



MATHENA CENTER FOR CHURCH REVITALIZATION

36555 Church Revitalization Practicum

Mondays 1pm-2:30pm

Mathena Center Office

Faculty

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Course Description

This internship will prepare aspiring pastors to provide the leadership and care needed to revitalize struggling, dying churches. The course will provide an academic foundation and practical experience in the three “stool legs” in our revitalization training:

- Pastoral Theology
- Healthy Ecclesiology
- Personal Soul Care



**MATHENA
CENTER**

for CHURCH
REVITALIZATION

**THREE-LEGGED STOOL
FOR REVITALIZATION**

HEALTHY ECCLESIOLOGY

PERSONAL SOUL CARE

**WHERE DO
WE GO?**

PASTORAL THEOLOGY

**HOW DO
I SURVIVE?**

**WHAT DO
I DO?**

All three “stool legs” are required to serve and endure in a church revitalization environment. Interns will meet with revitalization leaders, including all Mathena Fellows, and receive one-on-one discipleship to help prepare for this unique work.

Course Goals

Upon successful completion of the requirements of this course, the student will:

Understand the pastoral care and patience required when entering the community of a struggling congregation. Students will have the opportunity to study the theological framework and practical mechanics of congregational care.

Have a framework and model for understanding a multi-year strategy needed to return a struggling congregation to health. Students should develop a biblical understanding of the primacy of God’s sovereign care in the work of revitalization ministry, demonstrated primarily through shepherding the flock (1 Peter 5:2), prayer, and the ministry of the word (Act. 6:4).

Develop and maintain their own personal spiritual well-being. Students will be introduced to and expected to develop practices that will help deepen their love and relationship with Jesus and mitigate the spiritual risk intrinsic to church revitalization.

Be introduced to a broad range of pastors and church leaders who have worked in the area of church revitalization and successfully lead struggling churches to restoration.

Required Books

[Alexander, Paul and Dever, Mark. *How to Build a Healthy Church: A Practical Guide for Deliberate Leadership \(Second Edition\)*. Wheaton: Crossway, 2021.](#)

[Carroll, James. *Collateral Damage*. Scotland: Christian Focus Publications, 2017.](#)

[Clifton, Mark. *Reclaiming Glory*. Nashville: B&H Publishing Group, 2016.](#)

Croft, Brian. *Biblical Church Revitalization*. Glasgow: Christian Focus, 2016.

Croft, Brian and Croft, Cara. *The Pastor's Family: Shepherding Your Family Through the Challenges of Pastoral Ministry*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2013.

Croft, Brian. *The Pastor's Ministry: Biblical Priorities for Faithful Shepherds*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2015.

Croft, Brian. *Pastoral Perseverance*. Welwyn Garden City, UK: Evangelical Press, 2024.

Croft, Brian and Jim Savastio. *The Pastor's Soul: The Call and Care of an Undershepherd*. Watchmead, UK: EP Books, 2018.

Croft, Brian and Carroll, James. *Facing Snarls and Scowls*. Christian Focus, 2019.

Cofield, Randall. *Strategic Church Revitalization: Paul's Inspired Prescription for Church Renewal*. Acoma Press, 2023.

Henard, William. *Can These Bones Live?* Nashville: B&H Publishing Group, 2015.

McClellan, Kyle. *Mea Culpa*. Great Britain: Christian Focus, 2015.

Piper, John. *The Roots of Endurance*. Wheaton: Crossway, 2002.

Reeder, Harry and Swavelly, David. *From Embers to a Flame*. Phillipsburg: P&R Publishing, 2004.

Assignments and Assessments

Attendance and Participation

Because presence is so important to the work of church revitalization, interns are expected to be at all meetings and events. Anytime a non-emergency absence is required the intern is expected to communicate and receive permission from the Senior Fellow, preferably not less than 2 days prior to the scheduled time.

Emergency absences should be communicated to the Senior Fellow as soon as is possible.

Reading Roundtable & Pastoral Discussions

Interns will participate in specific discussions, moderated by the Senior Fellow to discuss assigned readings and talk with pastors involved in revitalization ministry. The schedule will show what books / chapters will be reviewed by roundtable dates during the year. Students should come to all roundtables ready to discuss what they learned from the reading, and ways it can help them in the practical aspects of ministry. **For a detailed reading schedule, see the last page of the syllabus.**

Reading Reports

Each required text should be read reflectively, particularly focusing on how the material relates to the work of church revitalization. The interns will be required to read **one** book prior to each class meeting (2 books for the first meeting). Interns are required to turn in a reading report/summary from the assigned reading prior to our class meeting by Monday at 12 PM. Any reading reports turned in after the beginning of Wednesday's class (1 PM) will be docked 25%. The point of this assignment is so that each of you arrive at class having thoroughly read and engaged the material for a robust discussion on the topics.

This assignment includes:

- 1) **250** words of summary
- 2) **10** key quotes that stood out to the student from their reading of the book (make sure to include the page number for reference).
- 3) **1** paragraph (4-5 sentences) reflecting on how this book helps prepare them for ministry.

