morphs into the exoskeleton, sealing off the life within, for bureaucracies are bent on one thing; their self preservation.”³⁸

Many times, the leadership structure within the church causes the churches to lose their creativity. This structure causes the church to focus on its own needs and desires rather than focusing on reaching new people for Christ. Others have left the church or decreased their involvement in church because the bureaucratic leadership structures tend to waste time. People are used to an efficient work environment. “These influential people had written off committee meetings that focus on minutiae, incompetent leadership, and inefficient projects. They thought in business terms—long-term planning, strategies, vision, bottom line performance and progress—concepts that don’t exist in church systems run by volunteers and headed by an overworked pastor.”³⁹ Many committees, councils, and teams within churches meet for the sake of meeting. With the development of technology, there are numerous other options to get information into the hands of these members. Information could and should be disseminated through email or other electronic avenues. In 46% of two-parent families, both parents work.⁴⁰ Plus the

³⁸ Tony Jones, *The New Christians: Dispatches from the Emergent Frontier* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2009), 192.

³⁹ Julia Duin, *Quitting Church: Why the Faithful Are Fleeing and What to Do About It* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2009), 31.

⁴⁰ “Raising Kids and Running a Household: How Working Parents Share the Load,” Pew Research Center, November 4, 2015, accessed November 9, 2015, <http://www.pewsocialtrends.org/2015/11/04/raising-kids-and-running-a-household-how-working-parents-share-the-load/>.

average family has 1.9 children.⁴¹ This alone makes time a scarcity in a person's life. People are stretched to meet the demands on their time trying to juggle family, sports, social life, and church life, so they want to make sure that the time they do devote to an activity or event is used wisely. This means churches need to plan more efficiently and have events that are quality, not necessarily in large quantity. Society today still wants to fight for justice of the oppressed and take care of the widows, and the orphans, but many times people feel like the church hinders this process rather than helps it.⁴²

Bureaucracy develops out of the desire for churches to be organized and have structure. Organization and structure is very important.

Structure enables churches to coordinate schedules, track budgets, assign tasks, and a whole host of things that facilitate the work of the church, and among other things, often make newcomers feel comfortable and assured. Structure can assure a better use of time and money, promote more clarity and less confusion, and achieve greater reach and impact with limited resources. The benefits of organizational structure are numerous.⁴³

This was obvious in the 1980s when churches began to impose business titles and principles on the church. Pastors and leaders began using some of the language and metaphors of the business world, adding business descriptions to their titles, such as executive pastor, senior pastor, chief financial officer, executive assistant to the senior pastor, the elder board, management team, and others.⁴⁴

⁴¹ Jennifer Day, "Changing Families, Changing Workforce," Population Association, December 13, 2011, accessed November 9, 2015, <http://www.populationassociation.org/wp-content/uploads/Changing-Families-Changing-Workforce.pdf>.

⁴² Josh Packard, Ph.D., and Ashleigh Hope, *Church Refugees: Sociologists Reveal Why People Are Done with Church but Not Their Faith* (Loveland, CO: Group Publishing, 2015), 55.

⁴³ Ibid., 55.

⁴⁴ Kimball, 80.

Churches often have structures in place that make people feel disenfranchised with the church. The de-churched or disenfranchised feel these structures hinder their ability to serve God through the church. At times, these structures pose a guardian posture of the church's past and its current survival. They are de-powering structures rather than empowering structures. "Heavily centralized and hierarchical organizations tend to concentrate power and gradually compel all activity inward, stifling innovation, creativity, and opposing new ideas."⁴⁵ It tends to be the older the congregation, the more complex the organization. This complexity tends to feed the hierarchical feel of the organization. This can happen in churches that have experienced decline because the bylaws that were written when the church was not in decline often require a certain number of people to serve on boards, teams, and councils which can cause complications in what should be a simple process. The governance should reflect the church's size; as the church grows or declines, flexibility allows for adjustments and restructuring. One size does not fit all.⁴⁶

People want to be a part of organizations and churches that empower their dreams and visions. The church needs to periodically evaluate its structures to see if they are hindrances to new ministries and dreams or if they enable people to see their dreams become reality through the mission of the church. A church should empower its members to do ministry in the community in which the church is located. When two or three people have an idea that fits within the overall vision of the church, the church leadership

⁴⁵ Packard, 56.

⁴⁶ "Church Structure and Leadership," Static1.squarespace.com, accessed November 10, 2015, <http://static1.squarespace.com/static/53d1217ce4b0d2ee8e81804c/t/54ef5045e4b0a11e9932adf2/1424969797508/Governance+I+-Church+Structure+and+Leadership.pdf>.

should encourage, equip, and send the group to do ministry. Leaders of growing churches do not try to build up their own power to become all powerful; exactly the opposite, they consider it as one of their most important tasks to help Christians develop greater degrees of empowerment. They equip, support, motivate and mentor.⁴⁷ The idea should fit the overall vision of the church. If not, there can be so many different ministries within the church that people are spinning in circles trying to accomplish the tasks that are before them.

The church has to be careful not to make its laity feel like entry-level employees in a large corporation. If it does not fit the overall vision of the church, then the leadership should still bless this ministry and help foster this new passion for ministry within the people. They can help by identifying other groups in the community where God is at work and encourage this group to join the established work. Church leaders are to give ministry away, and equip and empower new leadership. Churches have to be careful about the systems they create and continually evaluate them to make sure they bring glory to Christ. Churches should approach their leadership structure with eyes from the outside. If the church members were not ingrained in the church process, would they want to be? Packard suggests imposing exploding deadlines.

This would put an end date on some programs and staff functions that would otherwise exist in perpetuity. From the outset some of the work of the church is to be project based, not program based. When the project ends, the church moves on to something else. This idea is that activity stops when the deadline arrives, no matter what. Positions, programs, and budgets are much easier to create than eliminate. Often organizations find themselves pouring resources into sustaining activity long after the activity has ceased to be meaningful or effective.⁴⁸

⁴⁷ Christian A. Schwarz, *Natural Church Development: A Guide to Eight Essential Qualities of Healthy Churches* (St. Charles, IL: Churchsmart Resources, 1996), 24.

⁴⁸ Packard, 117.

Churches can be successful at gaining new leaders by setting up a rotational process. This process can extend to and allow easy entrance points on key committees, teams, and councils. Churches need to practice diligence when it comes to time served in one of these capacities. Terms should be limited to two to three years maximum with at least one year off in between times of service.⁴⁹ This allows for a rotation of leadership, but also keeps some people that have experience on the committee serving with new members. This allows for continuity in the process of revitalization of the church structure. Every so often, all church activities need to be evaluated and deemed either appropriate or inappropriate for furthering the vision and mission of the church. This should be a conglomerate effort among the staff and the congregation. New activities are always under scrutiny and constantly evaluated, churches should also practice this with ministries that have a longer history. This will let a church know if it is time to try a new initiative in these areas also. Providing ways for people to fulfill their dreams helps make a church successful. New initiatives bring about excitement and Cause the church to continually renew itself. This helps the church focus on its mission and allows for new leadership to arise. This also helps to combat “sacred cows,” or doing something simply because that is the way it has always been done.

Community

Community is important to the Dones, the Nones, the De-churched, and the Un-churched. It does not necessarily mean community within a church context. People are seeking authentic community. They may find community in their neighborhood, at the

⁴⁹ “Constitution and Bylaws of First Baptist Church Griffin, GA,” First Baptist Church Griffin, GA, October 27, 2009, accessed November 10, 2015, <http://www.fbcgriffin.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/09/constandbylawsforwebmay2010.pdf>.

local pub, coffee shop, or even at their local Cross Fit gym.⁵⁰ There are many avenues where community can be developed and where relationships can thrive. Authentic community, where people can be themselves and do life with one another, is a way that churches can combat decline. Stetzer said: “If you are passionate about the people and community where God sent you, and if you love them as He does, you will be motivated to know and understand their story.”⁵¹ People are looking for places where they can belong, tell their story, and continually write their story.

Church should be a place that naturally fosters community. There needs to be places within the church where people can ask questions and struggle to find answers together. Community is the way that people experience God together. When communities within a church are healthy, people form a bond of trust with one another.⁵² Communities within a church can form intense personal relationships among individuals. When you study God’s word in a safe, non-judgmental environment there is an intimacy that forms among those who study together. “Sociologists began studying religion in the 1800s, and some of their earliest most enduring writings are about the power of community to transform ritual into meaningful activity. What seems to matter the most is not the specifics of the ritual, but doing it together, with people who are known and trusted.”⁵³ A person can find ritual and spiritual fulfillment by a variety of means today and at any time of the day, but there is something more found in the give and take from a spiritual

⁵⁰ Dori Gorman, “Just Step In,” (Sermon, Sentralized Chicago, Naperville, January 13, 2015).

⁵¹ Ed Stetzer and Thom S. Rainer, *Transformational Church: Creating a New Scorecard for Congregations* (Nashville, TN: B&H Books, 2010), 48-49.

⁵² Daryl Ford, “Leading from a Micah 6:8 Lifestyle,” (Sentralized Chicago, Naperville, January 13, 2015).

⁵³ Josh Packard, Ph.D., and Ashleigh Hope, *Church Refugees: Sociologists Reveal Why People Are Done with Church but Not Their Faith* (Loveland, CO: Group Publishing, 2015), 35.

community that does life together. These communities not only provide affirmation, support, nurture, and fulfillment to individuals—they are vital in the spiritual formation of Christian beliefs. “Many times this community can be diverse and foster accountability that includes people who will challenge fundamental beliefs. It is through these interactions that people experience the divine and gain a better understanding of their faith.”⁵⁴

Small groups are a great way to help create community in a church setting. There are different kinds of small groups. Many traditional churches still use Sunday School as their small group medium. Most contemporary churches have moved away from Sunday School. Instead of having classes that meet at 9:45 a.m. on Sunday morning in rooms located at the church facility, contemporary churches have small groups that meet in homes or local businesses at various times throughout the week. Small groups are places where people connect, form community, and participate in life together. Many traditional churches focus on programing to win people to Christ. Small groups can be seen as a program, but they are programing based on relationships. “People win people to Christ; programs do not. People discover people in significant relational groups, not in a merry-go-round of programs and activities.”⁵⁵

Usually people who are involved in small groups have developed relationships with people inside the church. Small groups can be used as an assimilation process by churches. Journey Church in New York City has more people in small groups than they do on their membership roll. They utilize their small groups as venues where they can

⁵⁴ Ibid., 38.

⁵⁵ Kennon L. Callahan, *Twelve Keys to an Effective Church: Strong, Healthy Congregations Living in the Grace of God*, 2nd ed. (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2010), 39.

share about the value of church membership and promote the next membership class.⁵⁶

With the development of technology, our society has become very individualistic.

Americans can have hundreds of friends on social networks but they still seem to be lonely. Andy Stanley believes that God is concerned about this unhealthy reality in our culture. He states: “In the midst of our crowded existence, many of us are living lonely lives. We live and we work in a sea of humanity, but we end up missing out on the benefits of regular, meaningful relationships.”⁵⁷ These meaningful relationships can be built in small group ministries.

