



PATH8304 Critical Issues in Church Revitalization
A Professional Doctoral Seminar
September 29 – October 1, 2025

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NOBTS Mission Statement

New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary and Leavell College prepare servants to walk with Christ, proclaim His truth, and fulfill His mission.

Course Description

The purpose of this seminar is to explore and examine critical issues of churches experiencing plateau and decline. The seminar will identify common factors, specific implications, and strategic solutions involving church revitalization, utilizing case studies, reading assignments, demographic evaluations, and research applications.

Student Learning Outcomes

1. Students will become familiar with significant church revitalization resources.
2. Students will analyze their ministry context in order to select appropriate church revitalization strategies.
3. Students will develop essential leadership skills necessary for revitalizing churches experiencing plateau and decline.
4. Students will develop specific action plans for revitalizing churches experiencing plateau and decline.
5. Students will explore biblical and theological foundations for church revitalization.

Required Textbooks

Malphurs, Aubrey and Gordon E. Penfold. *Re:Vision: The Key to Transforming Your Church*. Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2014.

Gary L. McIntosh. *There's Hope for Your Church: First Steps to Restoring Health and Growth*. Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2012.

Pre-Seminar Assignments

1. Each student will read the textbook: Malphurs, Aubrey and Gordon E. Penfold. *Re:Vision: The Key to Transforming Your Church*. Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2014. In addition to the contents of the book, complete the Audits/Indicators/Surveys in Appendixes A – I. After reading the textbook and completing the Audits/Indicators/Surveys, write a personal **Leadership Assessment**, to include the following components: (1) the book is divided into three parts. Write a two-page reaction to EACH Part, discussing four key insights and four

challenges from each Part. (2) Utilizing a synthesis of Appendixes A – I, write a two-page, single-spaced assessment of your strengths and weaknesses as a revitalization leader. The Leadership Assessment is to be single-spaced, a space between each single-spaced paragraph, and no paragraph indentions, 8 pages total, informal writing style, first person allowed.

2. Each student will read ONE (1) of the textbooks listed below, and compose an **Annotated Analysis**, to involve the following components: (1) a one-page summary of the contents of the book, including strengths and weaknesses, (2) a two-page discussion of five [5] key insights and issues addressed in the book related to church revitalization, (3) a two-page synthesis of five [5] implications of the book for 21st century church revitalization. The Annotated Analysis is to be single-spaced, a space between each single-spaced paragraph, no paragraph indentions, and must utilize formal style according to Turabian, regarding cover page, margins, pagination, headings/subheadings, etc. Instead of footnotes, quotations can be referenced with end notes. First person is allowed.

Students are to email DeShannan Paddock (prodoc@nobts.edu) their first choice, second choice, and third choice. Due to Dr. Wilton's international ministry schedule, all your questions about the course need to be directed to her. Dr. Wilton will make the assignments, in the order of the emails received.

Barrett, Desmond. *Revitalizing the Declining Church*. Eugene: Wipf@Stock, 2021.

Bolsinger, Tod. *Tempered Resilience*. Downer Groves, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2020.

Cheyney, Tom. *Church Revitalization in Rural America*. Orlando, FL: Renovate Publishing Group, 2018.

Cliffton, Mark and Kenneth Priest. *Rubicons of Revitalization*. Littleton, CO: Acoma Press, 2018.

Henard, Bill. *Can These Bones Live? (Revised Edition): a Practical Guide to Church Revitalization*. Athens, TN: ReClaimed Church Publishing, 2021.

Kentucky Baptist Convention. *Lead to Revitalize: 15 Practices of a Church Revitalization Leader*. Abbotsford, WI: Aneko Press, 2020.

Kotter, John P. *A Sense of Urgency*. Boston: Harvard Business Press, 2008.

Rainer, Thom. *Anatomy of a Revived Church*. Spring Hill, TN: Rainer Publishing, 2019.

Scazzero, Peter. *Emotionally Healthy Discipleship*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2021.

Stetzer, Ed and Mike Dodson. *Comeback Churches: How 300 Churches Turned Around and Yours Can, Too*. Nashville: B & H, 2007.

Wilton, Don. *See You at the Finish Line*. Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 2006.

Wilton, Don. *Saturdays with Billy*. Nashville: TN: Thomas Nelson, 2021.

Wilton, Don. *When God Prayed*. Nashville: TN: B@H Publishing Group, 2008.

Note: Each student will make a 12-15 minute presentation, verbal and/or visual, to the class regarding the annotated analysis of the book assigned.

3. Each student will read: Gary L. McIntosh. *There's Hope for Your Church: First Steps to Restoring Health and Growth*. Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2012. Develop a **Congregational Case Study** of your current church context, utilizing Chapter 13 of the textbook and the Stages in Church Revitalization Chart (Figure 18, page 164). The Case Study should contain

the following components: (1) a one-page assessment of the church's current context (location, community profile, and a five-year average of worship attendance, budget receipts, baptisms, and other additions.) (2) a two-page discussion of the church's current stage of revitalization (Investigation, Development, Introduction, or Implementation), (3) of the 12 components (book chapters), discussing the three most challenging to accomplish in the current church context (three pages). The Congregational Case Study can be written in informal style, first person allowed; single-spaced, a space between each single-spaced paragraph, no paragraph indentions.

