

Congregational Vitality - Bibliography -

44 Questions for Congregational Self-Appraisal, by Lyle Schaller (Abingdon, 1998)
ISBN 0687088402

Schaller author directs the reader to the crucial questions a church must ask itself if it is to understand its mission and the course it must chart in order to achieve that mission. He shows church leaders how not to become trapped by "means to an end" questions (real estate, staffing, money, and schedules) and focus instead on questions related to the congregation's distinctive mission (identity, purpose, role, and God's call) and message. Note that the Evangelical Covenant Church is listed in the various charts in the book. (NOTE: This book is available in the following formats: Adobe Reader (E-book), Microsoft Desktop Reader (E-book), and print edition.)

Becoming a Healthy Church: Ten Traits of a Vital Ministry, by Stephen Macchia (Baker, 2004) ISBN 0801065038

Macchia explores how to move beyond church growth to church health. He notes that healthy growth is a process requiring risk-taking, lifestyle changes, and ongoing evaluation. This is a practical guide that lays out how to launch your church into a process of change.

Becoming a Healthy Church: Workbook, by Stephen Macchia (Baker, 2001) ISBN 0801091187

This companion workbook to *Becoming a Healthy Church*, provides summaries of the ten characteristics of a healthy church and looks at seven key questions that need to be answered by every leadership team. Each of the seven questions forms a step in the ministry planning process, which will help you and your church leaders assess the health of your church, realize its potential, and become unified with a plan toward greater health and vitality.

Behavioral Covenants in Congregations: A Handbook for Honoring Differences, by Gilbert R. Rendle (Alban Institute) ISBN 1566992095

This down-to-earth workbook gets to the heart of modern congregational life: how to live creatively together despite differences of age, race, culture, opinion, gender, theological or political position. Alban Senior Consultant Gil Rendle explains how to grow by valuing our differences rather than trying to ignore or blend them.

Beyond the First Visit: The Complete Guide to Connecting Guests to Your Church, by Gary L. McIntosh (Baker, 2006) ISBN 0801091845

The author invites you to take another look at your church through the eyes of a first-time guest to identify the things that might be holding them back from a second visit. This is a practical book that provides advice on assessing and improving the ways in which your church attracts people, welcomes them, does follow-up, and brings them into the church family. More than simply offering mere techniques, it gives suggestions for making a welcoming attitude part of the fabric of your church.

Biblical Church Growth, by Gary McIntosh (Baker, 2003) ISBN 080109156X

While church leaders change and trends go out of style, churches built on the foundation of God's Word will remain effective. The author explores the biblical principles for church growth and applies them to today's culture, providing nine principles that provide a foundation for helping both large and small churches achieve vitality and growth.

Breaking the Missional Code: Your Church Can Become a Missionary in Your Community, by Ed Stetzer and David Putnam (B&H Publishing Group, 2006) ISBN 0805443592

Combining studies on theology, ecclesiology and missiology with a vast array of quotes and insights, this book is a very important book for pastors attempting to transition churches from programmatic to missional or for planters seeking to learn the "code" of the culture where they are planting.

Breakout Churches, by Thom Rainer (Zondervan, 2005) ISBN 031025745X

According to the author, 80 percent of the approximately 400,000 churches in the United States are either declining or at a plateau. He tells the stories of 13 churches that moved from stagnancy to growth and from mediocrity to greatness. Along the way, Rainer explores the process of becoming a "breakout" church and the factors that lead to this spiritual metamorphosis.

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Can Our Church Live? Redeveloping Churches in Decline, by Alice Mann (Alban Institute, 1999) ISBN 1-56699-226-5

Mann explains how the natural life cycle of a congregation, as well as other internal and external factors, can produce a congregation that is in real trouble. She offers hope with practical options for congregations, leadership challenges for laity and clergy, and ways to work with denominations. Includes questions for discussion.

Christian Formation in the Local Church (Department of Christian Formation, ECC) – available from the Covenant Resource Center, 1-800-338-IDEA(4332) or resource.center@covchurch.org; may also be downloaded at www.covchurch.org.

Christian formation encompasses the key elements of the mission of the church. This statement applies to the local church, the denomination and the Church universal. The transformation of individual lives has always been a primary goal for the church. The introductory pages of this resource provide a definition for Christian formation and the various settings and agents that encourage Christian formation to take place. The four-session discussion guide is designed to help a church evaluate its ministry in terms of Christian formation by exploring the following questions:

- What are you doing that encourages Christian formation?
- What are you doing well?
- What are you doing that needs improvement?
- What areas of Christian formation are missing and need to be added or enhanced?

