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Reviewed by Lavern E. Brown and Gary J. Westra. Brown has a Th.M. from Dallas Theological Semi-
nary (1986) and a D.Min. from Western Seminary (1995). He is the former president of Transi-
tion Ministries Group Inc. and the current president of Turnaround Pastors Inc. He trains and
coaches pastors to serve as intentional interim pastors and as church renewal leaders. Email: bud@
turnaroundpastor.com. Gary Westra has an M.Div. from Western Theological Seminary, Michigan
(1983) and a D.Min. from Fuller Theological Seminary (2001). His dissertation was on Evangelism
and Church Growth in the New England Context. Gary served in senior pastor positions for thirty
years. He currently does consulting and coaching through Church One Ministry and works as a hos-
pice chaplain. Email: rdgjwestra@yahoo.com.

Re:Vision: The Key to Transforming Your Church marks an important shift in
understanding the factors necessary to introduce new life to dying churches.

This is not a case study of how pastors revitalized their churches, nor is
it a how-to formula. The book is not an academic treatment of missional
ecclesiology or spiritual formation. It is a careful analysis of original research
that answers a vital question. *Why do some pastors consistently bring new life to
stagnant and declining churches while others do not?*

Re:Vision stands in contrast with the church growth, church renewal, and
pastoral leadership literature. The current literature falls into the follow-
ing three broad categories: case studies, self-reports, and how-to. Although
Re:Vision has elements of all three, they are incidental or illustrative.

Case studies suffer from several flaws that make them of questionable
value in discerning archetypes for success or best practices. It is the nature
of case studies that each is unique and almost impossible to replicate. Case
study requires participants to remember past events, subjecting the findings
to the vagaries of memory. One recalls Peter Wagner's observation that pas-
tors of growing churches are often unreliable analysts of why their churches
grew. They are also susceptible to researcher bias, which risks missing
important data. Therefore, their conclusions should not be generalized as
hard and fast rules to follow.

Case studies, which Malphurs and Penfold avoid, also miss three critical
factors in church revitalization. They overlook how the pastor conducts his
day-to-day ministry. They neglect how he manages relationships. They do
not examine how he governs his personal needs in the work environment.
This leads to a significant risk. Desperate pastors seeking solutions to intrac-
table problems often fail if they look to case studies for models of ministry.

In contrast to the case study and self-report methods, *Re:Vision* provides
reproducible and verifiable research data. It shows, for the first time, direct
correlation between the pastor's temperament and success in renewing pla-
teaued and declining churches.

Re:Vision is organized into the following three main sections: Prepara-
tion for Discovery, Process of Discovery, and Practice of Discovery.

Part 1 (chapters 1–5) establishes the framework for their research. This section visits recent demographics about the state of the church in America and of pastoral leadership (chapter 1). They identify the crisis in pastoral leadership as one major cause contributing to the decline of the church's influence in America. While the decline of the church in America is well known, "church planting needs versus church planting ability" points to a critical under-pining for the thesis of the book. They cite a gain of 60,000 churches to be started between 2005 and 2020. However, 55,500 churches will close. Just to keep up with American population growth, we would need 48,000 additional churches! It is critical to find leaders who can revitalize existing congregations. The rest of the book addresses this need.

Chapters 2 and 3 advance the thesis that "[t]he solution to the church problem is a renewed vision for both church planting and church revitalization among our pastoral and denominational leaders" (33). They then lay out their case for biblical justification of re-envisioning ministry by identifying seven biblical characters identified as re-envisioning leaders.

The strength of their argument is the brief discussion of the pastors of the seven churches of Revelation. We hope future editions will include analysis of Paul's letters to Titus and Timothy, two pastors engaged in serious re-envisioning work!

Chapter 4, "Design, Direction, and Development," is a hinge chapter. It prepares readers for the data about effective re-envisioning pastors.

Readers must grasp the authors' assertion that "design dictates direction" (63). This means the temperament God designed into a pastor influences the pastor's ministry. This insight affirms that knowledge of *how* God designed them helps pastors develop to achieve greatest leadership potential. Their Leadership Development Plan addresses character and leadership improvement.

This chapter looks at other life events that also shape pastors. This is to be applauded. To know oneself and to build on how God has made him is a sign of spiritual and leadership maturity. How often is it said, "You have to be yourself. You can't be someone else"?

Chapter 5, "The Leader's Behavior," introduces the reader to personality temperament. The authors make the point that temperament was a *huge* [emphasis in original] factor in church revitalization. They offer a concise overview and working definition of the DiSC Personality Profile and the Meyers-Briggs Type Indicator (MBTI). These, with appendices A and B, help the readers understand how God designed them. As later chapters show, temperaments show one's readiness to God's agent in church revitalization.

