STRONGER CHURCHES NETWORK

Reclaimed Church Renewal Pathway*

Congratulations! Just by reading this document, you're taking an important step of faith. The Lord loves your church and desires for your church to serve as a gospel outpost in your community now and for years to come. He has also promised His presence and all the resources necessary for your church to fulfill His mission.

This church renewal pathway is built around prayer, biblical teaching, best practices, research among Tennessee Baptists, and the content of *Reclaimed Church: How Churches Grow, Decline, and Experience Revitalization* by Bill Henard.

This pathway includes three phases that are designed to be implemented over an 18-month period. Those phases include:

Phase 1: Assessment & Diagnosis

Phase 2: Recommendations & Agreements

Phase 3: Implementation & Scorecard

There are four basic requirements for a church to implement this process. Those include:

1. **Seeking.**

   By entering into church renewal effort, the church commits to seek the Lord in all things, to become a praying church that is desperate for God. You recognize that church renewal is spiritual warfare, and our victory is only in the Lord.

2. **Surrender.**

   The pastor, key leaders, and congregation must take on a humble posture, and willingly surrender to the will of God for the church. All "sacred cows," preferences, opinions, traditions, and programming are placed on the altar for God to do as He pleases.

3. **Saturation.**

   Church renewal efforts are not added to the church's existing programming. The call to surrender to the will of God and walk in the ways of God to reveal the glory of God affects every part of the church.

4. **Steadfastness.**

   The church renewal process requires a steady perseverance. There will be times that you may want to quit or short-circuit the process, but you commit to press on.

The following sections of this document describe in greater detail the Reclaimed Church Renewal Pathway.

Phase 1: Assessment & Diagnosis

Church renewal begins with seeking the Lord and facing reality through thorough an intentional assessment process. There is no quick-fix solutions for a plateaued or declining church. Churches must clarify where they are on the lifecycle (birth, growth, plateau, decline, death) before they can move toward renewal.

A. Core Assessment Lenses

Assess the church in these four areas:

Spiritual

- **God-Revealed Calling:** unified sense of purpose and direction from the Lord
- **Jesus-Centered Intimacy:** eager and regular corporate prayer, a common reliance on Jesus' presence among us
- **Spirit-Filled Living:** a dependence on the Spirit's power and presence to accomplish God's will through us; evident and abundant fruit of the Spirit displayed in the congregation; willingness to trust His power rather than our own

Relational

- **Church Unity:** relational unity, conflict resolution, generational mix, serving one another culture
- **Family Health:** marriage is honored, singleness is honored, parents disciple children, children are welcome and expected, care is given for the broken
- **Community Favor:** strong reputation in the community, church demographics match community, known for community service and engagement

Practical

- **Biblical Preaching:** guided by doctrine, disciple-making expectation, compelling
- **Gospel Leadership:** clarity of roles, clear decision-making, effective governance and healthy leadership systems, organized for forward movement, adequate facilities, financial health
- **Congregational Care:** member care, vibrant small groups, shared ministry, pastoral attentiveness

Missional

- **Kingdom Focus:** seeks Jesus' kingdom first, exists for the transformation of the community and beyond, pursues the salvation and success of others first
- **Neighbors & Nations Engagement:** outward focus, serving the community, multiplying churches locally, nationally, and internationally, missional mindset, gives sacrificially to missions
- **Evangelistic Disciple making:** frequent Gospel conversations, conversions, baptisms, ministry mobilization, multiplying leading disciples

B. Assessment Tools and Process

- **Pastor/leadership interviews:** history, high points, pain points, and perceived barriers.
- Stronger Churches Wheel Assessment package
- "Windows of Revitalization"
- **Community scan:** basic demographic data, drive-time mapping, and interviews with local stakeholders.
- **Attendance/financial trends:** last 5–10 years (worship, groups, giving, baptisms).
- **Observation:** Sunday visit notes using a simple rubric (welcome, clarity, excellence, next steps).
- Renewal Pathways

C. Assessment output

Produce a short, clear **diagnostic report** that includes:

- **Lifecycle stage:** plateau, decline, or near-death, using Henard's life-stage framework.
- Top 3–5 root issues (not just symptoms).
- 2–3 immediate "critical concerns" that must be addressed for the church to live (e.g., no evangelism, toxic conflict, no clear leadership).

Phase 2: Recommendations & Mutual Agreements

Church renewal requires intentional strategy, biblical focus, and congregational engagement. This phase turns assessment and diagnosis into a focused plan with clear agreements.

A. Strategic recommendations (3–5 priorities)

Build a concise church renewal plan around only a few key priorities.