- The discussion guide could be used as a basis for a one or two day board/council planning retreat or it could be used as a discussion guide for a church board spread over two to four months of regular meetings. The end result of this planning retreat will be an annual calendar of a church's ministry stated in terms of Christian formation. This discussion should include all congregational leaders and pastors so that all see their ministry in the light of Christian formation.

Church of Irresistible Influence, by Robert Lewis (Zondervan, 2003) ISBN 0310250153

An inspiring description and story showing how a church can become an irresistible influence on its neighborhood, community, and world by building bridges over troubled waters to a dying culture through showing the love of God in action.

Church That Works: Your One-Stop Shop for Effective Ministry, by Gary McIntosh (Baker, 2004) ISBN 0801091616

This at-a-glance practical guidebook helps pastors and church leaders with a wide variety of issues, including: reaching different generations, assimilating visitors, following trends, designing worship, danger signs of decline, and many more. Short, to-the point chapters examine trends and ministry methods that can be easily adapted to fit every church's needs.

Comeback Churches, by Ed Stetzer and Mike Dodson (B&H Books, 2007) ISBN 0805445366

It's no secret that most American Evangelical churches are in plateau and decline, but what can anyone do about it? Ed Stetzer and Mike Dodson have developed a good book for helping these churches recapture their sense of calling and vision and get them back on the road to church health.

The Complete Ministry Audit: Added Tools for Understanding Your Congregation, by Bill Easum and Robert Brydia (Abingdon, revised 2006) ISBN 0687497507

This tool gauges your congregation's health and potential for growth. It has long enabled congregations to understand what their particular character is, diagnose their problems and opportunities, and plot strategies to remedy problems and extend their mission into the community. It uses congregational surveys and questionnaires to give church leaders the best tools they can get for plotting their congregation's course. This revised edition makes this resource even more user friendly, with updated questionnaires, new guides to interpreting the data, and more comprehensive electronic tools on the enclosed CD-ROM.

Cracking Your Congregation's Code: Mapping Your Spiritual DNA to Create Your Future, by Robert Norton (Jossey-Bass, 2001) ISBN 0787955337

Discover your unique strengths and values -- and what God wishes for the future of your church. This book guides clergy and lay leaders to create or revisit their mission, vision, and values. The authors' change process will help congregations in any setting refocus on what really matters in ministry: welcoming, nurturing, empowering, and serving new and current members.

Culture Shift: Transforming Your Church from the Inside Out, by Robert Lewis, et. al. (Jossey-Bass, 2005) ISBN 0787975303

Culture Shift, written for church leaders, ministers, pastors, ministry teams, and lay leaders, leads you through the process of identifying your church's distinctive culture, gives you practical tools to change it from the inside-out, and provides

steps to keep your new culture aligned with your church's mission. Real transformation is not about working harder at what you're already doing or even copying another church's approach but about changing church culture at a foundational level.

Direct Hit: Aiming Real Leaders at the Mission Field, by Paul Borden (Abingdon, 2006) ISBN 0687331943

A new pastor sees himself or herself as a leader who anticipates a better for the congregation. However, the congregation tends to perceive the new pastor as someone who ministers to their needs and fulfills a chaplain-type role. The pastor must therefore lead the congregation through systemic change if new life is to be brought into the culture of the congregation. Three teams must be created: TEAM ONE is the prayer team that prays regularly for change and reproduction. TEAM TWO is the dream team that helps the pastor communicate urgency. TEAM THREE consists of leaders who recruit and train other leaders who are committed to urgent change. (Paul Borden is author of *Hit the Bullseye*.)

Discerning Your Congregation's Future, by Oswald and Friedrich (The Alban Institute, 1996)

This self-directed planning model combines prayer with research and discussion to identify God's direction for a congregation. The planning process is written in book form and could be used without the help of an outside consultant. The process is designed to take six to nine months for gathering data and considering possible priorities. At the end of the process a community gathering evaluates all the priorities and develops a new mission statement. This model could be used with four or five churches working in consort. Leaders from the churches could meet with a consultant three or four times during the process to evaluate progress, glean from each other and learn the next steps to accomplish before the next meeting. In this example, local church leaders would become the facilitators for their congregation. The process includes the following elements:

1. Ministry Assessment
2. An Evening of Historical Reflection
3. An Evening of Norm Identification
4. Interviewing Key People in the Community
5. Prioritizing Goals
6. The Congregational Meeting
7. Developing a Mission Statement

Eating the Elephant: Leading the Established Church to Growth, by Thom Rainer (Pinnacle Pub., 2003) ISBN 097423060X

The authors have written *Eating the Elephant* to show that a church can change and grow if you move at a pace that fits the church's situation, if you eat the elephant one bite at a time.