The discussion wanders into trouble when they assert that temperament is more important than a sense of "God's inner call." However, this misstep does not detract from the book's important contribution. Perhaps future editions will omit this assertion. It would be a wise editorial and theological choice.

One could debate which temperament assessment tools are best. Others, like the 16 PF (which also tests mental health), Strength Finders, the Birkman Method, and Emotional Intelligence Quotient, are all helpful. Regardless of one's preferred tool, the authors made a good choice with the DiSC and the MBTI.

The DiSC and Myers-Briggs are well known, accessible, and easy to understand. Expect to see other researchers follow with studies using other instruments. These reviewers are working with Penfold to replicate and expand this research using The Birkman Method. The Birkman compares both personality typology and a person's needs and stress responses. We have discovered statistically significant differences consistent with Penfold's findings and expect to offer unique, pastor-specific coaching tools.

Part 2 (chapters 6–8) is the heart of the book. Here one finds details about their research methods, findings, and the bridge from "what?" to "so what?" Some may find portions of this section tedious; others will blitz these pages with highlights, marginal notes, and dog-eared corners.

Chapter 6 introduces Penfold's original research. His work identifies the "characteristics of TAPs among evangelical churches that will help to discern between who is and who isn't a TAP." He discovered significant, measurable differences between turnaround pastors (TAP) and non-turnaround pastors (NTAP).

- TAPs have higher D and I scores, while NTAPs have higher S and C scores on the DiSC Personality Profile.
- TAPs communicate the church's vision with much greater clarity and passion.
- TAPs have mentors or coaches much more often than NTAPs.
- TAPs and NTAPs exhibit different leadership styles, especially in innovation and team partnership. The differences are spelled out in Appendix C.

Penfold also documents several surprises, matters of conventional wisdom about pastoral leadership, that are not supported by the data developed in his research.

- There are no distinguishing differences in spiritual giftedness between TAPs and NTAPs.
- Age does not distinguish TAP from NTAP.
- TAPs are not unique in their "history of pastoral leadership," tenure, or number of churches served.
- TAPs are no clearer or more effective in communicating the mission than are NTAPs, but they do a better job of communicating vision.[1]
- Long tenures do not predict growth, and short tenures do not predict plateaus.
- Pastors can lead multiple turnarounds.

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[1] These concepts are developed at some length on pages 152–155.

Chapter 7 introduces Malphurs' and Penfold's collaborative research. This expands Penfold's original work numerically, geographically, and denominationally. It also confirms original findings and increases its granularity by confirming at what his original research hinted.

In this chapter, the authors switch from the term turnaround pastor to "re-envisioning pastor" (and "non-re-envisioning" pastor) to stress vision's crucial role in the turnaround process.

Chapter 8 moves from "what?" to "so what?" The authors invite readers to answer four questions (prompted by the data) for themselves.

1. What if I'm a re-envisioning pastor?
2. What if I'm a non-re-envisioning pastor?
3. *Can* a non-re-envisioning pastor become a re-envisioning pastor?
4. *Should* a non-re-envisioning pastor seek to become a re-envisioning pastor?

The third question leads to a provocative discussion about the call to ministry. This provides the reader with an opportunity to reevaluate (and perhaps reaffirm) their choice of vocational ministry. All four questions offer counsel and hope for those not suited by temperament to be effective re-envisioning pastors.

Part 3, "The Practice of Discovery" (chapters 9–14), offers five steps pastors should take to move toward greater effectiveness as re-envisioning leaders.

This first step is to determine one's profile with the DiSC and the MBTI. Useful sketches of the components of each instrument help readers understand their profiles and how they compare with the re-envisioning pastor's profile. A few suggestions for personal and professional development are sprinkled through the chapter. The guidance is sparse, but there is enough to whet the appetite.

The authors stress vision's crucial role. They assert that "... [V]ision is essential to the leadership of re-envisioning pastors and seems to be missing in non-re-envisioning pastors and their churches" (146). Chapter 10 examines its components and suggests valuable guidelines on how to develop a vision. Vision clarifies direction, enhances leadership, motivates followers, prompts giving, generates passion, fosters faith (they call it "risk taking"), and sustains ministry. They give excellent guidance in the vision development and vision casting processes.

Many pastors will find that this chapter alone justifies the time and money spent on this book! Those wanting further help in this area can consult Malphurs, "Developing a Vision for Ministry."

Chapter 11, "Creating a Culture for Change," draws together two critical components needed to return churches to vigor and growth—a skilled pastor and a willing congregation.

They note that "culture eats strategy for lunch" (168). Effective strategy for church turnaround will fail if the church culture prohibits it. They sketch

out how a pastor might change a church culture to allow meaningful change. Eight pages (166–174) are given to illustrating a church culture's role in promoting or prohibiting change. This is followed by a brief description of a four-step change process.

