

Stories & Strategies

6 Lessons we are learning about Congregational Renewal

- 1 It is healthy and helpful to bring in outside eyes.** Don't go it alone. It isn't that congregations aren't capable, but an outside perspective can help them see things that aren't readily apparent in their own community. A neutral coach can ask good questions and identify assets and gaps within the community. Congregations tend to be hard on themselves. A coach can draw out strengths and highlight opportunities that may appear out of reach from an internal perspective.
 - Thrive and the denominational resources are here for congregations...not to sit in judgment, but to come alongside out of affectionate respect for the work that God is doing in each of our congregations. We are here for you.
- 2 It is most healthy to start now thinking about and engaging in renewal NOW.** Strengthening the relational fabric of a congregation is foundational for the hard work of renewal before a crisis necessitates difficult conversations. Visit, have intentional potlucks and do all of the things that create strong goodwill in the congregation so that the renewal efforts belong to the entire community and not solely on a small set of leaders.
- 3 Every congregation would do well to be involved in renewal conversations as a regular, corporate faith practice.** Like the frog in the boiling water, we are often lulled into thinking we are fine until we are not. Regular revisiting of vision and mission will help congregations identify mission drift before they are too far off course. This is renewal work.
- 4 Shepherd your culture and don't let your church culture shepherd you.** Besides the challenge of mission drift is also the challenge of strategy petrification. That is, an attitude of "we've always done it this way" that can lead congregations to become stuck. Regular evaluation of what lives in our culture that might get in the way of new strategies or innovative approaches to ministry is also renewal work.
- 5 An important growing edge for renewal in the Canadian context is the welcoming of newcomers to Canada.** Our church culture and strategies impacts our ability to welcome, learn from and enfold newcomers. It is our responsibility and privilege to adapt for the sake of Christ's growing Church.
- 6 Develop your leaders.** Whether it is ongoing renewal work or the renewal work required in the midst of a crisis, we can't assume that our ministry leaders are all ready for the task. We have resources that can help you with this. We are here for you.

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6 Lessons we are learning about Church Planting

- 1 Church planting is not a work that you should do alone.** Being supported by the denomination and a calling church makes a lot of difference. Having a prayer team that continually prays for a church plant is imperative. Being able to build a strong core team and a supportive community comes from a posture of kingdom building.
- 2 Every church planter needs a faithful mentor or coach.** Almost every successful church plant has been one where there is strong mentoring taking place, where a Paul is encouraging a Timothy (2 Tim. 2:2). Reciprocally, the ones that have failed have often lacked this provision.
- 3 One size doesn't fit all.** The best excitement about a church plant is the ability to discern with the Spirit what kind of plant is the best for an area. They won't look the same and they shouldn't. a wonderful phrase that helps describe this is "same , same but different" All churches have liturgy and worship and community and prayer and everything that describes a church. How it is accomplished may look different and that is the work of the Spirit.
- 4 Your family should be cared for with the same passion you have for the church plant.** With the pressure to see fruit and growth, the church planter can throw easily throw themselves into the work and sacrifice their family in the process. Though sacrifice is called for, the church planter should still insure that they are giving time and care to developing their own family and guarding against attacks on it.
- 5 Church planting matters.** The goal of most church planters is to see the good news of the gospel become good news in the community they are planting in. It is fresh and new and faith experiences are more likely to happen in a church plant. The goal to develop a congregation that will multiply and birth more congregations is a deep desire to be disciple makers and prayer warriors.
- 6 Be patient.** Most church planters are entrepreneurially bent. That means they lack patience on all levels. We want growth, success, and movement yesterday. But, when dealing with the souls of people it requires patience and long-suffering. People are fragile and sanctification is slow. We should know this from personal experience (being a human, weak, fragile, and slow to grow in holiness), but it can be easily forgotten. Impatience can lead to overlooking people and simply wanting to move to the next thing. The people we are called to serve become a roadblock instead of souls to nurture into maturity. Be patient with your congregation. Be patient with your leaders. Be patient with your neighbours. Be patient with the Lord as he works sovereignly through his church. (Romans 7)



**Christian
Reformed
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