*For the Reading Reports that have an interview included on the course schedule below, add a **100** word summary of the interview (links to interviews are shared in the schedule on the last page of the syllabus); as well as **5** key concepts related to revitalization ministry mentioned in the interview that stood out to you; and write **1** paragraph (4-5 sentences) reflecting on how the discussion helps prepare you for ministry.

Journaling

Students will journal once a week, preparing about 1-2 pages of text (double spaced) each time. These journals should reflect the soul work the student is doing, and reflections on how lessons can be practically applied in a local church context. Journals are turned in at the end of the semester.

Journal entries may be typed and turned in as pdf or they can be handwritten, scanned, and sent in.

Prayer

Because the work of a Revitalization Pastor depends so much on the care for his flock, Interns will be expected to pray systematically for the members of their local churches. If an intern is a member of a church that does not support this practice, he should contact the Senior Fellow to make alternate arrangements.

Reflection Paper (Due the 1st Semester)

At the end of the first semester, interns will turn in a 7–10-page reflection paper. In this paper the intern will select one of the practical aspects of revitalization ministry (i.e., Guard the Truth, Preach the Word, Pray for the Flock, Set an Example, Visit the Sick, Comfort the Grieving, Care for the Widows, Confront Sin, Encourage the Weaker Sheep, Identify and Train Leaders. See pgs. 16-17 of *The Pastor's Ministry* for further information) and consider what they have learned using the three “legs” of revitalization ministry taught over the semester (pastoral theology, healthy ecclesiology, personal soul care). So, using the three “legs” of revitalization ministry to organize the body of the paper, interns will address how one of these practical aspects will affect and/or be applied.

No outside sources are expected or even encouraged. **Interns should cite at least 4 of the books read from this semester for this course into their paper, and they may also cite the interviews assigned.**

This paper must follow the SBTS manual of style, any papers submitted that are not properly formatted will be returned and intern will lose 10% per day until the paper is resubmitted in the proper format.

Planning Project (Due the 2nd Semester)

At the end of the second semester, interns will submit a proposal for entering their first pastorate. Interns are to choose **one** of the following two options:

Option 1: Should I Plant or Revitalize?

You are looking to be sent out by a healthy church along with 8 families from the congregation. You were originally planning on doing a church plant but came across a church in the rural town you were looking at planting. It is 80 years old, and has 15 elderly members currently, with \$125,000 in the bank. They own the building and do not have any outstanding debts. You approach the church and ask them if they would be interested in you bringing the families with you and essentially replanting/revitalizing with them. They are resistant to the notion of a “takeover,” but would be interested in having just you come as the pastor. Your sending church will provide you church with \$100,000 the first year, \$50,000 the second year, and \$50,000 the third year in support. As you look at other options around the town, there is not an option that would be less than \$5,000 per month for renting, and this would also require having to tear down and set up each week.

Write a 7–10-page paper in which you put forward a 5-year plan to either plant or revitalize.

Answer the following questions throughout your paper:

- 1) Do I plant a church? (This will cost \$5,000 per month just to rent a building).
- 2) Do I try to replant in this old Church? (Remember, they are already resistant to this idea).
- 3) Do I try to be a pastor at this Church? (This is realistically the only shot you have at having a building right away in ministry). ***This means you really only have option 1 or 3. Will you plant or revitalize?***
- 4) How will you use the support money from the sending church?

Options 2: Hometown Hero

You are returning to your hometown to revitalize a local congregation. Using your native knowledge of the culture, **put forward a detailed plan (7-10 pages)** in which you anticipate the strengths, weaknesses, joys, and pains you expect to encounter in pastoral ministry there.

Be sure to answer the following questions:

- 1) What are the demographics of your hometown (school quality, crime rates, posture towards Christianity/church, is it a transplant town or a place where people move to set up roots? etc.).

- 2) What do you plan on committing your time, energy, and resources to in years 1, 2, 3, 4, and 5?
- 3) What specific challenges do you anticipate on a personal level as well as on a church level?

Special Events

Interns will have the opportunity to participate in special events on campus such as Mathena Center panel discussions. While not required, interns should make every effort to attend.

Interns can also discuss with the center staff any observation opportunities they would like to request (ie: Hospital Visit, Observe Service Planning). While these opportunities are not guaranteed, the center will help facilitate as time permits.

Revitalization Retreat

During the Spring semester (**March 6–8**) the Mathena Center will host a weekend retreat (*think 9Marks weekender style*). All students taking the internship for elective credit are expected to attend. The team will depart on a Friday afternoon and return on Sunday evening after the worship service with our host church. This will be an interactive experience allowing the students to walk through a live “case-study” of a church coming out of a revitalization season. If you are the regular preaching pastor, please make necessary preparations as this is an important aspect of the internship.

