

*Resources for*

# Congregations in *Transition*

General Transitions  
Opening a Congregation  
Clustering • Merging • Amalgamating  
Resizing  
Renewing  
Closing



# Congregations in Transition

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**Before considering any type of congregational transition,** we encourage congregations to take the time to assess their congregational wellness and where they are at in their journey. This assessment allows for a more successful transition. There are many programs and studies available to help you in this assessment process. Call The Vine at 1-866-642-2830 for more information.

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# Congregations in Transition

## General Transitions

When considering congregational transitions in general, the following resources may be helpful.

Bridges, William, *Managing Transitions: Making the Most of Change* (Cambridge, MA: Persus Books Group, 2003)

This book focuses on managing transitions in the business world, but there are applications for change in churches. Successful change depends largely on people embracing the need for change and effectively carrying out the transition. This practical resource provides examples, theory, checklists and easy-to-follow scenarios.

Available from The Book Room

Bush, Peter and Christine O'Reilly, *Where 20 or 30 Are Gathered – Leading Worship in the Small Church* (Alban Institute, 2006)

Peter Bush and Christine O'Reilly demonstrate how small churches can worship God with excellence in ways that promise spiritual renewal. Gathering a number of trends that coalesce into an emerging model of a lay-driven church, they use stories to suggest what this means for clergy leaders. Readable, practical, concrete!

Available from The Book Room

Dudley, Carl S. And Nancy T. Ammerman, *Congregations in Transition: A Guide for Analyzing, Assessing, and Adapting in Changing Communities* (Jossey-Bass, 2002)

This extensive hands-on guide, geared towards urban and suburban congregations, helps congregations meet the reality and challenges of today's constantly changing world. Written in an easy-to-follow workbook format, it combines theory, diagrams and interactive sections to engage congregational members in a practical way. This is a good resource for guiding congregations as they begin to consider a transition. It helps in analyzing and assessing changing communities and directs them in how to adapt.

Available from The Book Room

Hirsch, Alan, *The Forgotten Ways: Reactivating the missional church* (Brazos Press, 2007)

This is a fascinating and unique examination of two of the greatest apostolic movements in history (the early church and China) and their potential impact on the Western church at the dawn of the twenty-first century. The book may well become a primary reference book for the emerging missional church.

Available from The Book Room

## General Transitions

Life and Mission Agency, The Presbyterian Church in Canada, ***Called to Covenant: Strengthening Congregation-Presbytery Relationships*** (The Presbyterian Church in Canada, Toronto, Ontario, 2004)

This resource is for congregations and presbyteries that are trying to guide churches through transitions and congregational turning points. It provides helpful checklists, and questions and outlines the process for moving through various types of transition. The following sections are particularly helpful for congregations experiencing transitions:

“Signs of congregational good/poor health” pp. 20-21

“A Process for Congregational Turning Points” pp. 32-33

Available from The Book Room and online at [www.presbyterian.ca/resources/online/1800](http://www.presbyterian.ca/resources/online/1800)

Life and Mission Agency, The Presbyterian Church in Canada, ***Called to Covenant: Strengthening Congregation-Presbytery Relationships: Resource Book*** (The Presbyterian Church in Canada, Toronto, Ontario, 2004)

This book goes hand in hand with the resource above. The following sections are particularly helpful for congregations experiencing transitions:

“Tools for Presbyteries and Congregations in Discerning Health” pp. 31-33

“Measuring Tool for Ministries” pp. 18-23

“Planning Your Congregation’s Future: a planning tool for congregations and presbyteries” pp. 36-60

“Reviewing Options for Ministry and Mission” pp. 46-49

“Life Cycles of Congregations” pp. 53

Available from The Book Room and online at [www.presbyterian.ca/node/1801](http://www.presbyterian.ca/node/1801)

***Congregational Awareness Studies: Four self directed studies for church leaders*** (Toronto, Ontario: The Presbyterian Church in Canada, 2003)

The “Church Health” section of this resource (pp. 3-8) guides congregations in determining their level of congregational health as they consider a transition.

Available from The Book Room and online at [www.presbyterian.ca/resources/online/2244](http://www.presbyterian.ca/resources/online/2244)

Nelson, C. Ellis, ***Congregations: Their Power to Form and Transform*** (Atlanta, Georgia: John Knox Press, 1988)

Although dated, this is a sound, theoretical book for congregational leaders, clergy or elders when considering a transition. The book focuses on congregational identity and calling and considers why we congregate as Christians.