The chapter orients pastors to the issues, but the brief treatment of how to manage significant change leaves the reader wanting to know more. Had they used the established vocabulary of prescribed values (*claimed* ethical motives for behavior) and practiced values (*actual* ethical motives for behavior), they would have made it easier for readers to connect with change management literature.

Their guidance on the change process would benefit by including the salient contributions of systems theory. The systems perspective that "in group" behavior is reinforced by an unconscious behavior-response feedback loop intended to maintain equilibrium is a powerful tool. It helps pastors differentiate themselves from painful resistance. It equips them to give helpful and useful responses to the fear and anger that attend disruptive change. This chapter fails to address the crux of the problem—how to manage resistance to congregational change. This is surprising given the excellent works that adapt the change management literature to the church.

They map out the following four steps in the change process: "Read the Current Culture," "Thaw Out the Current Culture," "Transition the Culture to a New Level," and "Reform the New Culture at the New Level." A mission-critical fifth step, responding to resistance, is omitted. Failure to mention resistance management is a conspicuous omission, because this is where most ventures into change fail.

Since *Re:Vision* is about the qualities of a successful turnaround pastor, they could have omitted this chapter. The choice to include it is understandable. It raises the issue about one crucial component of church turnaround. Nevertheless, the use of a somewhat idiosyncratic vocabulary and omission of mention about the large body of change management literature ends up raising more questions than are answered.

Their discovery that re-envisioning pastors have mentors or coaches could be the second most important research finding, the first being the re-envisioning pastor's personality profile. This is the subject of chapter 12. In his original research, Penfold discovered that 62 percent of REPs had a coach when they began their ministry. They continued to work with a coach even after years in ministry. In contrast, 57 percent of NREPs started with a coach, but after several years, the rate had dropped to 14 percent! The authors acknowledge that, due to a poorly crafted question ("Have you had in the past and do you now have a mentor or coach in your life?"), they could not duplicate Penfold's earlier findings. By combining past and present, the question cannot discriminate what happens with the pastors over time.

This question is worthy of further exploration. Why do a majority of NREPs stop working with a coach, while a majority of REPs continue with them? These reviewers theorize that as pastors struggle to bring renewal to plateaued or declining churches, they isolate. Confirming the presence and effectiveness of coaches begs for additional exploration.

The authors contend that church turnaround requires vision and leadership, but most pastors are not designed this way by personality or spiritual giftedness. Working with a coach would help most of them. Coaching based on accurate personality assessment could give sharper focus to the coach's work, increasing the likelihood of the protégé becoming an effective renewal agent.

Chapter 13 addresses the "how" by outlining "preparation, process, and practice." This places the elements of vision, change, and coaching into a larger framework.

A helpful distinction is made between church *models* versus a church *process*. Churches and pastors often seek to *model* themselves after other (often larger) churches. Working out a prayerful process that arrives at a vision and practice of ministry that fits them and their circumstances is a wiser and more effective strategy. *Re:Vision* stands apart from other writing because it does not push pastors and churches to *be* like someone else. Rather, it counsels them to *become*, with God's help, a better version of themselves.

This process is an acute need, in these reviewers' opinions. The strength of *Re:Vision* is that it offers pastors a self-development and church-development roadmap. Since most pastors do not fit a "turnaround profile," having a roadmap for the *process* is extremely valuable.

The final chapter addresses seminaries, denominations, and church networks. This exceeds the book's scope by encouraging re-envisioning of these groups, just as pastors are encouraged to re-envision their churches. While the need may be there, assessing these other groups requires additional research. They suggest ways that personality assessment, coaching, and leadership development are needed by those involved in training pastors. They end with an exhortation for quality research to be done by denominations and networks.

The reviewers offer an additional point not made in the book—those involved in any way with pastoral placement should insist on personality type assessment. In light of new research, when faced with a church stuck in years of plateau or decline, a wise placement process would assess candidates to find those God has "wired" for turnaround ministry.

Re:Vision: The Key to Transforming Your Church ends with the story of an NREP who is now leading his church in revitalization. It is a hopeful ending.

As already stated, *Re:Vision* is a watershed volume. It is a paradigm shift from other books on church revitalization and turnaround. While some readers might be mistakenly discouraged because they are not designed for turnaround, the church will profit from this volume. Its greatest weakness

may be its greatest strength—the wealth of data, analysis, and recommendations mean it is not an easy, inspiring read. It is a great roadmap for both non-revisioning and revisioning pastors. We look forward to future, expanded editions of this work!

We hope future editions will include one change and two additions. The suggested change rests at the publisher's feet. It is probable that their arbitrary insistence on a set number of pages has resulted in using a small, hard-to-read font. We hope they will eliminate that problem. The two additions we would recommend are an index of subjects and a bibliography of works consulted.