Small groups are not just to build relationships among the community of the church; they are also utilized to build spiritual maturity among believers. Small groups can help in the process of sanctification, where people are constantly growing and becoming more like Christ. Most of the time pastors “cast the net” wide on Sunday morning. There are people in attendance with various amounts of knowledge of Scripture. If the pastor goes too deep, he may lose people in the process. Small groups can be a safe place to grow deeper in our relationship with Christ. Most of the time a person comes to know Christ through a relationship with another believer.

Small groups can help tremendously with pastoral care. “Two examples of this are found in Acts 2:44,45 and Acts 4:32–37. In essence, those in various house meetings took care of their own.”⁵⁸ We don’t lose track of people no matter how large the church is if they are involved in small groups. Small groups can be organized by interest, location,

⁵⁶ Nelson Searcy, “Assimilation: From First-Time Guests to Members,” (Audio of lecture, Journey Church, New York, NY, April 28, 2005), accessed November 10, 2015, www.churchleaderinsights.com.

⁵⁷ Andy Stanley and Bill Willits, *Creating Community* (Sisters, OR: Multnomah Books, 2004), 24.

⁵⁸ Aubrey Malphurs, *Planting Growing Churches for the 21st Century: A Comprehensive Guide for New Churches and Those Desiring Renewal*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1998), 235.

social needs, convenience of schedule, demographics, and various other ways. They are much more flexible than the traditional Sunday School. Small groups are a very important part of contemporary church life and should be a major part of any church, including Moderate Baptists churches. Small group relationships should be life-giving relationships, the kind of relationships that encourage one another, that build one another up, and that breathe a refreshing breath into our life. Ortberg states it this way:

This is why the experience of authentic community is so life-giving. We are taking our place in fellowship with Life himself. When I am in isolation, I am lonely. When I am in community, I experience what might be called “fullness of heart.” The human heart is forever empty if it is closed upon itself. In the community—the divine community especially—heart comes alive.⁵⁹

As our hearts come alive in community, our churches will also become revitalized. Community is one of the major keys to attracting and keeping people involved in church. Many of our churches today have become depersonalized. They are like supermarkets or filling stations where people come in and get what they need for the week from a person on stage that they do not have a relationship with. You can come in as an individual and leave without speaking or greeting anyone, basically being invisible. That is not how the church was designed to exist. Instead of being sermon- and audience-focused, the church should be a place of meaningful human contact. The early church had it right in the beginning where their meetings were centered around the breaking of bread

⁵⁹ John Ortberg, *Everybody's Normal Till You Get to Know Them* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2003), 40.

⁵⁹ James Emery White, *The Rise of the Nones: Understanding and Reaching the Religiously Unaffiliated* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2014), 99.

together and having open dialogue in homes.⁶⁰ Churches would be wise to invest time, energy, and money into developing opportunities for community to thrive. In our fast-paced, individualistic society people are longing to belong.

Cause

Those who are done with church, de-churched, or un-churched have a few things in common with the majority of our society today. They, like most people, want to be a part of something that matters, or makes a difference in the world in which we live. The days of helping the poor by feeding them or giving them clothes but not building a relationship with them are over. People no longer want to place a bandage on a hemorrhage when a tourniquet is needed. From the 1990s through the 2000s, people placed a large emphasis on community and they wanted to belong before they believed.⁶¹ Cause was developed out of belonging to the community. In more recent years, this has changed to where the Cause helps to develop the community. The group comes together to accomplish a common Cause and therefore forms a community around the Cause.

From 2010 forward, cause-think campaigns to rescue girls from sex trafficking or food drives to end world hunger- became the leading edge of our connection with a lost world, and specifically the Nones, in terms of both arresting their attention and enlisting their participation in community and relationship. Consider the 2013 Passion Conference in Atlanta, GA. What captured outside media attention was not the sixty thousand students in attendance, much less the messages related to the Christian faith; what attracted the media was their commitment to eradicate modern-day slavery—in a word Cause.⁶²

⁶⁰ Charles Pankratz, "Direction: The Early Church's Purpose for Assembling," *Direction Journal*, accessed November 10, 2015, <http://www.directionjournal.org/10/1/early-churchs-purposes-for-assembling.html>.

⁶¹ White, 99.

⁶² *Ibid.*, 100.

Whenever the world sees the “Cause,” they long to be a part of the vision. The problem with many churches is their Causes are trivial. Our churches teach from the pulpit to live a life of faith, but many churches are too comfortable to change or attempt new initiatives. Their “Causes” are raising money to build a new building, or collecting clothes to make themselves feel good about helping those less fortunate than themselves. This doesn’t take much faith, or passion. Many times the Cause can be detrimental to the church because outsiders see it in a negative context. One such Cause is the Nones’ view on immigration reform. Heidi Glenn on NPR spoke about the disconnect between the church and the Nones:

“If the church was known more for our efforts to welcome the stranger than keep them out, I think the church would have greater credibility with rising generations,” says Baughman. “For example, on immigration policies, we’ve taken the wrong stance on that, and they know. The thing is they’re smart enough. A lot of them have grown up in the church and then rejected it. They’ve read the scriptures that talk about the importance of welcoming the stranger, they’ve read the scriptures about the importance of caring for the poor, and when they see that no longer on the lips of those who are in religious authority, they see that the God we present is bankrupt, and that we’re theologically thin in our ability to even speak our own story.”⁶³

Many in our society know the scripture and they want the church to reflect the scripture with its actions. The church is called to love, and love is an action word. The Nones understand this and feel like if the church isn’t going to act then there is no need to belong to organized religion.

In 2012 Steve Corbett and Brian Fikkert released the book *When Helping Hurts*. One of the book’s central messages is that, rather than doing things *for* the poor, churches

⁶³ Heidi Glenn, “As Social Issues Drive Young from Church, Leaders Try to Keep Them,” The Two-Way: Breaking News From NPR, January 18, 2013, accessed September 29, 2015, <http://www.npr.org/sections/thetwo-way/2013/01/18/169646736/as-social-issues-drive-young-from-church-leaders-try-to-keep-them>.

need to do things *with* the poor, because only the poor understand their own needs and capabilities.⁶⁴ Love is an action word that draws the church to serve others, but it is something more than just meeting the person's needs; the church is to do life with them and develop a relationship with them. The church is called to love them. Christ calls people to love their neighbor in scripture, but you can't love those you do not know. Christians first are called to know their neighbor, to have a relationship with them, and then the church can truly know the needs and heart of its neighbors.⁶⁵ This is a concept that the church in America is missing. The church has relationships with people that are like the people attending the church. It is comfortable with the similarities experienced with the people who are inside of the church. Therefore many churches do not reach out to their community because many communities don't have the same demographic makeup as the people who attend the church. This is especially true in the downtown church or inner city church. This began in the 1960s with "White Flight" to the suburbs but continues today. This is the reason many churches moved to the suburbs.⁶⁶ On the surface it looks as though cities and suburbs are becoming diverse, but when we look closer we see the real story. "Segregation between places (e.g., city-suburb or suburb-suburb) may be increasing, even as overall metro-neighborhood segregation declines."⁶⁷ This concept is still alive in many communities. We send missionaries money and resources to meet the needs of those outside of churches. Why are the insiders (those who

⁶⁴ Packard, 120.

⁶⁵ Brad Briscoe, "Where I Belong," (Sentralized Chicago, Naperville, January 14, 2015).

⁶⁶ Mark T. Mulder, *Shades of White Flight: Evangelical Congregations and Urban Departure* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2015), 111.

⁶⁷ Alana Semuels, "White Flight Never Ended," *The Atlantic*, July 30, 2015, accessed November 10, 2015, <http://www.theatlantic.com/business/archive/2015/07/white-flight-alive-and-well/399980/>.

attend church) not putting love into action in their own communities and showing love in action to their neighbors?

There are numerous injustices in every community. Why are churches not seen as the good neighbor or Samaritan who is helping to fight for the “Causes” that are injustices among the poor, the homeless, the widows, and the educational system? Is it because churches do not see the benefit that these “Causes” will provide to the establishment? One of Jesus’ core messages was to live in solidarity with those in need. Churches need to shift their focus from internal Causes to the Causes that are pervasive in the surrounding communities so they can make an impact on the community of which they are a part.

Fresh Expressions

The Church of England has had its share of struggles. There are cathedrals throughout the United Kingdom that have many more people tour their facility on a daily basis than they have in worship services throughout any given year. Every year Westminster Abbey welcomes over one million visitors for tours and is very much part of the standard tourist trail complete with large coach parties.⁶⁸ This is a much larger amount than the church has in attendance for worship services. The Church of England has been on its deathbed for many years. Recently the church decided to change its focus from the establishment to beginning new works through “Fresh Expressions.” They have experienced much success. These Fresh Expressions are examples of churches that are built surrounding a “Cause.” Each of these Fresh Expressions are sponsored by an

⁶⁸ “Westminster Abbey London-a Practical Briefing for Visitors,” The London Toolkit, accessed October 26, 2015, <https://www.londontoolkit.com/whattodo/westminsterabbey.htm>.

existing church which helps the church to focus externally on those who do not and probably would not attend one of the established churches or monstrous cathedrals.

There is a surfer church on Polzeath beach, a youth congregation based in a skate park and a church for skiers. Others are more familiar but in unfamiliar settings—such as church in a café, pub, church or school. They can be found in rural areas as well as in towns and cities and have been planted to reach all age groups—pensioners as well as those focused on children or young families. There is no intention to divide people up. The surfer church does not have security guards to ban non-surfers at the door. But the aim is to plant church into the communities to which people actually belong. Then those churches can reach out to people who are different as well. Many churches are neighborhood based, but Fresh Expressions of church are also planted into networks.⁶⁹

The Fresh Expressions movement is looking at an old landscape, the church, through a new lens. Fresh Expressions look for ways that God is working in the community and join his work. An evangelistic incarnational approach is the heartbeat of Fresh Expressions.

As the lingering power of Christendom fades, so the church has to hear the call to go to the great majority, those who no longer come to church or who have never had any connection to it. The church exists not for its own sake, but for the place where it is located in the light of God's purpose in Christ. The purpose of a fresh expression is to be a community for networks or parts of a neighborhood where the church is not already engaged, in order to fulfill this calling.⁷⁰

A Fresh Expressions community has ties to an established church, but it may not ever add people to the established church. As a matter of fact, it may cause the number of people attending a church to decrease due to being sent out into the community to live and participate in life together. When a church begins partnering with its neighbors and forms Fresh Expressions of ministry, it could act as a renewing force for the global church as well as the local church by showing the community that the host church is

⁶⁹ “An Introduction,” Fresh Expressions, last modified September 15, 2015, accessed September 30, 2015, <https://www.freshexpressions.org.uk/about/introduction>.

⁷⁰ Graham Cray, ed., *Ancient Faith, Future Mission: Fresh Expressions of Church and the Kingdom of God* (Norwich: Canterbury Press, 2012), 19.

concerned about its community. Fresh Expression is more than an off-site small group meeting. Yes, it may be a smaller group of people, but this group of people exhibit all of the five purposes of the church that are exhibited in scripture: worship, fellowship, discipleship, ministry/service, and evangelism/missions.⁷¹ These are common elements that each fresh expression exhibits, but they may be exhibited in numerous different ways.