Possible priority categories:

- **Jesus-Centered Intimacy:** call to prayer, repentance, and renewed dependence on God's word as the central revitalizing force.
- **Neighbor and Nations Engagement:** clear gospel focus, community presence, and personal evangelism training.
- **Spirit-Filled Living:** vibrant weekly worship experience, clarity of purpose, accessibility to guests, gospel-centered preaching.
- **Gospel Leadership:** clarify authority, leadership structures, unify around vision, resolve lingering conflicts.
- **Evangelistic Disciple Making:** pathway from worship → groups → serving → leadership development.
- **Church Unity:** prayer, reconciliation, forgiveness, clarity of purpose, sacrificial giving

For each priority, specify:

- **Goal:** "Increase baptisms from 0 to 5+ per year" or "Launch 2 new community groups."
- **Key actions:** 3–5 specific steps with owners and approximate timelines.
- **Resources:** training, coaching, budget, and partners required.

B. Revitalization Covenant (Agreements)

Renewal cannot be done to a church. The pastor and people must "buy in" and commit.

Create a simple written covenant between:

- Pastor and leadership team (or renewal team).
- Key committees/boards.
- Congregation (affirmed in a called meeting).

Include in the agreement factors such as:

- **Spiritual posture:** "We will commit to pray weekly for our church's renewal and seek unity."
- **Change posture:** "We will support necessary changes in methods while holding firmly to biblical convictions."
- **Relational commitments:** "We will address conflict biblically, refuse gossip, and speak directly with one another."
- **Participation:** "We will attend, serve, give, and invite as part of this revitalization effort."

Set **review checkpoints** (e.g., every 4 months) where the church revisits the covenant and evaluates faithfulness, not just results.

Phase 3: Implementation & Scorecard

Revitalization needs clear measurement and benchmarks of success using simple rubrics and defined goals. A scorecard keeps attention on health rather than gimmicky growth targets.

A. Scorecard structure (monthly/quarterly)

Organize your scorecard around 4–6 health indicators, each with 1–3 metrics. Use both quantitative and qualitative measures, similar to the rubrics used in revitalization projects.

Health Area	Example Metrics (Score 1–5 each quarter)	Notes
Spiritual Vitality	% of members in at least one prayer gathering; stories of answered prayer	Focus on dependence, not just activity.
Evangelism & Mission	Gospel conversations reported; baptisms; new community contacts	Reflects a priority on evangelism in renewal.
Worship & Weekend Experience	Average attendance; guest count; guest follow-up completed	Track both attendance and hospitality.
Discipleship & Groups	% in groups; number of functioning groups; new leaders trained	Measures people movement into community.
Leadership & Unity	Leadership team health score via brief survey; conflict incidents resolved biblically	Use a simple 1–5 rubric.
Systems & Stewardship	On-time budget reports; giving trends; facility issues addressed	Supports long-term sustainability.

For each metric:

- **Set baseline:** current reality from Phase 1.
- Set 12–24 month targets that reflect realistic revitalization, not instant turnaround.
- Use a 1–5 rubric where 3 = acceptable/sufficient, 4 = healthy, 5 = strong.

B. Implementation Rhythm

Practical guidance encourages clear process, patience, and consistent attention to the plan over time.

Suggested rhythm:

Monthly:

- Leadership team reviews scorecard, prays over each area, and adjusts actions.
- Leaders share 1–2 simple stories of progress with the church family.

Quarterly:

- **Congregation-wide update:** review major metrics and tell stories, not just numbers.
- Reaffirm revitalization covenant and adjust plan where necessary.

Annually:

- Full reassessment using the same tools from Phase 1 for comparison.
- Celebrate wins, repent where needed, and reset a fresh 12-month plan.

C. Sample 3-phase timeline (12–24 months)

- **Months 1–3: Assessment & diagnosis**
  - Conduct surveys, interviews, and data review; present diagnostic report.
- **Months 4–6: Recommendations & agreements**
  - Develop 3–5 priorities, draft revitalization covenant, secure congregational affirmation.
- **Months 7–18: Implementation & scorecard**
  - Run the plan, track the scorecard, hold quarterly check-ins, and perform an annual reassessment. This framework lets you integrate Henard's emphasis on biblical, evangelistic, and health-focused revitalization into a concrete 3-phase process with assessment, clear recommendations, mutual agreements, and a practical scorecard for ongoing guidance.
- **Months 18-24: Evaluate and Celebrate**
  - Measure progress; make adjustments; celebrate hard work and God's faithfulness.

Based on the ministry of Bill Henard, including his books *Reclaimed Church and Can These Bones Live.

TBMB
Tennessee Baptist
MISSION BOARD