

Three Primary Components of Church Revitalization

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Outward Deluge (intentional outreach)

Outward – the church directs its attention to the community.

Deluge – think of a rainstorm; everything in its path gets wet.

An outward deluge is a sustained, ongoing outward focus. It is not a single event or once a year focus.

There are four components to a sustained outward focus.

1. *It involves a significant number of the church members.* Significant implies this is not just an effort of a small, evangelistically minded group within the church. There is enough involvement that it communicates that the church is invested in looking outward.
2. *It is a year-round ministry.* Of course, there will be breaks but the point is that the church is invested in the community in an ongoing way.
3. *It is part of the church's identity.* The community recognizes the church as the church that (fill in the blank); “has the recovery programs”, “hosts English as a Second Language classes”, etc.
4. *It is strategically and intentionally connected to the church.* The church does not just host community services, like a food pantry. The outreach program, events and strategy are designed to be bridges that the church members can use to build relationships in the community and open the door to inviting people to church, into small groups and classes.

None of the above implies that there is no place for seasonal or single events. But, these events (like a Christmas Eve service), need to be thought through and fit into the larger outreach strategy of the church.

Welcome Readiness (becoming a welcoming church)

Current church members naturally assume that our churches are always ready to welcome newcomers.

Visitors have a very different perspective. Here are 10 common visitor experiences of churches that prompt us think about how we come across to guests. These come from a survey of people's experiences from visiting churches for the first time.

1. The stand-and-greet time was unfriendly and awkward. (Does not mean it is wrong or bad, but it needs to be done well.)
2. Unfriendly church members. (We need to equip our people to know how to come across in a friendly manner.)
3. Unsafe children's areas. (All the way from cleanliness to safe toys and play areas to security.)
4. No place to get information about the church.
5. Bad church website.
6. Poor signage.
7. Insider church language.
8. Boring or bad church services.
9. Members telling guests that they are in the wrong pew or chair.
10. Dirty facilities.

Close the back Door (assimilation)

There is never 100% retention of members or new attendees in our churches. Here are four proven practices that can help any church improve the retention of new attendees. (These need to come alongside addressing specific issues related to your church.)

Backdoor Closure #1: High Expectations – The New Testament does not call us to a mediocre participation in the life of the church. Cultivate an attitude among current members and newcomers that we are going to participate in the life and ministry of the church at a New Testament level of commitment.

Backdoor Closure #2: Groups – One of the single most powerful tools toward Backdoor Closure is getting people involved in groups. Groups are relational connection points, and relationships are one of the greatest reasons people remain and stay involved.

Backdoor Closure #3: Ministry Involvement – If the members are involved in ministry, they are more likely to stay with the church for the long haul. The most common ministry involvement for newer members and attendees is the welcoming/greeter's ministry.

Backdoor Closure #4: The New Members' Class – Churches committed to closing the backdoor keep these classes well publicized, are often led by the pastor, communicate essential information (doctrine, staff, denominational background, and ministries) and expectations. The class is a steppingstone directly into involvement.

*Taken from The Scrappy Church, Thom S. Rainer, 2018, pages 41-97