Fresh Expressions are not just movements in England. There are Fresh Expression in the United States also. Fresh Expressions do not come with a blueprint to follow. They are associated with a common Cause. They can range from workplace expressions, to a coffee house expression, or a Cross Fit expression. Some Fresh Expressions are in urban settings, but they can also be in rural settings. They may be associated with a certain segment of the population; they could be in housing projects or high rises. If there are people who are un-churched or de-churched in the church's community, a fresh expression may be a viable way to share the gospel and life with this group or segment of the population. A Fresh Expression is a form of church for the changing culture, established primarily for the benefit of those who are not yet part of any church.⁷² Many churches today are not a part of the culture; they try to separate from the culture and then wonder why they are not seen as relevant in people's lives. Western culture today is similar to biblical times as far as not having the Christian faith as the dominant worldview.

⁷¹ Rick Warren, *The Purpose Driven Church: Growth Without Compromising Your Message and Mission* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1995), 119.

⁷² Travis Collins, "What Is a Fresh Expression of Church," Fresh Expressions, accessed November 14, 2014, <http://freshexpressionsus.org/about/what-is-a-fresh-expression/>.

Fresh Expressions of church look much like the church of Acts. Like those first-century congregations, Fresh Expressions are loosely organized and often have team leadership. Many times they are made up of first-generation believers who are passionate. In both the church of Acts and today's Fresh Expressions of church there is an almost desperate reliance on the Holy Spirit as well as a strong sense of togetherness.⁷³

Fresh Expressions are a way for the church to sharpen its focus on the community in which it is located. There are people within every established congregation that have a passion for a particular people or segment of the population in their community. Instead of trying to minister to that segment from the old attractional model of "Come one, come all," Fresh Expressions can mobilize church members to get out of their comfort zone and live out their calling among the community. The stumbling block for most churches is they probably will not see a return on their investment of having more people in the pews. If churches can catch the vision of being externally focused and Great-Commission-minded, then they will see the benefits of Fresh Expression churches because lives will be changed by the gospel.

Budget

When one begins to examine a church's budget, they can tell where the church's focus is. At a quick glance it is obvious whether the church focus is on external or internal ministries. Many Moderate Baptist churches allocate well over fifty percent of their budget to building upkeep and staff salaries. The majority of other assets are allocated to internally focused ministries such as ministries for adults, music, youth and children. The average Moderate Baptist church allocates less than ten percent to missions

⁷³ Travis Collins, interviewed by author, Decatur, GA, October 8, 2014.

and outreach.⁷⁴ Many churches are financially struggling, so that they only can give a small percentage of their budget to missions; they are in a mode of preservation instead of focusing on those outside of the church. If they do allocate money toward missions it is usually to the denomination body or to mission organizations. Very few Baptist churches actually see or know the missionaries they support because their mission giving is funneled through The Cooperative Program or some other global mission organization.

The church budget needs to reflect the overall mission of the church. If the church does not have areas of their budget focused on reaching the community outside of the church building it should rethink its budget. Larry Burkett used to say, “Show me your checkbook, and I’ll show you your priorities.” The same can be said for churches. Spend 20 minutes looking at your church’s budget, and you’ll quickly be able to tell its priorities.⁷⁵ If one applies this same principle to most churches today, what would be considered the priorities of the church? Would the church’s priorities reflect The Great Commission found in Matthew 28:19-20? It states: “Therefore 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. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.”⁷⁶

Moderate Baptist churches need to regain their evangelistic zeal and make sure their budget reflects room to plan for endeavors to reach the community where the church

⁷⁴ “‘The Cooperative Program of Southern Baptists’ Interesting (and Important) Facts about the CP,” SBC Life, September 2013, accessed September 5, 2015, <http://www.sbc LIFE.net/Articles/2013/09/sla7>.

⁷⁵ “Church Budgeting: Who Sees the Numbers?,” Dave Ramsey, March 17, 2010, accessed October 5, 2015, <http://www.daveramsey.com/blog/church-budgeting-who-sees-the-numbers/>.

⁷⁶ Matt. 28:19-20 NIV.

is planted. A church can apply the Google “20 Percent Time” framework to their budgeting process, which would allow for creativity and outward-focused ministry opportunities. An employee for Google is allowed one-fifth of their workday to pursue special projects and passions within Google’s overall mission and framework.⁷⁷ If the church would allocate twenty percent of its budget to new innovative ideas and initiatives that fit the overall mission of the church, this would allow for creativity and easy entrance into the involvement in church life. This leads to relationships being built around a Cause that in turn creates community. This allocated twenty percent allows for dreams to become reality and it also allows for failures. An organization that isn’t failing often isn’t succeeding. Failure can have advantages. It is inevitable in uncertain environments, and, if managed well, it can be a very useful thing.⁷⁸ For churches, failure is an opportunity to learn, grow, and communicate to congregants that church leadership does not have all of the answers and could use their help.⁷⁹ Failure is not the goal of new initiatives, but when the budget allows for dreams to take place, it also allows for failure, which brings about new ideas and opportunities for future change.

Conclusion

Church today should be outward-looking, externally focused, and engaged in their local community by providing opportunities for people to do life together. There should also be a focus on equipping the saints to do ministry while retaining core values of the church and directing the mission of the church. Church is entering a time of evolution.

⁷⁷ Packard, 144.

⁷⁸ Rita McGrath, “Failing by Design,” Harvard Business Review, April 2011, accessed October 3, 2015, <https://hbr.org/2011/04/failing-by-design>.

⁷⁹ Packard, 115.

This does not mean throwing out all of the old structures and abandoning all of the programs within the church; actually it should revisit the historic past, as it leads into the future. In Packard's conclusion he wrote:

The current church structure does serve a purpose. There are a lot of people who find value there. But from my perspective, it serves too narrow of a purpose. It primarily serves the purpose of order and routine. The problem is they have taken that order and routine and rigidity and liturgy and applied it to absolutely everything. It's like everything has become liturgy. It's all routine. And a lot of people need that, but there has to be room for me too.⁸⁰

Christians are in a time and place where there is a desperate need for rethinking church. Every church will be different depending on the community they are engaging. The key is churches have to change and lead the culture today. They can't do everything the same way they have done it forever and expect different results. There is no "cookie cutter" program to implement to experience church growth. Some principles may be transferable but each church should reflect its community.

Baptists have been known for their missions and evangelism in the past.⁸¹ These two components have been the backbone of Baptist churches for many years, but in recent years it seems they have been forgotten or pushed aside to pursue other loves. A church is not evangelistic or missional by accident. It is a very intentional act from the leadership and congregation. There are numerous ways a church can do evangelism. The church may practice a ministry-based approach to evangelism, or a marketplace/workplace approach, or they may use a witnessing program. The important factor is that the church practices some form of evangelism to keep its focus on the

⁸⁰ Ibid., 129.

⁸¹ David S. Dockery, ed., *Southern Baptist Identity: An Evangelical Denomination Faces the Future* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2009), 290.

community and toward the external.⁸² As long as the church continues to stay in touch with its community, it will be able to understand the needs and desires of the community.

Most unbelievers like Jesus, but many of them do not like the church because of the actions of Christians. The Barna Group did a study based on scripture using twenty-five specific actions and attitudes that that were either Christlike (loving others) or Pharisaical (following rules) and asked Christians how they would react in these instances. There is no wonder non-Christians think of Christians as judgmental. The survey indicates that most people who attend Christian churches land on the pharisaical end of the continuum. Here were the findings:

Fifty-one percent of self-identifying Christians are primarily pharisaical in attitude and action, 14 percent are mostly pharisaical in attitude but more Christlike in behavior; and 21 percent are more Christlike in attitude but mostly pharisaical in actions. The remaining one out of every seven (14 percent) tends to be more Christlike in both attitude and action.⁸³

The unchurched are not attracted to church by legalism and moralism; the unchurched are attracted to the church through love in action. “The best outreach strategies in the world will fail if we are unable to see each churchless person we encounter as a singular, infinitely valuable bearer of God’s image.”⁸⁴ As a church it would be wise to approach viewing people through the lens of Christ. Being able to see people as Christ sees them helps Christians to have compassion upon the people as Christ would have compassion. Each church should get to know the unchurched in its community. The approach to the unchurched is different if they are de-churched (born again but no longer attending) compared to the truly unchurched (never have attended

⁸² Ibid., 291.

⁸³ Ibid., 179.

⁸⁴ Ibid., 182.

church). Most churchless people aren't looking for a church. They are seeking an encounter with God; even if they are not seeking him directly, the vast majority is seeking to experience the essence of who he is: love.⁸⁵

Churches may have lost the urgency for evangelism and missions because they have forgotten to see people as individuals whom God loves. We forget sometimes that God loves people so much that he became a person. The efforts to reach the unchurched, or the de-churched, the Nones or the Dones, need not be for church growth and selfish motivation, but it should be out of desire and love for people to get to know Christ. Barna and Kinnaman say it this way in their book *Churchless*:

We must confess that we are sometimes complicit in the stalled spiritual journeys of the unchurched, and commit to becoming more effective as communities of transformation. We must ask ourselves if church is a place that allows broken people to heal fully then reorient their momentum toward God, without sliding back into spiritual inertia. Consider how we can become a church that doesn't avert our eyes from grief, disappointment, or doubt. Loving the churchless means suffering with them—which is the original meaning of the word compassion—and trusting God to use seasons of darkness to bring new life.⁸⁶

Church revitalization is hard work; it is not for the faint of heart. The church reinvents itself through this process into a place that is willing to love and hurt with people, the people in our cities, towns, and communities. The church finds work that is going on in the community that God has orchestrated and the church joins the work, blesses the work, and shows love and support. When the church invests itself into the people of Christ and hurts for the people Christ hurt for, giving our lives to those he gave his life for, then we prove our love for Jesus is true. Caleb Breakey may have said it best in *Called to Stay*, “From the least to the greatest, from the stained glass to the strobe

⁸⁵ Ibid., 183.

⁸⁶ Ibid., 188.

lights, we are the church—and we were created to do life together in the Body of Christ.”⁸⁷

Churches need to address the mass exodus that is taking place. The way the church addresses the issue will look different in every community. The church will not increase in attendance again by looking inward and meeting its own needs and desires; the church will be who it is called to be when it once again reaches those in its community. When the church’s focus is not only on feeding the saints, but also on searching for ways to reach those who are lost and seeking God, the church will experience growth. This takes a dramatic shift within the church to focus on those external to the church, developing relationships, joining Causes, and showing support through community and sharing Christ.

⁸⁷ Caleb Breakey, *Called to Stay: An Uncompromising Mission to Save Your Church* (Eugene, OR: Harvest House Publishers, 2013), 175.

SECTION 4: ARTIFACT DESCRIPTION

The artifact is a web-based seminar for Moderate Baptist churches in particular, but can be utilized by all denominations. The intent of the artifact is to help teach ways churches can begin the revitalization process. The artifact will contain the following:

(1) Introduction: Who I am and why revitalization of established churches is just as important and beneficial as church planting.

(2) Biblical Perspective: Stressing the mandates of scripture, prayer and the Holy Spirit's role in church revitalization.

