Rebuilding a Dying Church

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Introduction:

Church renewal or church revitalization (re-planting) is becoming more prevalent as a church planting strategy. Having gone through the process myself, I believe, in a lot of ways, that there are more advantages to re-plant a church as opposed to starting a church from scratch.

Church planting was not on my radar screen when I was going through seminary and the years following as I served here at Inter-city Baptist Church. However, I was regularly challenged with the option from the ministry of Pastor Doran. Consequently, God gave me a desire to plant a church and in 2006, He made it clear that is what He had for the next step in my ministry life.

My wife is from Tampa, FL and as we spent time down in that area with family over the years, God started burdening my heart for that area. The real estate market was booming and Tampa was really expanding. As I did research to plant a church in the north-west part of Tampa, I was told about a dying church called Keystone Bible Church. We decided to approach this project as a re-plant. Through the re-planting process God has allowed Keystone Bible Church to become a healthy church.

I. Consideration Stage

A. Advantages:

1. Replanting gives you a “gospel two-for-one”. You get to establish a good witness for the gospel in a community, but you also get to tear down a bad witness.

2. Revitalization encourages the saints in the existing church. Many dying churches are populated by faithful people who love Jesus. When their beloved church is revitalized, they get the joy of being part of a healthy church and are freshly encouraged by the powerful way God works.

3. Replanting also harnesses a lot of resources for the kingdom. Dead churches are sitting on millions of dollars’ worth of land, buildings, and equipment. You don’t need all of that stuff to plant a church, but since Jesus-loving Christians have already paid for it, it seems like a shame not to use it.

   (Michael McKinley, 9 marks blog, 4/4/2011).
B. Disadvantages:

1. There is a bad gospel witness that has to be overcome.

2. There is a small group of saints still there, but they have not bought into your vision.

3. There is a building, but many times it is as tired as the people are.

II. Evaluation Stage

A. It is crucial that you really assess the situation and the people.

B. It is crucial that you cast a clear vision.

C. It is crucial that you are clear about issues.

D. It is crucial that you infuse the group with new blood.

III. Implementation Stage

A. Take a season to get everyone on the same page.
1. Re-write the Constitution.

2. Drill in Philosophy.

B. Have a grand opening.

1. This helps the group really understand there is a new beginning.

2. This helps the community understand there is a new beginning.

C. Work hard- church planting is not for the weak.

1. Build relationships with every person in the church.

2. Maintain the momentum.

3. Continue to teach philosophy.

4. Follow the plan.

5. Beware of pitfalls.

6. Wrestle with your own heart.