Available from The Book Room

# Congregations in Transition

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## General Transitions

Schaller, Lyle E., *Choices for Churches* (Nashville, Tennessee: Abingdon Press, 1990)

This book provides tools to discern where a congregation is at in its journey and what type of ministry approach would be most effective in a specific context. It offers many examples of ministry styles and ways to move from one style or size to the next.

Available from The Book Room

# Congregations in Transition

## Opening a Congregation

The following resources may be helpful for the opening of a congregation.

Clark, Brian, Jan Edminston; Philip Lotspeich; Craig William, ***Starting New Churches (Beginning New Churches: A Process of Discernment) Version 2.0.*** (Louisville, Kentucky: PCUSA, 2009)

This step-by-step resource, produced by the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), guides those considering a new church on how to seek approval from presbytery, how to create a foundational statement, a vision statement, a mission plan, and a missionary plan (people needed to fulfill the mission plan). It provides helpful timelines, biblical connections, reflections and studies for each step in the process.

Available online at [www.pcusa.org/churchgrowth/pdf/starting-new-churches.pdf](http://www.pcusa.org/churchgrowth/pdf/starting-new-churches.pdf)

Compton, Stephen C., ***Rekindling the Mainline: New Life through New Churches*** (Alban Institute, 2003)

Many books are available on how to start new churches. This is not just another one. It is, rather, a book about why new churches are essential, required, and necessary for the vitalization of the church. Compton argues that the need to build is not based on needing to replace congregations that die or even on needing to create growing new congregations to overcome the decline. Newer churches do tend to grow faster than older congregations, but they do something else that is much more important. They reach new populations and change the nature of the denominations and judicatories that plant them because the growing edge of a system is open to change. If taken seriously, radical change is required, and perhaps even a bit of chaos. But, Compton notes, the mainline need fear chaos only in the absence of a clear sense of purpose.

Available from The Book Room

Denison, Chuck, Associate for New Church Development (PCUSA) ***Connectional Church Development: A Presbytery Handbook for Creating New Churches***

This step-by-step practical handbook on creating a connectional new church is available free from the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church (U. S.A.). Beginning with a feasibility study and moving to the creation of a thriving new church, this handbook presents a model of local partnerships and connectional resourcing, of trained and motivated leadership, building a presbytery task force or commission and calling an organizing pastor.

Available from The Book Room

# Congregations in Transition

## Opening a Congregation

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Feeney, James H. , *Team Method Church Planting* (Abbott Loop, 1988)

Most evangelical churches are active in soul-winning. Relatively few have dreamed of planting a new church as a viable method of soul-winning. Yet as we trace the evangelistic activities of the apostles in the Book of Acts, we see churches sprouting up wherever there was significant success in evangelism. This manual cites the practical basis of church planting and describes the local church as both a ministry training and church-planting center. It includes a section of practical considerations in church planting, seven appendices packed with useful information, and a thorough bibliography.

Available from The Book Room

***A Guidebook for Planting New Congregations in the United Church of Christ***, <http://www.ucc.org/newchurch/planting.html>

The Church Development and Renewal Team, part of the national United Church of Christ, offers expertise in advising conferences, new churches and their pastors about planting, formation and nurture of new congregations.

Available online at [www.ucc.org/newchurch/planting.html](http://www.ucc.org/newchurch/planting.html)

Hotchkiss, Dan, *The Post-Construction Blues Clergy Journal* (Clergy Journal, Inver Grove Heights, MN: Logos Productions. March 2006)

This article guides people after they have just built a new church and building. It addresses issues such as increased operating costs and how to shift the emphasis away from money and building to ministry and program.

Available online at [www.alban.org/conversation.aspx?id=2154](http://www.alban.org/conversation.aspx?id=2154)

***Implementation Guide to New Church Development*** - <http://www.ncd-international.org/public/BooksImplementation.html>

This guide gives instructions on how to do the NCD Survey and guides a church through the process of developing a strategy to address the minimum factor. It contains checklists for the eight quality characteristics that the survey measures and a training program for “biotic thinking.”

Available from The Book Room

# Congregations in Transition

## Opening a Congregation

Logan, Robert E. and Charles R. Ridley, *The Church Planter's Assessment Guide*;

Logan, Robert E., *Be Fruitful and Multiply*;

Logan, Robert E. and Neil Cole, *Beyond Church Planting*;

Logan, Robert E. and Sherilyn Carlton, *Coaching 101*;

Logan, Robert E. and Gary Reinecke, *Coaching 101 Handbook* (Church Smart Resources, 1-630-871-2598; customerservice@churchsmart.com)

Available from the Book Room

Murry, Stuart, *Church Planting: Laying Foundations* (Herald Press, December 2000)

Church planting is not just about planting more churches. Many books on the topic fail to ask about what kinds of churches are needed. They focus on "How?" or "How many?" rather than on "Why?" or "What Kind?" *Church Planting* probes more deeply into contemporary culture and invites readers to think creatively and radically about a wide range of mission and church issues. The book sets church planting within a broader theological framework and also examines mission implications of postmodern and post-Christian societies. Exploring new forms of church life, Murray passionately argues that church planters should establish new kinds of churches rather than merely "cloning" existing models. Nothing less will be adequate for mission in diverse and changing cultures.