(3) Vision: Discussion of the need for a clear and precise vision for the church and the role it plays in keeping ministries focused.

(4) Bureaucracy and Structure: Discussion of how to break down the bureaucracy and structures within the church that hinder involvement of new leadership. Also how to put an end to ministries that are no longer productive and begin new, externally focused, purposeful ministries.

(5) Relationships and Community: Examine the importance of relationships and community within a church and how it can help people stay involved in the church. Look at particular ways relationships and community can be vital in the assimilation process.

(6) Cause: Stressing the importance of a central "Cause." The Nones and Dones are drawn to Causes that make a difference in the community.

(7) Budget: Make certain that the church plans for new initiatives in their budget. Also provide margin in the budget by allocating money to new dreams so as to fulfill the vision of the church.

(8) Reaching local community: Offer practical ways the church can get to know its community and become visible in the community.

Each of these sections will have a corresponding downloadable worksheet to go with the discussion presented on the webinar. The hope is churches that are trying to revitalize and have an impact for the Kingdom of God in their community can utilize the webinar. This will not be a “cookie cutter” program that a church can take and implement directly in their church and experience growth. It is a tool that will foster discussion among the staff and leadership where they can utilize the principles presented to dream about the future impact of their church. It is designed to help them conduct an examination of their current situation and make adjustments accordingly to become focused on those who are not currently attending their church, meeting their needs, and spreading the gospel.

With this artifact being designed as a webinar, it can be used by churches around the United States at a time that is convenient to them. My hope is that it can be used for staff and leadership retreats as churches try to reinvent themselves to reach their community for Christ. The webinar makes use of current technology and allows access to a larger audience. It is a cost-effective way for large and small churches to receive resources they may need to jumpstart a new strategy for their church to reach their community without the need to travel and attend a face-to-face conference.

SECTION 5: ARTIFACT SPECIFICATIONS

This section of the written statement provides the specifications of the website: www.hambric-brooks.hilleys.com. It will provide details of the artifact as well as its general focus.

Goals: The purpose of www.hambric-brooks.hilleys.com is to engage and begin discussions among congregations in the process of church revitalization. The various webinars will promote discussion and creativity among church leaders to assess where their congregation needs to make adjustments to foster growth within the church.

Measuring Success: Success of the site will be measured by the number of downloads and participants in the webinar.

The Audience: The audience of the site is intended to be Moderate Baptist churches who are experiencing decline and are in need of revitalization. I recognize other churches can benefit from the site so it will not be limited to any specific denomination. The site will be open to all congregations needing to discuss and experience revitalization.

Scope and Content: The site will be intended to host videos, power points, and worksheets that will help foster brainstorming sessions among moderate church leadership about the need for church revitalization and what it looks like in their ministry context. It will be an interactive site where there will be places for comments from church leaders to specify their findings and discussions that took place after each section.

Budget: The technical aspect of developing a website is beyond my capacity so I have contracted with Troy Hilley, who is an IT Support and Professional Manager at Georgia Technical College, to help with this process. I have also contracted with Chris

Borders for graphic design and videography. Both are donating their assistance to this project. The only cost that will be incurred is for hosting the website. I have \$1,000 for hosting and initial setup. The website will be able to be maintained in the future by payments from churches when it goes public as a resource for churches to use.

Promotion: Promoting www.hambric-brooks.hilleys.com will be an ongoing process. Social media will be the most cost-effective way to promote the site. Promotion of www.hambric-brooks.hilleys.com at the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship Fall and Spring Convocations and at various other events hosted by Moderate Baptists will also be important.

SECTION 6: POSTSCRIPT

This project represents an attempt to help Moderate Baptist congregations who are in decline think through their current situation as a church in their community and to help them to process and evaluate the information they have discovered. The goal of this project is to help these churches in decline become revitalized. The work helps churches examine where they are currently in the process of revitalization and is designed to help them develop new strategies for healthy growth within their ministry context.

This dissertation is not intended to be a best practices approach to revitalization, but it contains some information and principles that can be applied to churches in decline. The artifact for this project utilizes a website that will host mini webinars on various topics relating to revitalization of the Moderate Baptist church. The webinars will include power points, handouts, and a time of reflection and brainstorming to direct leaders of congregations through the revitalization process.

When churches are experiencing decline, budget restraints are a real possibility, and this resource needs to be made available for widespread use among churches in decline. This approach was chosen to allow the leadership of a congregation to work together in resolving the issue of decline without the expense of traveling to a conference. They can gather around a computer or a projection screen in a conference room or classroom in their church and participate in the process together. This allows the webinar to be utilized upon a global scale.

This project is just the starting point for church revitalization. There will need to be continual research done in this area. Churches will continually need to reinvent themselves as culture continues to change. Decline is being experienced in most

denominations today, but there are numerous churches that are continuing to grow. Research into churches that are experiencing growth needs to continue. Principles for growth that can be applied to various churches need to be continually discussed.

This topic of church decline and revitalization is currently being examined by many notable scholars and will continue to be a topic of study and conversation until the church experiences a time of growth and resurgence. A couple of other topics for research in this area that need to be explored further are “The Nones,” and “The Dones.” “The Nones” are a segment of the population in America that is continually on the rise. They are the religiously non-affiliated. They are not necessarily Atheist or Agnostics; they may believe in God, but they choose not to be a part of organized religion. “The Dones” are people who have been involved in churches in the past that have become disenfranchised with the church due to various reasons and have quit attending. Together, these groups make up a considerable number of people who are not attending churches. Research needs to continue into both of these groups to provide information on how churches can know what the best approach is to build relationship’s with and healing among these segments of the population.

Church decline is a real problem among Moderate Baptists and many other denominations. It is a topic that is constantly being discussed on blogs and websites, and in meetings. Revitalization of the church can take place, but it is hard work. The “Bride of Christ” will always be present, but it may not continually look the same as it always has. The hope of this project is to get Moderate Baptist churches discussing the possibilities for the future of the church, and to help Moderate Baptist churches experience a time of revitalization and to see the possibilities of a bright future.

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APPENDIX: ARTIFACT

The link to the Artifact Revitalizing The Heart of Moderate Baptist Churches website is as follows: <http://hambric-brooks.hilleys.com>.

Below are some screen shots to show you how the site operates. There is an Overview video on the opening page of the site followed by ten operational pages. On each additional page there is a Power Point that automatically advances with a recorded MP3 audio track. Each page also contains a worksheet to go along with the Power Point that leaders are able to utilize as they work with their team on the revitalization process. This site was designed so technically a church can go through the webinar without the need of an outside facilitator.

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Revitalizing The Heart Of Moderate Baptist Churches

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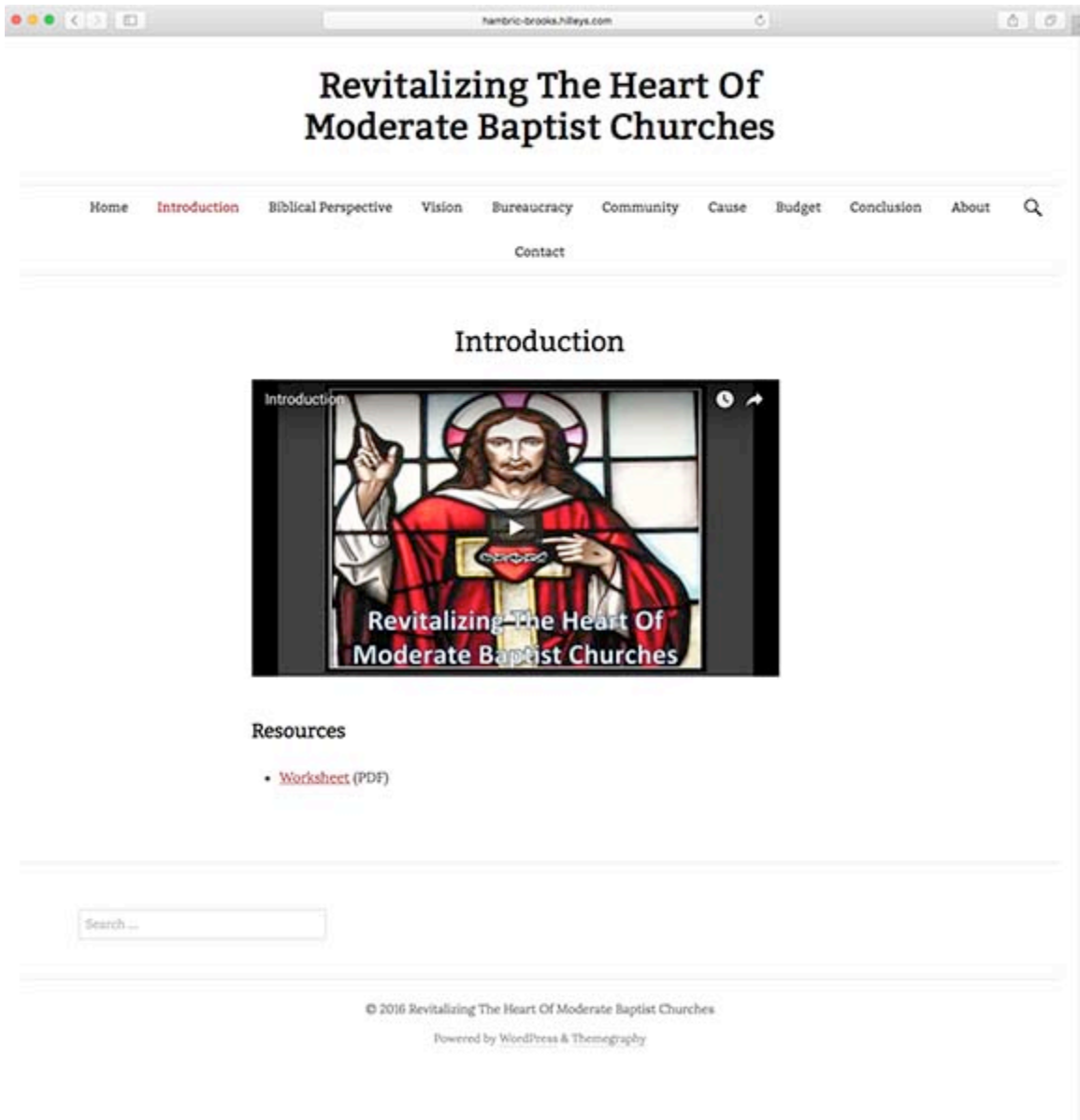
Revitalizing The Heart Of Moderate Baptist Churches

[Home](#) [Introduction](#) [Biblical Perspective](#) [Vision](#) [Bureaucracy](#) [Community](#) [Cause](#) [Budget](#) [Conclusion](#) [About](#) [Contact](#)

Overview for Revitalizing The Heart Of Moderate Baptist Churches

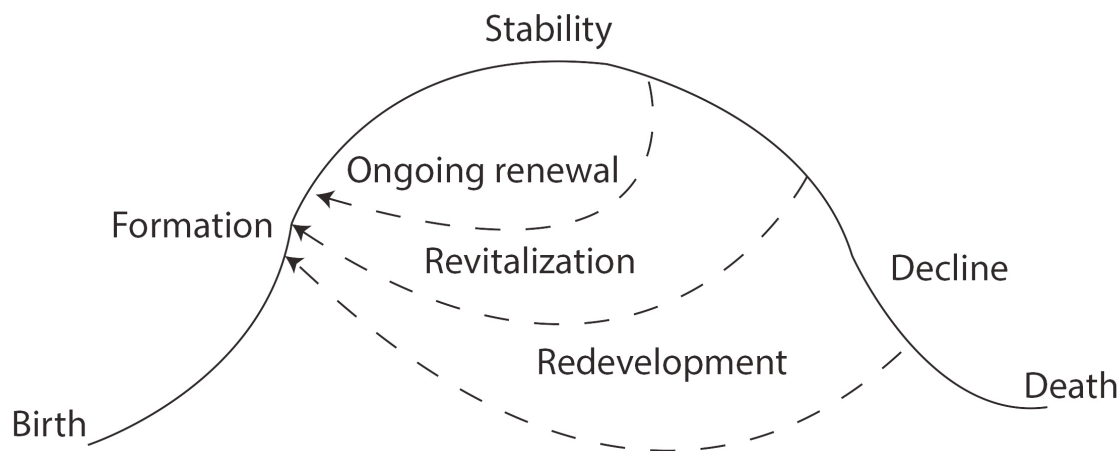


If you are interested in knowing more about revitalization of The Moderate Baptist Church I encourage you to explore this website. Beginning with the Introduction each section is designed to be viewed by leaders with a leadership team from your church. Each section has a Powerpoint with audio and a PDF worksheet for the group to fill out and work through together. This website is designed to help you figure out what "revitalization" looks like in your congregation.