The Externally Focused Church, by Rick Rusaw and Eric Swanson (Group, 2004) ISBN 0764427407

Learn from churches that have made serving their communities a priority: Attract new believers and reach hurt and skeptical people through service; Help your members deepen their spiritual commitment through service; Discover practical ways to change your community.

From Embers to a Flame: How God Can Revitalize Your Church, by Harry Reeder P & R Publishing, 2005) ISBN 1596380462

Whether your church is healthy or struggling, the principles in this book point the way to greater spiritual vitality. The author specializes in church revitalization— alerting congregations of potential problems, helping them see their weaknesses and opportunities, and guiding them to apply biblically based strategies for rekindling flames of growth.

From Nomads to Pilgrims: Stories from Practicing Congregations, by Diana Butler Bass and Joseph Stewart-Sicking (The Alban Institute, 2005) No. AL313; ISBN 1-56699-323-7

A follow-up to *The Practicing Congregation: Imagining a New Old Church*, this book tells the extended stories of a dozen congregations that have been on a pilgrimage to vitality—retrieving and reworking Christian practice, tradition, and narrative. These are stories of congregations that have found a new sense of purpose through Christian practices that they have made their own. Each in its own way has discovered a renewed sense of identity and mission on the pilgrimage to vitality.

The Habits of Five Highly Effective Churches, by George Barna (Regal, 1999) ISBN

One of the ministry secrets among highly effective churches is reliance upon good habits. A habit is a repeated behavior. Highly effective churches have a transforming impact on people's lives because they have developed habits that facilitate specified ministry outcomes – outcomes that are consistent with Scripture and that emphasize life transformation. The Nine Habits include:

1. Rely upon strategic leadership.
2. Organize to facilitate highly effective ministry.
3. Emphasize developing significant relationships within the congregation.
4. Congregants invest themselves in genuine worship.
5. Engage in strategic evangelism.
6. Get people involved in systematic theological growth.
7. Utilize holistic stewardship practices.
8. Serve the needy people in the community.
9. Equip families to minister to themselves.

This book provides good discussion material for boards or planning committees. At times the book is very prescriptive but it still prompts good discussion. Two surveys are available to support the teaching of this book and they can provide insight into your church. The "Personal Spiritual Inventory" and "The Highly Effective Church Inventory" are self-scored surveys and can be purchased from www.barna.org; 1-800-55-BARNA; 5528 Everglades St, Ventura, CA 93003.

Hit the Bullseye: How Denominations Can Aim Congregations at the Mission Field, by Paul D. Borden (Abingdon, 2003) ISBN 0687043719

This is a book about a significant turn-around of a middle-level administration of justice in one Protestant denomination, and it does offer hope that other like administrations might be able to experience a better and more effective existence. Everyone's experience is unique and therefore cannot be replicated. However, the implementation of foundational all-encompassing principles, the development of new strategies, and the performance of specific tactics that are successful in one situation does offer hope to others that their modeling of the principles, adapting the strategies, and creating specific tactics to fit their context can bring change.

Holy Conversations: Strategic Planning as a Spiritual Practice for Congregations, by Gil Rendle and Alice Mann (Alban Institute, 2003) ISBN 1-56699-286-9

The authors cast planning as a "holy conversation," a congregational discernment process about three critical questions: Who are we? What has God called us to do or be? Who is our neighbor? They then equip congregational leaders with a broad and creative range of ideas, pathways, processes, and tools for planning.

How Your Church Family Works: Understanding Congregations as Emotional Systems, by Peter Steinke (Alban Institute, 2006) ISBN 1-5669-329-6

Steinke shows how to recognize and deal with the emotional roots of such issues as church conflict, leadership roles, congregational change, irresponsible behavior, and the effects of family of origin on current relationships.

Kicking Habits: Welcome Relief for Addicted Churches, by Tom Bandy (Abingdon, 2001) ISBN 0687049342

Offers twenty truths that thriving churches have discovered. Good reading for anyone whose congregation has stagnated, or is caught up in a seemingly irreversible decline.

Leading Change in the Congregation: Spiritual & Organizational Tools for Leaders, by Gilbert R. Rendle (Alban Institute, 1997) ISBN 1566991870

Excellent insights for planning strategies to help congregations into and through change. A great guide for dealing with the dynamics of change – spiritual, intellectual, and emotional.