Available from The Book Room

***New Church Development Guidelines***, Foothills Presbytery, Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)

This booklet outlines the new congregational development strategy of Foothills Presbytery.

Available online at [www.pcusa.org/mgbconnect/pubs/ncd-guidelines-foothills.pdf](http://www.pcusa.org/mgbconnect/pubs/ncd-guidelines-foothills.pdf)

# Congregations in Transition

## Opening a Congregation

Malphurs, Aubrey, ***Planting Growing Churches for the 21st Century: A Comprehensive Guide for New Churches and Those Desiring Renewal*** (Publishing Group, 2006)

*Planting Growing Churches for the 21st Century* is not about how many people you can get through the church doors on Sunday morning but about planting and growing spiritually healthy churches equipped to reach today's unchurched generation. With vision, purpose, and practical advice, Aubrey Malphurs carefully walks through the six stages of a new church, including funding, creating a strong servant leadership, and establishing values. The church planters workbook will help you in your own context, showing you how to develop a focus group, recruit a leadership team, and implement small groups.

Available from The Book Room

Sinclair, Daniel, ***A Vision of the Possible: Pioneer Church Planting in Teams*** (Authentic, 2006)

Daniel Sinclair thoroughly covers practical whys and how-to's concerning pioneer church planting among unreached people groups – specifically Muslims, Hindus, and Buddhists – with applicable discussions from Scripture along the way. It addresses resistant environments and church planting teams. It also includes a newly revised seven “Pioneer Church Planting Phases” which is widely used by mission agencies for unreached peoples.

Available from The Book Room

Sjogren, Steve and Rob Lewin, ***Community of Kindness*** (Gospel Light Publications, 2003)

Consider just three of the 106 vital lessons in *Community of Kindness*:

- 1) You will face anger often. In fact, it will become your number one enemy.
- 2) Be a “go and do good” church as opposed to a “come and see” church.
- 3) Create your own vision, values and philosophy – not someone else's.

Each lesson in this book is short, smart and to the point. It gives you comprehensive, credible guidelines for planning your goals – what to look for before you leap.

Available from The Book Room

Stetzer, Ed, ***Planting Missional Churches: Planting a Church That's Biblically Sound and Reaching People in Culture*** (B&H Publishing Group, 2006)

Stetzer offers the watershed instruction book for planting biblically faithful and culturally relevant churches. The “how-to” and “why” issues of church planting are here, providing practical guidance through all phases of a church plant while also taking a mission-minded look at existing and emerging cultures.

Available from The Book Room

Surratt, Geoff, Greg Ligon and Warren Bird, ***The Multi-Site Church Revolution: Being One Church... in Many Locations*** (Zondervan, 2006)

Drawing from the examples of churches nationwide, this resource shows what healthy multi-site churches look like and what motivates congregations to make the change.

Discover how your church can:

- a) cast a vision for change,
- b) ensure a successful DNA transfer (vision and core values) to its new site,
- c) develop new leaders,
- d) fund new sites,
- e) adapt to structure and staffing change,
- f) use technology to support your worship services.

You'll identify the reasons why churches succeed and how they overcome common snags. The resource also offers specific action steps and self-diagnostic tools.

Available from The Book Room

Wood, H. Stanley, ed., ***Extraordinary Leaders in Extraordinary Times: Unadorned Clay Pot Messengers*** (Eerdman's, 2006)

This is an illuminating study of the most successful pastors of new churches in seven American mainline denominations. Four expert scholars – H. Stanley Wood, Carl S. Dudley, Darrell L. Guder, and Robert S. Hoyt – carefully analyze the results of a comprehensive survey of more than 700 founding pastors of new-church developments. The insights draw a blue-print for successful ministry to the unchurched in the twenty-first century.

Available from The Book Room

# Congregations in Transition

## Clustering • Merging • Amalgamating

The following resources may be helpful when considering clustering, merging or amalgamating congregations:

Brenner, Harvey M., *Merging Congregations: The Exploration, Facilitation and Execution of a Synagogue Merger, and the Role of the Administrator/Executive Director in the Process* (Warren, New Jersey: Temple Har Shalom, 2008)

Although based on the Jewish tradition, this resource provides biblical (Old Testament) guidance for congregations considering clustering. It combines theoretical and practical direction that can be adapted to our Presbyterian system of governance.

