

DEFINITIONS IN CHURCH REVITALIZATION

REVITALIZATION

The process by which a church becomes internally healthier over time

Generally, revitalization involves the “inner working of a church” without help from an exterior church, partner or replanter. The exceptions:

- Revitalizing churches often need the guidance of a consultant.
- Revitalizing pastors often need the advice of a director of missions, denominational leader, coach, or mentor.

Examples:

- First Church has been in peril for many years. She has hired new pastors in hopes of turning around, but the efforts have failed. A pastor skilled and experienced in church revitalization becomes the pastor, and, over time, the church obeys the Great Commandment and Great Commission anew.
- First Church has been in peril for many years. An intentional interim deals with the conflict, strife, and inward focus of the congregation. A new pastor arrives, and the church becomes healthy and growing once again.
- First Church has been in peril for many years. A new pastor is hired. He is not patient and changes many things very quickly. He loses 40% of his congregation, but he gains 40% back within a few years. Even though the church lost many members, a new sense of urgency is born, and the church thrives once again.

In a few words: The church becomes healthy with little to no outside influence. (True revitalization is done without adoption, fostering, replanting, etc.)

FOSTERING

The process by which a church receives temporary help from another congregation in hopes that the support will be a catalyst for the distressed church to become healthy and fully independent

Examples:

- First Church is struggling financially, so Calvary Church temporarily helps financially.
- First Church is dwindling, so Calvary Church assists by sending volunteers to attend the church for a season, helping First Church set up healthy systems, refurbishing the property, providing ministry training, etc.
- First Church needs to reach the lost in their community. Calvary Church assists the people of First Church as First Church leads community events, ministries, and outreaches

Fostering is a relationship, not a merger, or a permanent solution.

In a few words: The struggling church becomes healthy with the temporary assistance of another congregation.

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ADOPTION

The process by which a church becomes a satellite or ministry of a stronger congregation

Examples:

- First Church has a wonderful location in a growing area but is still dwindling. Calvary Church adopts First Church, and the location is now known as Calvary Church West, a satellite location.
- The demographics around First Church have significantly changed over time. However, the church members have not adapted their ministry, and the church is in decline. Calvary Church will turn First Church into a congregation more suited to reach the community. Calvary Church will provide all of the resources, while First Church will provide the location. First Church and Calvary Church become one.

In a few words: The struggling church becomes a permanent location/ministry of another congregation. The struggling congregation will have a new identity under the leadership of a different congregation.

REPLANT

The process by which a church is reborn with a new vision, new leaders, and a new identity, but may maintain its current location and/or name

Examples:

- First Church has been in decline for fifteen years. She is down to twenty-five people but is in a location worthy of a congregation. With the help of denominational leadership, another church, or an outside entity, First Church intentionally closes her old identity and is reborn in her old location as Veritas Church. Veritas Church is born with a new pastor or even an entirely new staff. Some of the members from First Church remain, but under new vision and identity. First Church dies intentionally, and Veritas Church is born at the First Church site.
- First Church is down to just a few members. She gifts her property to a denomination or church. An entirely new church is born with a new vision, direction, strategies, and name

Fostering is a relationship, not a merger, or a permanent solution.

In a few words: A church is intentionally reborn with a new identity.

DEFINITIONS IN CHURCH REVITALIZATION

MERGER

The process by which two churches become one church

Examples:

- First Church has been struggling for twenty years. Calvary Church is a stable and growing church. First Church reaches out to Calvary Church to merge. First Church sells their property, and the proceeds are used for ministry at Calvary Church. The members of First Church become members at Calvary Church. No attempt is made to salvage the identity of First Church.
- First Church has been struggling for twenty years. Calvary Church is a stable and growing church. The two churches merge, but they maintain one location as a church while the other location becomes a community ministry site (health clinic; community center; etc.).
- First Church has been struggling for twenty years. Calvary Church is a stable and growing church. A few of the pastoral staff at First Church become part of the pastoral staff at Calvary Church. The First Church location is maintained for community ministry purposes.

In a few words: Two churches autonomously merge into one church.

*Every church revitalization is highly contextualized. Sometimes, two or more of the above concepts are fused together.

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