Session 1: Introduction

Renewal, Revitalization, Redevelopment



This chart shows loops back to the formation stage of three different points in the life cycle. Adapted from Dr. Alice Mann's *"Can Our Church Live."*

Where is your church in the "Life Cycle"?

The Big Picture

What are the top five strengths of our church?

What are the top five weaknesses of our church?

The collective top five for the leadership team:

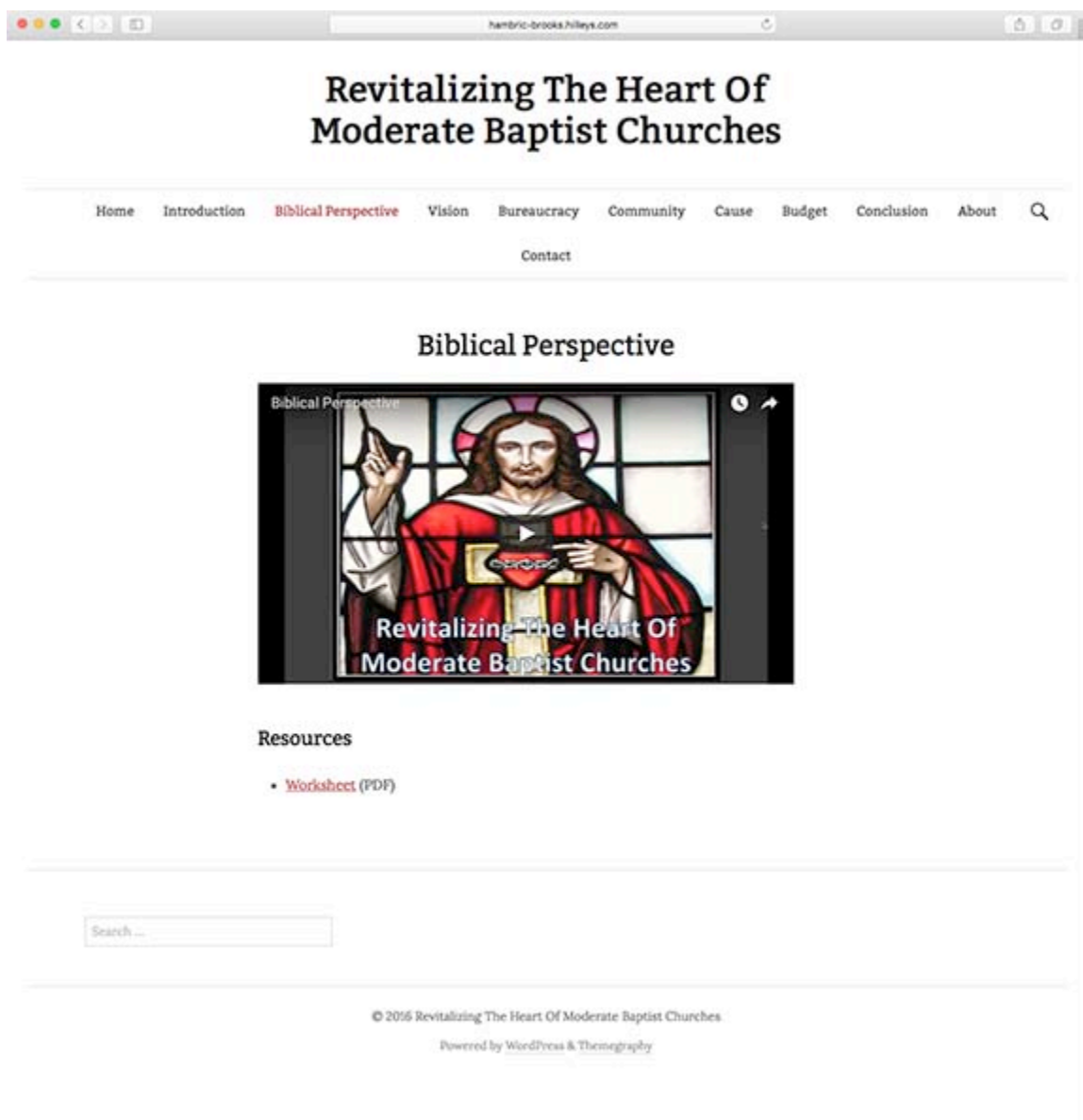
Strengths

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.

Weaknesses

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.

What are five hindrances your church may experience to the revitalization process?



Session 2: Biblical Perspective

1. Revitalization begins with _____.
2. The process needs to be _____ in prayer. (Prayer for the Church, community, and the lost)
3. “The early church did not grow because of _____, they grew because of Prayer and the Holy Spirit.” From *If My People Pray* by Randy Maxwell.
4. Prayer helps us put our _____ rather than ourselves.
5. Revitalization requires _____.

Scriptural Support on Prayer for Revitalization

Rejoice always, pray continually, give thanks in all circumstances; for this is God’s will for you in Christ Jesus. 1Thes. 5:16-18.

“For though we live in the world, we do not wage war as the world does. The weapons we fight with are not the weapons of the world. On the contrary, they have divine power to demolish strongholds.” 2 Corinthians 10:3-4

“Therefore I tell you, whatever you ask for in prayer, believe that you have received it, and it will be yours.” Mark 11:24

“If any of you lacks wisdom, you should ask God, who gives generously to all without finding fault, and it will be given to you. But when you ask, you must believe and not doubt, because the one who doubts is like a wave of the sea, blown and tossed by the wind.” James 1:5-6

“Instead of being worried about anything, instead in prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God.” Philippians 4:6-7

“And I will do whatever you ask in my name, so that the Father may be glorified in the Son. You may ask me for anything in my name, and I will do it.” John 14:13-14

Jesus said, “If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you, ask what you will and it will be done for you.” John 15:7

The role of the Holy Spirit in Revitalization

Keys to growth are Prayer and the Holy Spirit, _____.

The Holy Spirit is an _____ in many churches.

Ezekiel 37

“Again he said to me, ‘Prophesy to these bones, and say to them, O dry bones, hear the word of the Lord. Thus says the Lord God to these bones: Behold, I will cause breath to enter you, and you shall live. And I will lay sinews upon you, and will cause flesh to come upon you, and cover you with skin, and put breath in you, and you shall live; and you shall know that I am the Lord.’ So I prophesied as I was commanded; and as I prophesied, there was a noise, and behold, a rattling; and the bones came together, bone to its bone. And as I looked, there were sinews on them, and flesh had come upon them, and skin had covered them; but there was no breath in them. Then he said to me, ‘Prophesy to the breath, prophesy, son of man, and say to the breath, Thus says the Lord God: Come from the four winds, O breath, and breathe upon these slain, that they may live.’”

Homework

Who are the leaders that you need to pray for in the revitalization process?

What strengths from the SWAT analysis at the end of section one could be assets to revitalization?

What weaknesses from the SWAT analysis at the end of section one should be addresses for revitalization to take place?

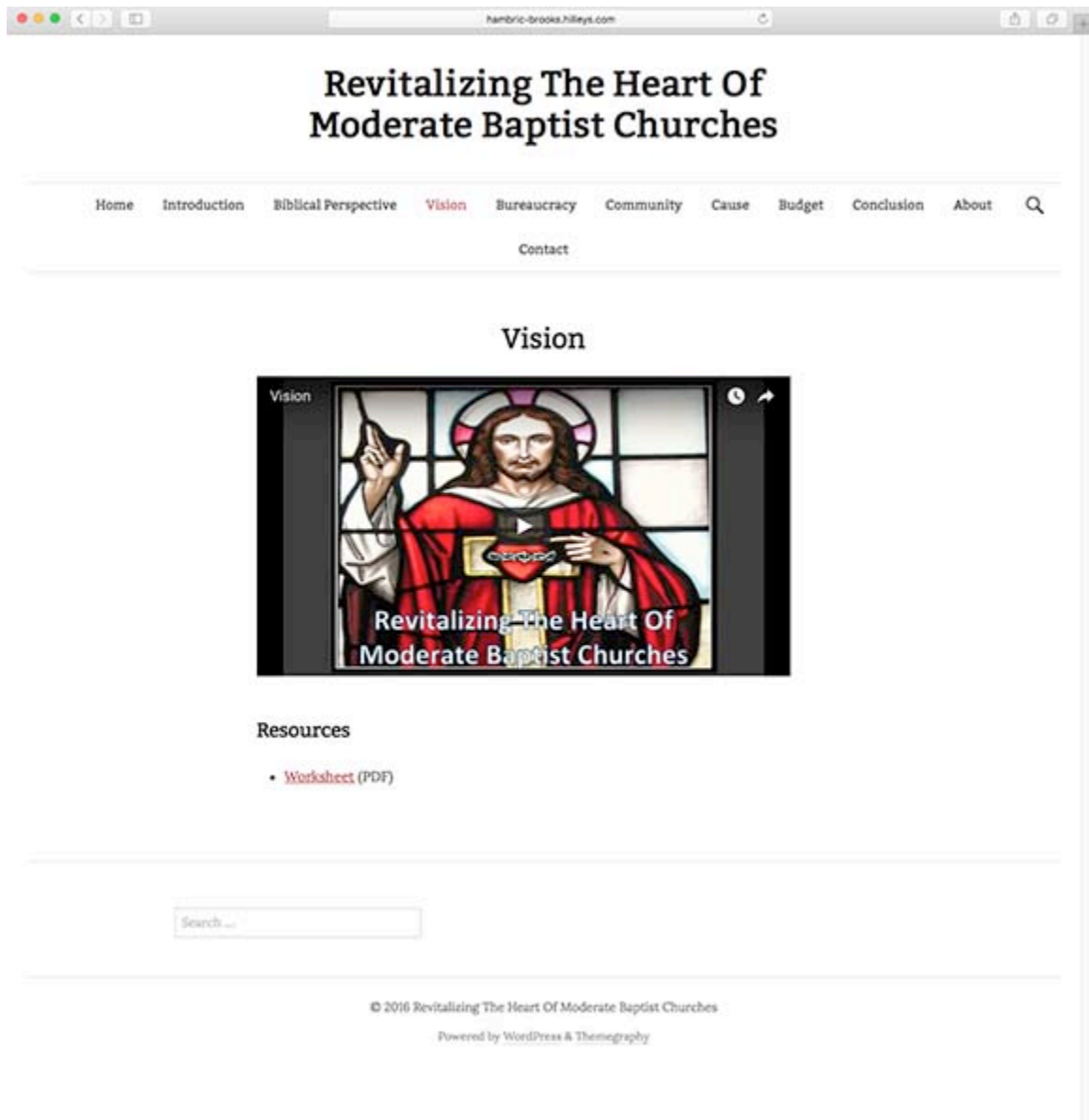
Are there certain hindrances to revitalization that need to be lifted up before God in prayer?