Leading Turnaround Churches, by Gene Wood (ChurchSmart, 2001) ISBN 1889638218

Wood offers hope for a turnaround situation and explores topics such as: How to assess if you're a turnaround leader, Scenarios that contribute to plateau and decline, Obstacles to initiating change, and How to develop a compelling vision for the church.

Left Behind in a Megachurch World: How God Works Through Ordinary Churches, by Ruth A. Tucker (Baker, 2006) ISBN 0801012694

After studying various smaller, "plateauing" churches from around the country, the author weaves her interests in church growth and spiritual formation to show that smaller churches bear the greatest mantle for Christlikeness. This book shatters the myth that only megachurches are leading the way for Jesus and shines a spotlight on ordinary churches doing extraordinary deeds.

Managing Transitions: Making the Most of Change, by William Bridges (Perseus Publishing, 2003) ISBN 0738208248

Veteran consultant William Bridges maintains that situational change (corporate mergers, layoffs, bankruptcy, and restructuring) is not as difficult to make as psychological transition. He shows how to minimize the distress and disruptions caused by these changes.

Multigenerational Congregations: Meeting the Leadership Challenge, by Gilbert R. Rendle (Alban Institute, 2001) ISBN 1566992524

Rendle offers alternatives to quick-fix and problem-solving solutions to congregational conflicts.

Natural Church Development, by Christian A Schwarz and Christian Schalk
(ChurchSmart Resources, 1996) Order directly from ChurchSmart at 1-800-253-4276

Critics of the church growth movement have often emphasized the need for quality congregations. We should not focus on numerical growth, but rather, we should concentrate on qualitative growth. Christian Schwarz has done extensive research world-wide and found that healthy, growing churches seem to share eight quality characteristics:

- Empowering leadership
- Gift-oriented ministry
- Passionate spirituality
- Functional structures
- Inspiring worship service
- Holistic small groups
- Need-oriented evangelism
- Loving relationships

NOTE: Several of our regional conferences in the ECC have trained facilitators to lead Covenant churches through this process.

Organic Church: Growing Faith Where Life Happens, by Neil Cole (Jossey-Bass, 2005) ISBN 078798129X

If we want to connect with young people and those who are not coming to church, we must go where people congregate. Cole shows readers how to plant the seeds of the Kingdom of God in the places where life happens and where culture is formed - restaurants, bars, coffeehouses, parks, locker rooms, and neighborhoods. *Organic Church* offers a hands-on guide for demystifying this new model of church and shows the practical aspects of implementing it.

The Pastor's Guide to Growing a Christlike Church (Beacon Hill) ISBN 083-412-1042

In this collection of essays by leaders such as John Maxwell, William Willimon, H.B. London, George Hunter III, Mary Paul, James Earl Massey, and others, you'll discover the keys to creating a spiritually healthy church. Topics include: developing servant leaders, getting church members involved in serving your community, nurturing healthy spirituality in your church, developing authentic Christian community and fellowship, planning worship services that bind church members together, and casting a vision for the future of the church.

Paying Attention: Focusing Your Congregation on What Matters, by Gary Peluso-Verdend (The Alban Institute, 2005) ISBN 1-56699-308-3

In this book, the author issues a call to congregational leaders to refocus their church's attention on the core matters of Christian faith—the Word, the example of Christ, and an intentional embrace of theology and spiritual practice—to renew the congregation's vision and to center itself again on God's call.

The Practicing Congregation: Imagining an Old New Church, by Diana Butler Bass (The Alban Institute) No. AL295; ISBN 1-56699-305-9

The author argues that there are signs that mainline Protestant churches are indeed changing, finding a new vitality intentionally grounded in Christian practices and laying the groundwork for a new type of congregation. She helps readers understand tradition in new ways and creates an alternative path through the culture wars that today arrest the energies of most denominations.

The Present Future: Six Tough Questions for the Church, by Reggie McNeal (Jossey-Bass, 2003) ISBN 0787965685

McNeal identifies the six most important realities that church leaders must address and contends that by changing the questions church leaders ask themselves about their congregations and their plans, they can frame the core issues and approach the future with new eyes, new purpose, and new ideas.

The Purpose-Driven Church, by Rick Warren (Zondervan, 1995)

Rather than asking "What will make our church grow?" we need to be asking "What is keeping our church from growing?" This book is not a step-by-step planning guide or process like most of the other books. Instead it provides an example of how to identify your purpose as a church and organize to make that purpose live in the people of a congregation. This book is easy to read and contains many helpful illustrations and side bars to help a committee use it as a tool to evaluate and rethink its church's ministry.

