

Church Revitalisation as A Network or Denominational Strategy

Europe is in desperate need of re-evangelisation. Whilst it is hugely encouraging that there are many new church plants, and church planting movements, across the continent, there are also many small churches that are declining and dying. If some of these churches were able to be revitalized so as to become thriving and growing gospel churches this could have a huge impact. This talk will consider the particular contribution that denominations and church networks can make to church revitalisation, drawing on the experience of the FIEC, a network of 6000 gospel churches in the UK. It will consider how denomination and networks can catalyse a vision for revitalisation and coordinate resources and expertise so as to ensure the maximum effectiveness.

John Stevens is the National Director of the Fellowship of Independent Evangelical Churches, a family of over 500 Bible-centred churches in the UK, a position that he has held since 2010. Prior to this he was one of the founding pastors of City Evangelical Church Birmingham, which was planted in the centre of the UK's 2nd largest city in 1999. He was instrumental in starting the Midlands Gospel Partnership, was the course Director of the Midlands Ministry Training Course and is a visiting lecturer at Oak Hill Theological College. John is also one of the pastors of Christchurch Market Harborough, a church he helped to plant when he took up his current role. He was converted whilst studying law at Cambridge University, and after taking a post-graduate degree at the University of Oxford worked for 16 years as a University Lecturer, ending his career as Deputy Head of the Law School at the University of Birmingham. John is married to Ursula and they have four children aged between 16 and 11. He blogs at www.john-stevens.com on theology, church life and ministry, culture and politics.

I. The New Testament Pattern

- A. Acts 14:21-25
- B. Act 15:36
- C. 2 Corinthians 11:28
- D. Titus
- E. Revelation 2:1-3:22

II. Introduction to FIEC

- A. Fellowship of Independent Evangelical Churches (UK)
- B. Not a denomination but a network/family of autonomous churches
- C. Our constituency – 600 gospel churches
- D. Our context – UK – 3% evangelicals
- E. Our vision: “Independent churches working together to reach Britain for Christ”
- F. Our Staff Team

III. Our Gospel Strategy

- A. A thriving gospel church in every community
- B. Growing existing churches
- C. Planting new churches
- D. Revitalising churches

IV. Our Revitalisation Strategy

- A. 160 smaller churches – many at risk of closure
- B. Larger churches that have plateaued/stalled
- C. Some successful revitalisations
- D. Realising the gospel potential of church revitalisation
- E. Establishing a “Church Revitalisation Team”
- F. Appointment of a “Revitalisation Co-Ordinator”
- G. A strategic plan for revitalisation
- H. Mobilising the constituency – Leaders conference and consultation
- I. Connecting with churches outside the network that want revitalisation
- J. Outcomes of our revitalisation strategy

V. Advantages of Revitalisation

- A. Existing building
- B. Core congregation
- C. Connection with community
- D. Available resources

VI. Advantages of a Network/Denominational Strategy

- A. Awareness of the need

- B. Understanding of the opportunities
- C. Pooling of expertise and experience
- D. Dedicated staff to take strategy forwards
- E. Ability to connect resources with opportunities
- F. Development of tools, procedures, and paradigms
- G. Engaging larger churches with the vision
- H. Identifying potential revitalisers
- I. Showcasing both successes and failures
- J. Identifying common issues

VII. Dangers of a Network/Denominational Strategy

- A. Expectation that every church ought to be revitalised
- B. Reluctance to close churches without a viable future
- C. Creating unrealistic hope of revitalisation
- D. Small churches expect denomination to solve their problems

VIII. Essentials of a Network/Denominational Strategy

- A. Leadership vision and visionary leadership
- B. Expertise
- C. Dedicated Staff
- D. Data analysis/research capacity
- E. Resources “buy-in” from larger churches and church planters
- F. Love combined with hard-headed realism
- G. Celebrating and communicating success stories

For further reading:

John James, *Renewal: Church revitalisation along the way of the cross* (10publishing)

Thom Rainer, *Autopsy of a Deceased Church* (Broadman & Holman)

Andrew Davis, *Revitalise* (Baker Books)

Albert Mohler, *A Guide to Church Revitalisation*, SBTS Press

Brian Croft, *Biblical Church Revitalization: Solutions for Dying & Divided Churches (Practical Shepherding)* (Christian Focus)

Ed Stetzer, *Comeback Churches: How 300 Churches Turned Around and Yours Can Too* (Broadman & Holman)

Harry Reeder, *From Embers to a Flame, How God Can Revitalize Your Church* (Presbyterian & Reformed)

<https://fiec.org.uk/news/article/we-need-to-talk-about-church-revitalisation>

<https://fiec.org.uk/news/article/resourcing-church-revitalisation>

<https://fiec.org.uk/news/article/a-regained-vision>

<https://fiec.org.uk/resources/article/church-revitalisation-an-honest-conversation>