Examine programing in these areas of the church-Worship, Discipleship, Evangelism, Ministry, Outreach, and Missions.

Is most of the programing focused on needs and desires of those who attend the church?

Spend time in prayer over these areas: specifically asking for guidance on whether they need to continue like they are, or do some need to be discontinued.

Pray for guidance from the Holy Spirit on beginning new initiatives to meet the needs of the community in which the church is located.



Vision

1. What is the dirty word?
_____.
2. The vision of the church needs to be _____
and _____ so people understand
exactly what they are being asked to do as a church.

3. Visions require _____ attention.
4. A Sanctuary is a “safe place” to take _____.
5. When a church has a clear precise vision it creates a _____ or at the minimum a _____ for the church to follow, the people have a common goal to work toward with a clear vision.
6. The church needs to develop a vision that not only meets the needs of the people in the church, but it also has to have an _____.
7. There will always be a correlation between what God puts on the _____ of a church to do and what he is up to in the world at large.

HOMEWORK

Does your church have a clear, focused, vision?

If so, does your church keep this vision at the forefront of discussions involving ministry?

If not...I want your group to do a little exercise...Discuss together what is your church concerned with in your community? What ministry opportunities do you see?

Do these concerns continually come up in the life and conversations of your church and the members?

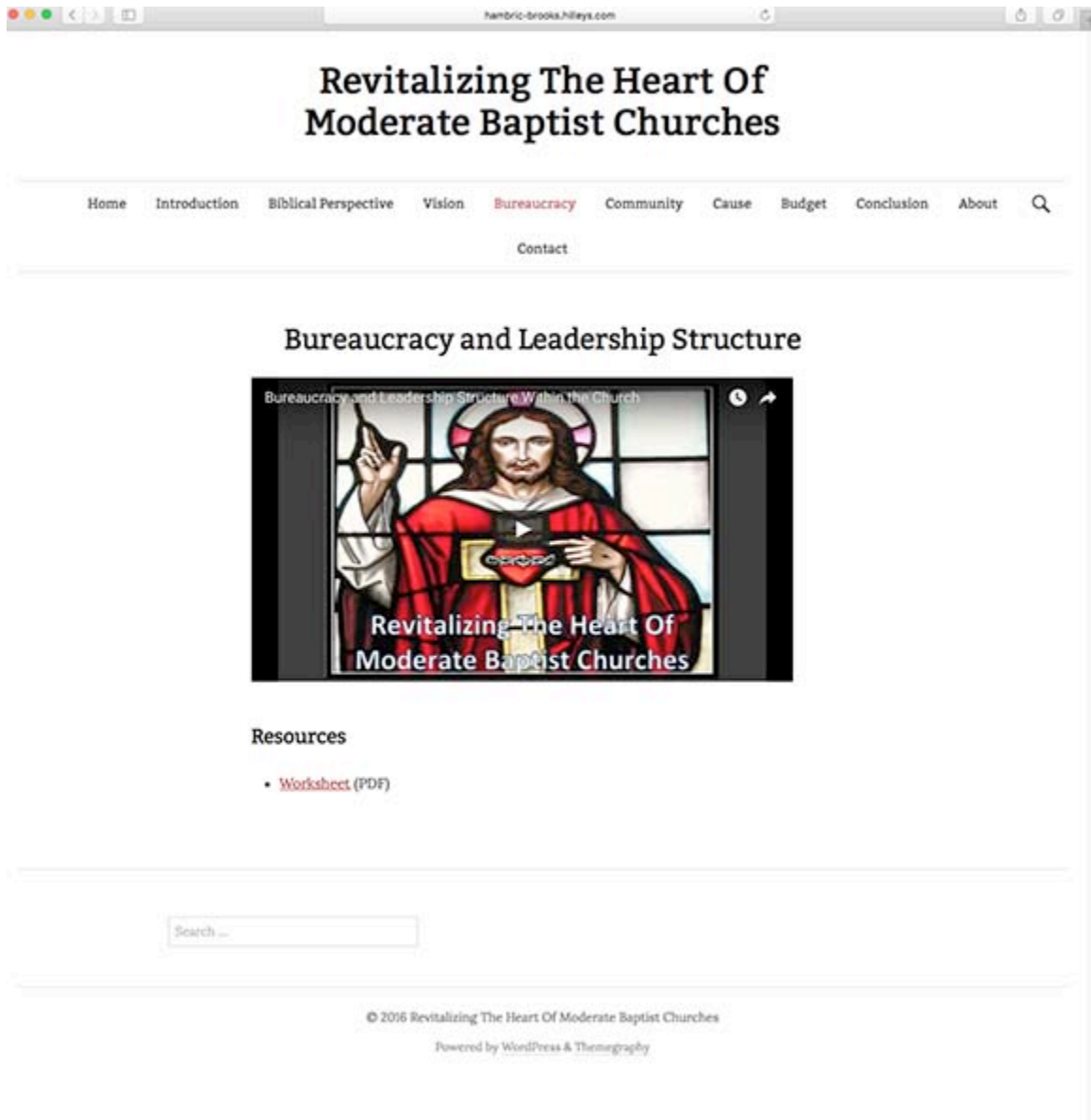
Begin to pray about these concerns and see where God is at work in this process.

Write down your churches desires for the community.

Write down the opportunities for ministry within your community.

Merge your churches desire with the opportunities for ministry and you should have a feasible vision for your church.

Make sure your vision statement is clear, and focused. Make sure to continually keep your vision before the people of the congregation so they will know the direction that the church is moving.



Bureaucracy and Leadership Structure Within the Church

1. Creating more structure (bureaucracy) won't fix your organizational problems, unless that structure is created to support your _____.
2. People want to have a _____ in the directional processes of the church.
3. Bureaucracy in churches and denominations begin for the good of the institution but eventually they can choke out _____.
4. Time is a _____. In _____ of two parent families both parents work. The average family has _____.

5. Heavily centralized and hierarchical organizations tend to concentrate power and gradually compel all _____, stifling innovation, creativity, and opposing new ideas.
6. One size does not _____.
7. A church should _____ its members to do ministry in the community in which the church is located.
8. Churches have to be careful about the systems they create and _____ them to make sure they bring glory to Christ.
9. Churches can be successful at gaining new leaders by setting up a _____.
10. Terms should be limited to _____ with at least one year off in between times of service.
11. Providing ways for people to fulfill their dreams helps make a church _____.

Homework

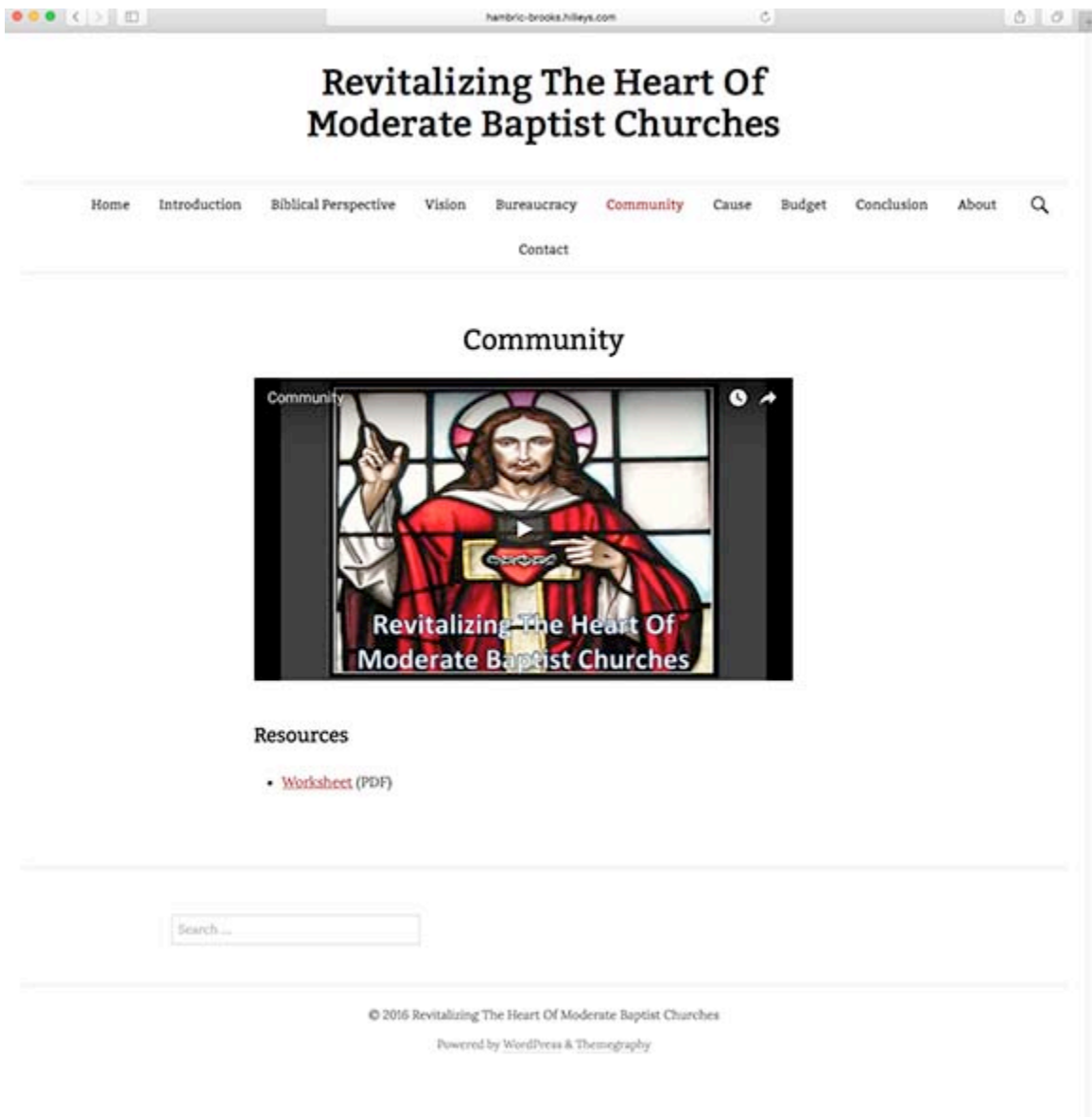
Does your churches structure inhibit the growth of new leadership or does it help in equipping new leadership?