Raising the Roof: The Pastoral-to-Program Size Transition, by Alice Mann (Alban Institute, 2001) ISBN 1-56699-254-0

Features a five-step process enabling the congregational learning team to engage a wider circle of congregational leaders and members in study, discernment, and planning. Includes discussion of passive barriers to growth—plus Mann's "System Change Index" tool to help congregations measure their progress from pastoral-size to program-size ways of operating.

Seven Practices of Effective Ministry, by Andy Stanley (Multnomah, 2004) ISBN 1590523733

This insightful book speaks to every church leader who yearns for a simpler, more effective approach to ministry. An engaging parable about one overwhelmed pastor is followed by an overview of seven successful team practices, each one developed and applied in a ministry setting. Reinforced by relevant discussion questions, these clear, easy, and strategic practices can turn any ministry into a winning team.

Shaped by God's Heart: The Passion and Practices of Missional Churches, by Milfred Minatrea (Jossey-Bass, 2004) ISBN 0787971111

The author presents the best practices for re-energizing Christian spirituality in a congregational setting. He provides readers with the tools for assessing their congregation's position on the continuum between maintenance and mission and for determining the actions that will move them toward becoming a missional community. He also outlines key strategies that successful churches have used to become relevant in a postmodern society without losing what is distinctly Christian in their spiritual practices.

Simple Church: Returning to God's Process for Making Disciples, by Thom Rainer and Eric Geiger (Broadman and Holman, 2006) ISBN 0805443908

Based on case studies of four hundred American churches, authors Thom Rainer and Eric Geiger prove that the process for making disciples has quite often become too complex. Simple churches are thriving, and they are doing so by taking these four ideas to heart: Clarity. Movement. Alignment. Focus.

Size Transitions in Congregations, edited by Beth Ann Gaede (Alban Institute, 2001) ISBN 1-56699-246-X

Arlin Rothauge and Alice Mann are among the contributors who focus on aspects of size transition.

Small, Strong Congregations: Creating Strengths and Health for Your Congregation, by Kennon Callahan (Jossey-Bass, 2000) ISBN 0787949809

This hands-on book chronicles the emergence of a vast number of congregations that are questioning the bigger-is-better notion in church membership. The author examines the values and qualities helpful for shaping and strengthening small congregations, offering ideas for creating mission and service, compassion and shepherding, community and belonging, self-reliance and self-sufficiency, worship and hope, teams and leaders, space and facilities, and giving and generosity.

Turn Your Church Inside Out: Building a Community for Others, by Walt Kallestad (Augsburg Fortress, 2001) ISBN 0806640340

Kallestad explores how a church can become a mission center—committed to reaching out to others through evangelism and service. He provides ideas and tools to help churches be open to change, innovative, creative, and ready to make a difference in their communities.

Turn-around Churches: How to Overcome Barriers to Growth and Bring New Life to an Established Church, by George Barna (Regal, 1993) ISBN 0830716572

George Barna shows how to overcome barriers to growth and bring new life to an established church.

Your Church Can Thrive: Making the Connections that Build Healthy Congregations, by Harold Percy (Abingdon, 2003) ISBN 0687022568

How will your church grow? The author lays out four main groups of people that churches should seek out: those in the pews, those who walk in, friends and family of current members, and those who live in the neighborhood. He then explores ways that churches can understand the needs of these groups and reach out to them.

Friendship First - Curriculum Series (Group Publishing, 2005) – available from www.friendshpfirst.com

Based on a recent research study, Gallup reports that belonging comes before believing. Group has released this churchwide initiative to help people move from just knowing about each other and Jesus to having a friendship with one another and with God. *Friendship First* offers 13 separate get-togethers for children, youth and adults. Each get-together encourages, challenges, and inspires group members to go forward in friendship with one another and with Jesus. Could be adapted for intergenerational gatherings, as well. For more information, go to www.friendshipfirst.com.

This bibliography was prepared by the staff of the Covenant Resource Center. While not specifically endorsed by the Evangelical Covenant Church, the above resources may be helpful as you plan for ministry. For additional assistance or suggestions, contact the Covenant Resource Center at 1-800-338-IDEA(4332) or resource.center@covchurch.org. Unless otherwise noted, items may be ordered through www.covenantbookstore.com or info@covenantbookstore.com.