Extensions for Assignments

Due to this being an internship in which students are being trained for pastoral ministry, turning assignments in on time is expected, as managing one’s time well and meeting deadlines is crucial for earning the trust of one’s congregation. The following should be considered when you are deciding whether to ask for an extension on an assignment: Have I endured a health, family, or vocational crisis? Please note, that inconveniences such as: a head cold, spotty internet, a shift change at work, or just “not planning well enough ahead,” are not sufficient occurrences to be invoked as a crisis. If you genuinely have had an

unexpected crisis occur that demands you needing an extension on an assignment, it is expected that you reach out to the Student Associate at least one day before the due date and detail how this crisis has specifically affected your ability to turn the assignment in. Further, you will also be expected to initiate a specific date on which you are committing to turn the assignment in. At this point it is in the Student Associate's discretion to permit the extension and whether there will be a grade penalization or not.

Any assignment that is turned in late will receive a minimum of a 25% grade penalization.

Grading

Participation in Class/Reading Reports	50%
Journaling	15%
Prayer Directory	10%
Reflection Paper/Planning Project	25%

Grading Scale

A	4.0 94-100	B	3.0 83-87. 99	C	2.0 73-77.99	D	1.0 63-67.99
A-	3.7 90-93.99	B-	2.7 80-82. 99	C-	1.7 70-72.9 9	D-	0.7 60-62.99
B+	3.3 88-89.9 9	C+	2.3 78-79. 99	D+	1.3 68-69.9 9	F	0.0 0-60

POLICIES

Internship

It has been communicated, from registration to the syllabus discussion, that ALL participants in the internship will complete ALL assignments on the scheduled dates. ***This applies to those taking the elective course as well as those who are not. This is a requirement as an intern in the Mathena***

Center. All students will sign their name, covenanting to fulfill this expectation at the beginning of each internship.

Supervision

Interns report directly to the Senior Fellow of the Mathena Center, and as delegated by the Senior Fellow to Student Associate of the Mathena Center.

Academic Credit

The Church Revitalization Practicum is a year-long course. When registering Interns are expected to complete both the fall and spring semester and will receive 1.5 credits for each semester. If a student is an employee at UPS and is looking to be reimbursed for the fall semester, please reach out to the student associate early on in the fall semester and arrangements can be made, especially if the student is graduating in December.

Special Needs

In order to ensure full participation, any student with a disabling condition requiring special accommodations (e.g., tape recorders, special adaptive equipment, and special notetaking or test-taking needs) is strongly encouraged to contact the Student Associate at the beginning of the internship.

Syllabus Disclaimer

During the course of the semester the Senior Fellow reserves the right to modify any portion of this syllabus as may appear necessary because of events and circumstances that occur during the term.

Dress

Because the interns will often meet faculty and visitors to the Southern Campus, dress for all Mathena Center events is business casual.

Integrity of Academic Work

All students are required to affirm their academic integrity when submitting all course work with the following statement, signed by the student (at the bottom of the title page):

On my honor, I have neither given nor taken improper assistance in completing this assignment

Fall Meetings	Lecture Topic(s)	Reading
1 (8/18)	Introduction to Internship and Syllabus Orientation to Mathena Center Model of Church Revitalization	Croft's <i>Biblical Church Revitalization</i> and <i>Pastoral Perseverance</i>
2 (9/8)	The Work of the Revitalization Pastor	Croft's <i>The Pastor's Ministry</i>
3 (9/15)	The Rewarding, Redeeming Work of Church Revitalization: Watch Randall Cofield Interview	Read Cofield's <i>Strategic Church Revitalization</i>
4 (9/29)	The Role of Preaching in Revitalization	Croft's <i>Facing Snarls and Scowls</i>
5 (10/13)	Faithfulness and Survival in Revitalization Ministry Watch Michael Craig Interview	Croft's <i>The Pastor's Soul</i> Watch Michael Craig's Interview
6 (10/27)	A Long Patient Road to Faithfulness (5-10 Year Rule) <i>Interview with James Carroll</i>	Carroll's <i>Collateral Damage</i>
Spring Meetings	Lecture Topic(s)	Reading
1 (2/9)	Introduction to Second Term: Ecclesiology Matters	Alexander and Dever's <i>How to Build a Healthy Church: A Practical Guide for Deliberate Leadership</i>
2 (3/2)	Picking Your Battles Wisely <i>Pastoral Interview with Steve Bray</i> Watch Sean Corser Interview	Piper's <i>The Roots of Endurance</i>
3 (3/16)*	Mistakes Made in Church Revitalization Watch Steve Barbees Interview	McClellan's <i>Mea Culpa</i>

March 7-9	Weekender Training @ Castlevew Church	None
4 (3/30)	Planting vs. Revitalization <i>Pastoral Interview with Pastor and Mathena Center Fellow Tim Beougher</i>	Clifton's <i>Reclaiming Glory</i>
5 (4/13)	Alternative Revitalization Strategies <u>Watch Bryan Watts Interview</u>	Henard's <i>Can These Bones Live?</i>
6 (4/27)	Leading Your Family Through Revitalization	Croft's <i>The Pastor's Family</i>