How long does it usually take for new members to become involved in the decision making process with in your church?

Are you intentional about assimilation of new members into the life of the church?
Do your committees, teams, councils, or other leadership and advisor groups have limits on service tenure?

If not how do you think your church would react if you try to impose term limits for service?

How many years do you think would be appropriate to limit terms to? Think through if you think there needs to be an overlap so everyone doesn't rotate off at once? Is there a need for some constancy in leadership?



Community

1. Authentic community, where people can be themselves and do life with one another, is a way that churches can _____.
2. People are looking for places where they can belong, tell their story, and _____.

3. _____ is the way that people experience God together.
4. What matters the most in forming community is not the specifics of the ritual, but _____ with people who are known and trusted.
5. _____ are a great way to help create community in a church setting.
6. Small groups can be seen as a program, but they are programing based on _____.
7. _____; programs do not. People discover people in significant relational groups, not in a merry-go-round of programs and activities.
8. Small groups are not just to build relationships among the community of the church; they are also utilized to build _____ among believers.
9. Most of the time a person comes to know Christ _____ with another believer.
10. Instead of being sermon and audience focused the church should be a place of meaningful _____.
11. In our fast paced individualistic society people are _____.

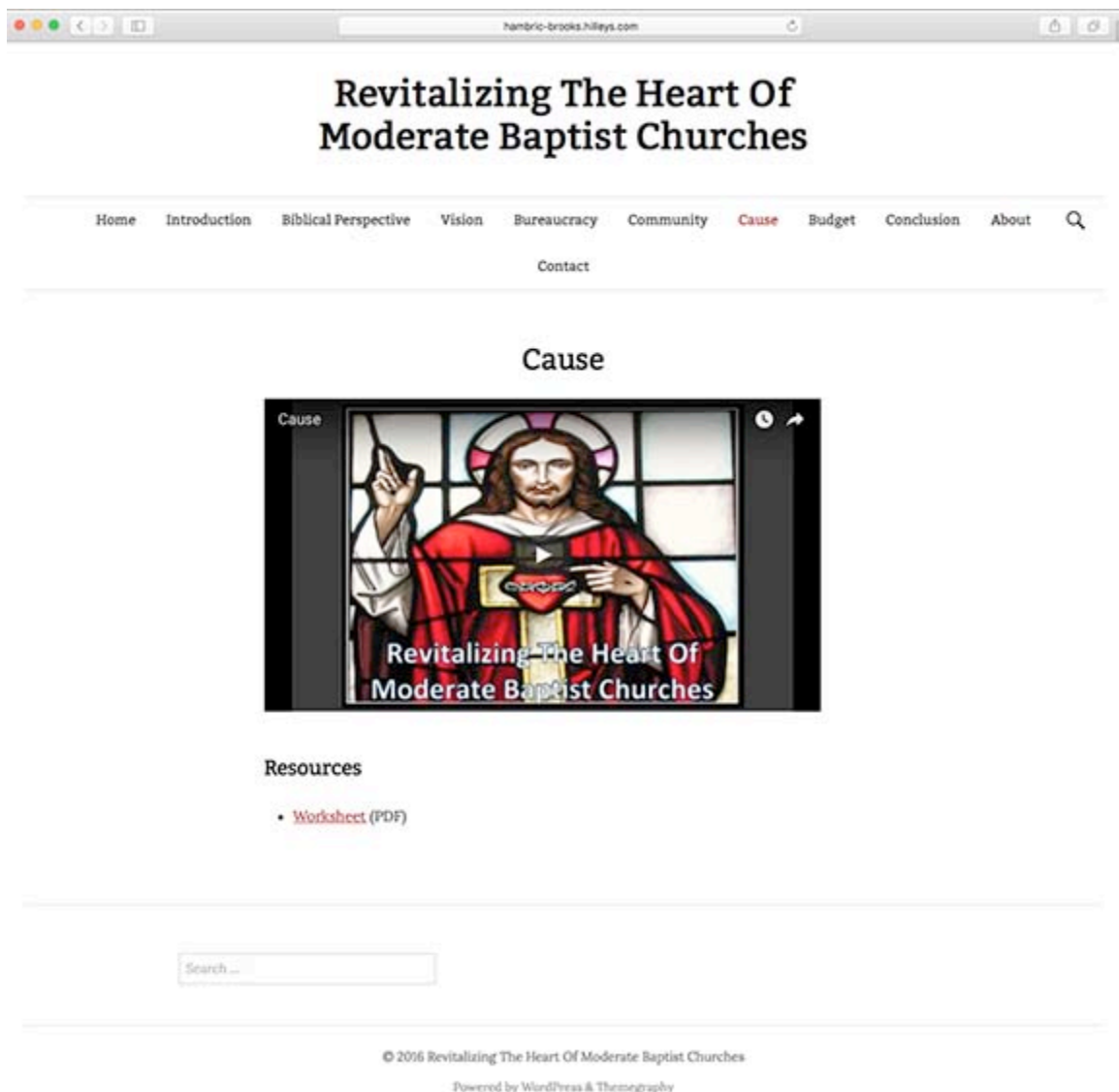
Homework

Does your church have a strong sense of community among its attenders?

If not what are some ways you feel like your church could develop a sense of community?

Are small group ministries an option that can be added to your programing to foster community within your context?

Development of community has to be intentional, what are some ways you can create intentional times and places for community to develop?



CAUSE/FRESH EXPRESSIONS

1. _____ helps to develop the community.
2. The problem with many churches is their causes are _____.
3. Many in our society know the scripture and they want the church to reflect the scripture with its actions. The church is called to love, and love is an _____.

4. Rather than doing things for the poor, churches need to do things _____ the poor.
5. Christ calls people to love their neighbor in scripture, but you cant love what you _____.
6. Therefore many churches do not reach out to their community, because many communities don't have the same _____ as the people who attend the church.
7. Churches need to _____ from internal causes to the causes that are pervasive in the surrounding communities so they can make an impact on the community of which they are a part.
8. The Fresh Expressions movement is looking at an old landscape, the church, through a _____.
9. A Fresh Expression is a form of church for the _____, established primarily for the benefit of those who are not yet part of any church.
10. Fresh Expressions are a way for the church to _____ on the community in which it is located.

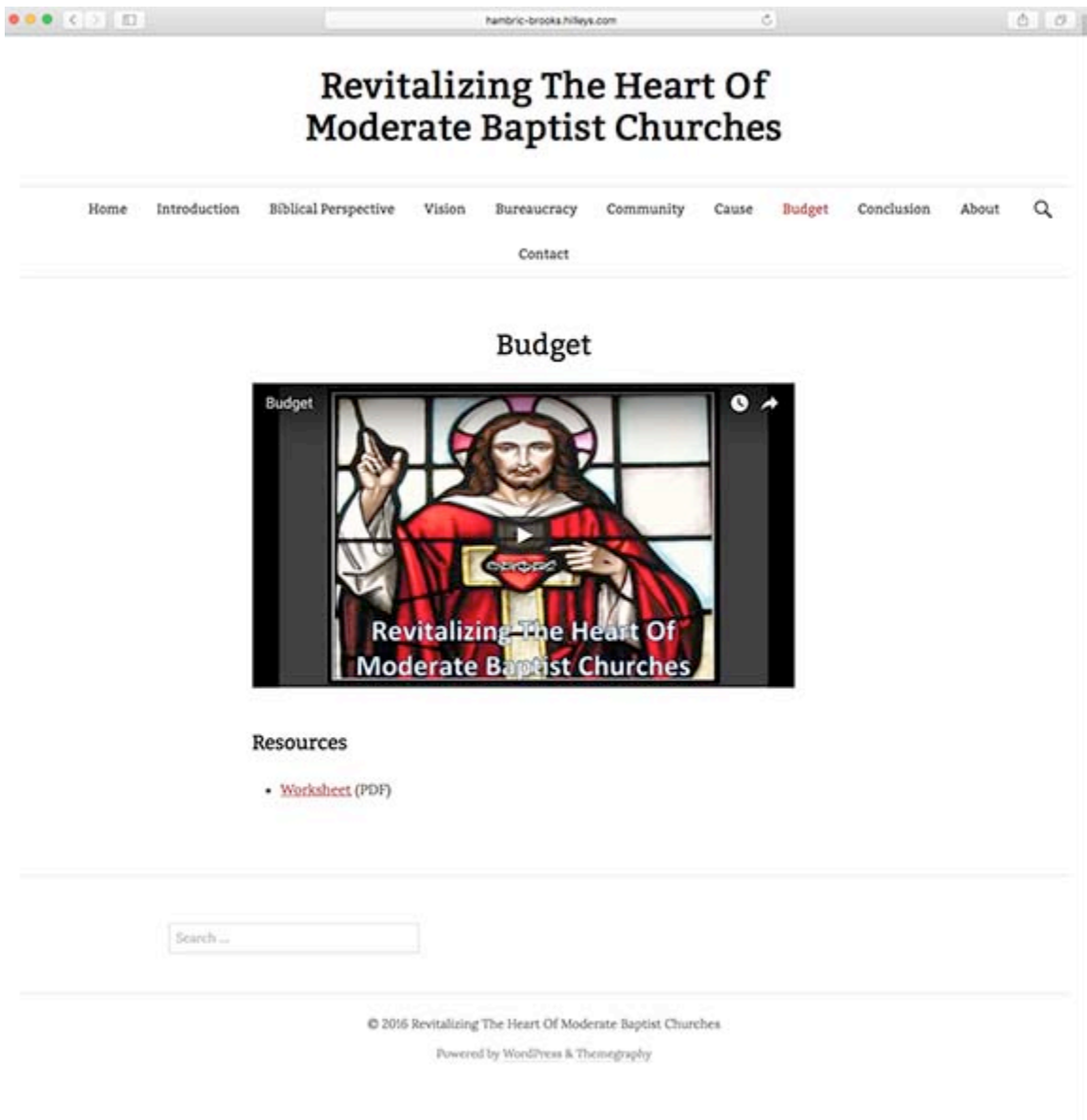
HOMEWORK

Examine ways your church can rally around a “cause” and meet the needs of your community? (Teen Pregnancy, Illiteracy, Poverty)

Are their organizations doing good works in your community that your church can join in helping to make a difference?

Invite people to help with the “Cause,” form ministry opportunities around “causes.”

These ministry opportunities around a common cause can help form community.



Budget

1. Many Moderate Baptist churches allocate well over _____ of their budget to building upkeep, and staff salaries.
2. The average moderate Baptist church allocates _____ to missions and outreach.
3. If the church does not have areas of their budget focused on reaching the community _____ of the church building it should rethink its budget.