Note: Assignments 1, 2, and 3 are to be posted on Canvas no later than midnight, September 28, 2025.

During the Seminar Assignment:

Each student should be prepared to be involved in class discussion and dialogue regarding the pre-seminar assignments.

Post-Seminar Assignment:

Each student will develop a **Church Revitalization Strategy** for their church. The Strategy must utilize all of the seminar textbooks and class discussions. Specific instructions regarding the format, structure, and components of the Strategy will be given by the professor prior to the end of the seminar. **The Church Revitalization Strategy paper is to be posted in Canvas no later than November 1, 2025.**

Course Evaluation

Leadership Assessment	20%
Annotated Analysis	20%
Congregational Case Study	20%
Church Revitalization Strategy	30%
Seminar Discussion & Dialogue	10%

Learning Management System (CANVAS): You will be enrolled in the Canvas class. Pre-seminar and post-seminar assignments should be uploaded on or before the assigned due date. The course schedule, documents, and other presentations will be shared on Canvas by the professor.

Student Canvas Resources

Student Guide to Canvas: <https://community.canvaslms.com/t5/Student-Guide/tkb-p/student>

Canvas Tutorial Videos: <https://community.canvaslms.com/t5/Video-Guide/tkbp/videos#student-videos>

Technical Assistance

For assistance regarding technology, consult ITC (504-816-8180) or the following websites:

1. Selfserve@nobts.edu - Email for technical questions/support requests with the Selfserve.nobts.edu site (Access to online registration, financial account, online transcript, etc.)
2. ITCSupport@nobts.edu - Email for general technical questions/support requests.
3. www.NOBTS.edu/itc/ - General NOBTS technical help information is provided on this website.
4. Canvas.NOBTS.com - Click on the "Help" button for technical questions/support requests regarding the NOBTS CANVAS System. You can also email questions to Canvas@nobts.edu.

Plagiarism on Written Assignments

NOBTS has a no-tolerance policy for plagiarism. Plagiarism in certain cases may result in expulsion from the seminary. See the NOBTS Student Handbook for definition, penalties, and policies associated with plagiarism.

Selected Bibliography

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- Ammerman, Nancy T., Jackson W. Carroll, Carl S. Dudley, and William McKinney, eds. *Studying Congregations: A New Handbook*. Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1998.
- Anderson, Leith. *A Church for the 21st Century*. Minneapolis: Bethany House Publishers, 1992.
- Anthony, Micheal J., and Mick Boersma. *Moving On Moving Forward: A Guide for Pastors in Transition*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2007.
- Atherton, Michael. *The Revitalized Church: Forfeiting Self to Follow God*. Bloomington: Cross Books Press, 2012.
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- Bandy, Thomas G. *Moving Off the Map: A Field Guide to Changing the Congregation*. Nashville: Abingdon, 1998.
- Barna, George. *Futurecast: What Today's Trends Mean for Tomorrow's World*. Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale, 2011.
- _____. *The Power of Vision: Discover and Apply God's Vision for Your Ministry*. Ventura, CA: Regal, 2003.
- _____. *Turn-around Churches: How to Overcome Barriers to Growth and Bring New Life to an Established Church*. Ventura: Regal Books, 1993.
- Barna, George and David Barton. *U Turn: Restoring America to the Strength of Its Roots*. Lake Mary, FL: Frontline, 2014.
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- Buttry, Daniel. *Bring Your Church Back to Life: Beyond Survival Mentality*. Valley Forge: Judson Press, 1988.
- Cahill, Dennis J. *Lifestyle Market Segmentation*. Binghamton, NY: Haworth, 2006.
- Callahan, Kennon L. *A New Beginning for Pastors and Congregations: Building an Excellent Match Upon Your Shared Strengths*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1999.
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- Cladis, George. *Leading the Team-Based Church*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1999.
- Cordeiro, Wayne. *Doing Church as a Team*. Ventura: Regal Books, 2001.
- Crandall, Ron. *Turn Around Strategies for the Small Church*. Nashville: Abingdon, 1995.
- DeVine, Mark and Darrin Patrick. *Replant: How a Dying Church Can Grow Again*. Colorado Springs: David C. Cook, 2014.

- Deymaz, Mark. *Building a Healthy Multi-Ethnic Church: Mandate, Commitments, and Practices of a Diverse Congregation*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2007.
- Dickerson, John S. *The Great Evangelical Recession: 6 Factors That Will Crash the American Church...and How to Prepare*. Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2013.
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- Easum, Bill. *A Second Resurrection: Leading Your Congregation to New Life*. Nashville: Abingdon, 2007.
- Easum, Bill, and Dave Travis. *Beyond the Box: Innovative Churches That Work*. Loveland: Group, 2003.
- Everist, Norma Cook, and Nesson, Craig L. *Transforming Leadership: New Vision for a Church in Mission*. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2008.
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- George, Carl F. *How to Break Growth Barriers: Capturing Overlooked Opportunities for Church Growth*. Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1993.
- _____. *Church for the Unchurched*. Nashville: Abingdon, 1996.
- Guder, Darrell L., ed. *Missional Church: A Vision for the Sending of the Church in North America*. Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1998.
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