4. Spend 20 minutes looking at your church's budget, and you'll quickly be able to tell its _____.
5. A church can apply the Google "_____" framework to their budgeting process which would allow for creativity and outward focused ministry opportunities.
6. This allocated twenty percent allows for dreams to become _____ and it also allows for failures. An organization that isn't failing often isn't succeeding.

Homework

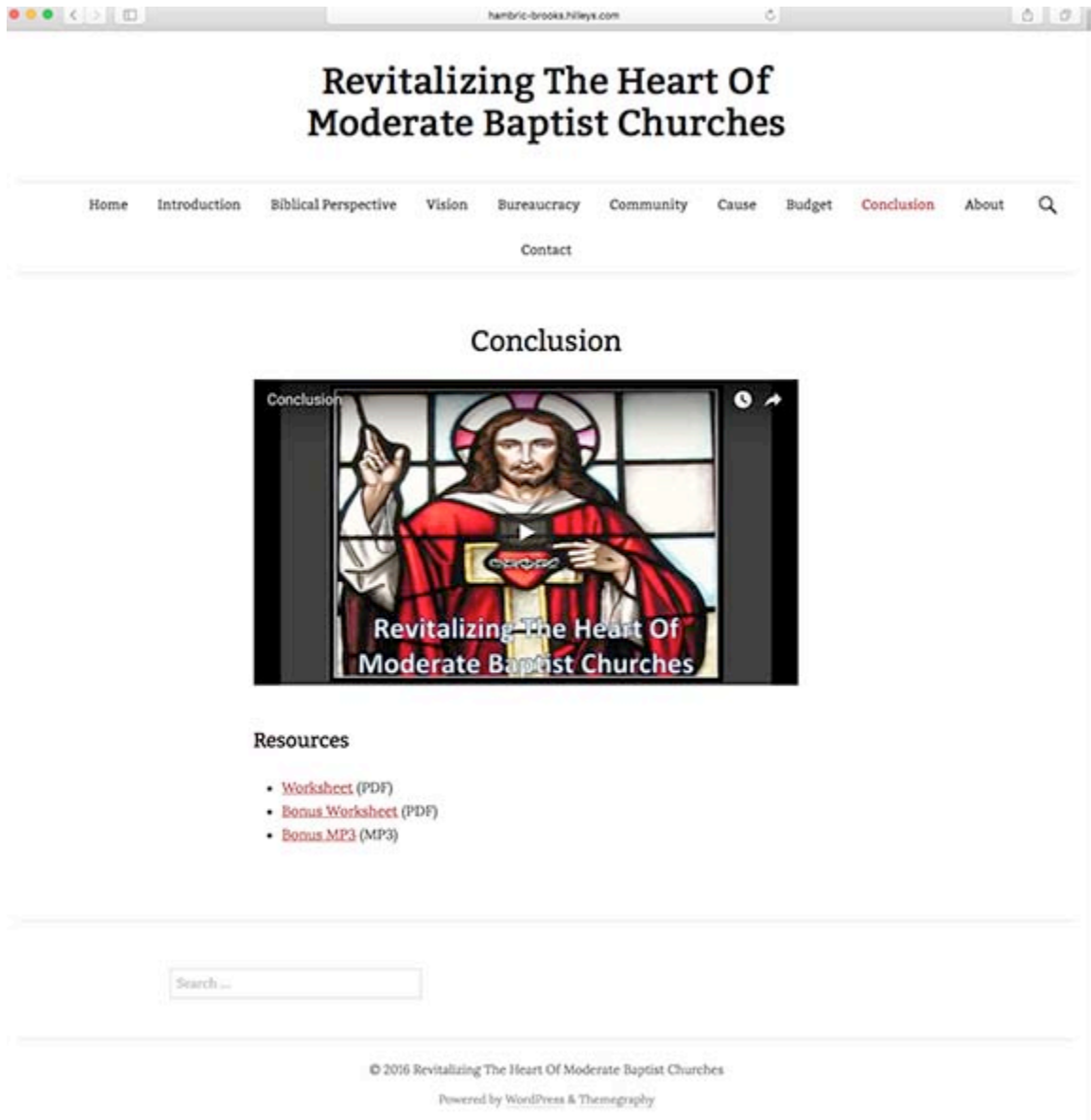
What percent of your budget is allocated to staff salaries and building upkeep?

How much of your money is allocated to missions?

Is there any freedom in your budget to allow for new initiatives?

Are there places in your budget that you can cut or decrease the amount allocated if needed, to allow for new initiatives?

To allow for new programing with external focus' there may be a need to cut some internal programing, how can you decide which programing may need to be cut. If you identified the causes in your community, how much money in your budget is allocated to make a difference in those causes.



CONCLUSION

1. Christians are in a time and place where there is a desperate need for one to _____.
2. There is no “_____” program to implement to experience church growth. Some principles may be transferable but each church should _____.
3. The most important factor is that the church practices some form of evangelism to keep its _____ and toward the _____.
4. More than four out of five non-Christian young adults (_____) say they personally know a Christian; but just _____ say the lifestyles of Christians they know are noticeably more positive than the norm.
5. As a church it would be wise to approach viewing people through the _____ of Christ.
6. The approach to the un-churched is different if they are _____ (born again but no longer attending) compared to _____ (never have attended church).
7. The church will not increase in attendance again by looking inward upon itself and meeting its own needs and desires; the church will be who it is called to be when it once again reaches _____.

Homework

What are ways your church can shift its focus to those who are outside of the church?

How dramatic of a shift will it be to move your church to focus on its community?

What are some causes in your community that your church can become involved in?

Who are some people, or age segment that are missing from your church? What are some ways that you can build some relationships with that demographic within your community?

Where do the missing people “hang out” in your community?

Rethink your strategies for reaching those who are not attending church, involve all age groups in the discussion for the missing components from your church. Bonus

BONUS-Ideas

Handout water bottles at the next citywide event, these events maybe fundraisers for schools, local races, and sporting events. Have each participant wearing a shirt that identifies him or her as being a part of your church.

Do a gas buy-down. Create a traffic jam with this idea. Have people pumping gas at the gas station but cutting the price per gallon by .25 or .50. Whatever your budget can afford. Do this for a two- hour time slot. You will pay the difference to the gas station between your price and the regular price. Wash the customers windshield, offer to check their tire pressure and oil level. Make sure to wear t-shirts and have signage to tell people who you are. You can probably get the local radio station to announce it for free.

Give out Krispy Kreme Donuts during morning traffic. Set this giveaway up at a freeway off ramp, or a long traffic light, or traffic island. Hand out boxes of doughnuts, some glazed, some chocolate. Make sure to watch out for traffic in your enthusiasm.

Provide block parties for neighborhoods during the spring and summer months.

Have parties of appreciation for the local police, Firemen, or EMT's

Offer single mom oil changes

Blood pressure screenings

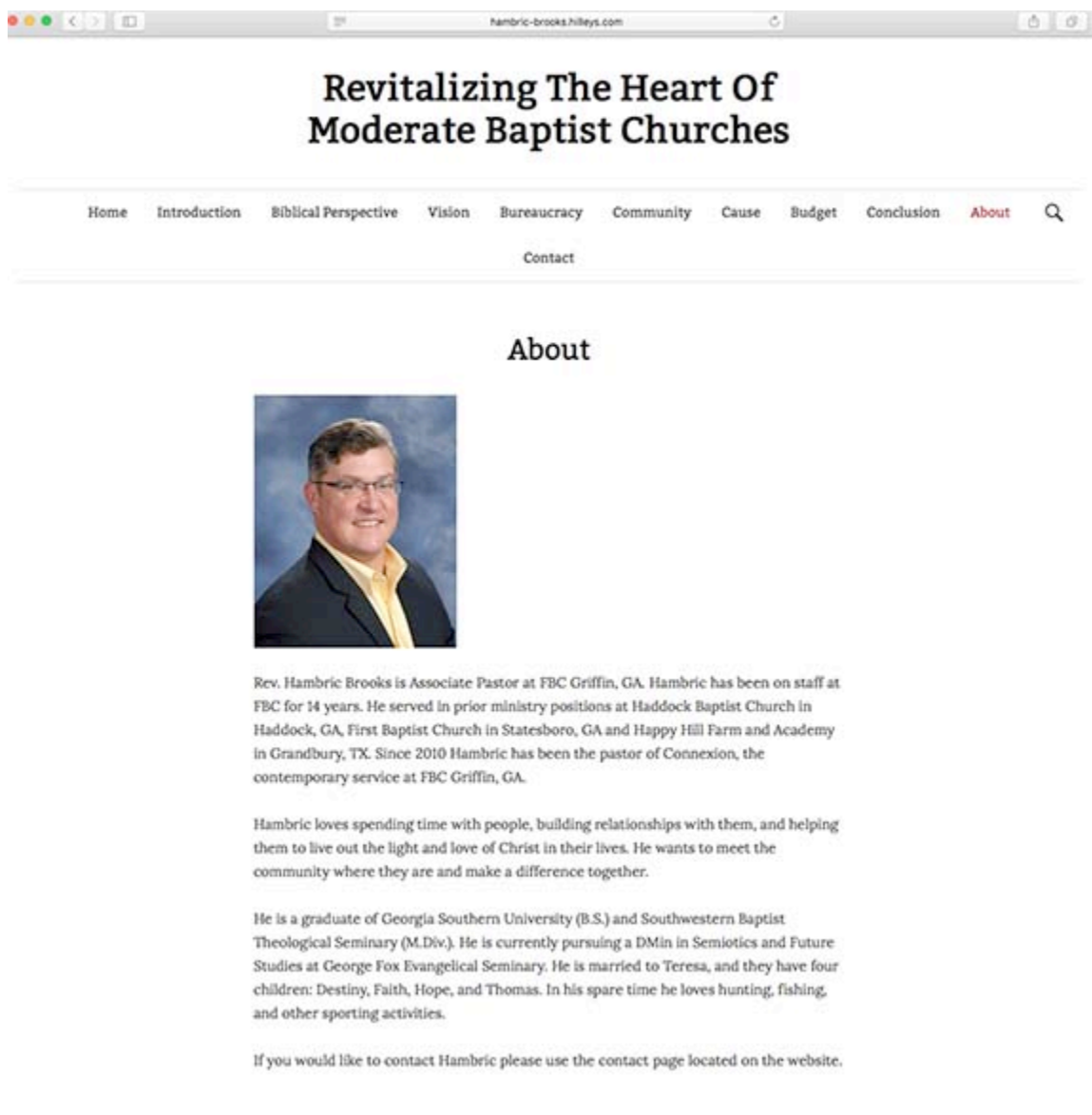
Tutoring services after school with retired teachers as instructors.

Provide school supplies for needy families

Smoke detector battery replacement.

Move in welcome parties. Be strategic; provide them with the first meal in their new home. Provide them some items they may have forgotten like shelf paper, Cleaning supplies, and light bulbs.

The possibilities are endless. Put your leadership teams head together and brainstorm some fresh ways your church can become visible to people in your community continually thinking of ways to reach out to people, and make a difference in their lives.



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Moderate Baptist Churches

[Home](#) [Introduction](#) [Biblical Perspective](#) [Vision](#) [Bureaucracy](#) [Community](#) [Cause](#) [Budget](#) [Conclusion](#) [About](#) [Contact](#)

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