Available online at [natanet.org/uploads/5388HBrennerMERGINGCONGREGATIONS.pdf](http://natanet.org/uploads/5388HBrennerMERGINGCONGREGATIONS.pdf)

Frey DeCou, Rev. Donna, *A merger journey* (Louisville, Kentucky: PCUSA News. PCUSA, 2004)

This article is the story of two congregations that merged in the Seattle area.

Available online at [www.pcusa.org/pcnews/2004/04556.htm](http://www.pcusa.org/pcnews/2004/04556.htm)

Hughes, Dennis J., *Two Times Two Equals Two* (Louisville, Kentucky: Perspectives: An online publication of the Office of the General Assembly. PCUSA, August 2008)

This article tells the story of two congregations that merged in the Seattle area.

Available online at [www.pcusa.org/oga/perspectives/jun07/two.pdf](http://www.pcusa.org/oga/perspectives/jun07/two.pdf)

Marshall Eibner, Janet, *Amalgamations & Mergers – Last Grasp or New Ministry?* (Toronto, Ontario: Potentials in Print, Vol. 2, No. 1, Pages 5-7, October 1998)

This article helps us to reshape our vision of congregational mergers, encouraging us to consider them not as failure or a sign of decline but as a potential for a new and relevant ministry.

Available from The Vine

**Guidelines for the Dissolution or Amalgamation of Congregations** (Toronto, Ontario: The Presbyterian Church in Canada, 2009)

This helpful resource, put out by the national staff of The Presbyterian Church in Canada, guides presbyteries and congregations through dissolution or amalgamation of congregations. It is divided into three parts: :

- the theories of each option and how to determine which choice is most suitable for a particular congregation
- the practical steps in the dissolution of a congregation
- the practical steps in an amalgamation process

Available from The Book Room

## Clustering • Merging • Amalgamating

Prince, Dick, ***Amalgamation began with vision*** *Potentials in Print* (October 1998, Vol. 2, No. 1) (Toronto, Ontario: Potentials, pages 3-4)

This is the story of two congregations that amalgamated to develop a completely new ministry.

Available from The Vine

Yanagihara, Rev. Dr. Mariko, ***And the Two Shall Become One: A Resource on Church Mergers*** (Louisville, Kentucky: Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), 2008)

A guiding resource put out by PCUSA for churches that are considering or going through a merging of congregations. It asks pertinent questions that will direct sessions and congregations as they make decisions on whether or not to merge and how to do it.

Available online at [www.pcusa.org/smallchurch/pdf/churchmerger.pdf](http://www.pcusa.org/smallchurch/pdf/churchmerger.pdf)

Yarrow, Luann, ***And the Two Shall Become One*** (Alban Institute, 2009)

An interview with Alice Mann encouraging congregations to look at all their options before deciding that a merger would be beneficial. She cites four areas of readiness that a congregations should consider before deciding on a course of action.

Available from The Vine

Waldkoenig, Gilson A. C., William O. Avery, ***Cooperating Congregations: Portraits of Mission Strategies***

Transitioning communities are challenging congregations to develop unique, creative strategies for remaining open for ministry. Based on an intensive study of five cooperative ministry ventures.

Available from The Book Room

Thompson Jr., George B., ***Church on the Edge of Somewhere: Ministry, Marginality, and the Future***

George Thompson asks congregations to explore the meaning of being *in* the world but not *of* it - a church on the "edge of somewhere."

Available from The Book Room

# Congregations in Transition

## Resizing

The following resources may be helpful when considering the resizing of congregations:

Gaede, Beth Ann, ***Size Transitions in Congregations*** (*Harvesting the Learnings Series*) (Herndon, Virginia: The Alban Institute, 2001)

This collection of articles by 14 key thinkers provides an in-depth and invaluable resource for congregations confronting size transitions, providing theoretical background, group exercises and practical help.

Available from The Book Room

Mann, Alice, ***The In-Between Church: Navigating Size Transitions*** (Herndon, Virginia: The Alban Institute, 1998)

Alban Senior Consultant Alice Mann specializes in size transitions in congregations. This book addresses the hurdles and anxieties that accompany a congregation as they change from one size to another. Mann details the adjustments in attitude and culture, the practice and form that are necessary to support successful size change, whether growth or shrinkage. It is directed towards clergy and lay leadership of congregations of all sizes and is useful for individual reading or group discussions. Mann provides analytical tools, stories from real situations, excerpts from others' research, practical hints and biblical reflections.

Available from The Book Room

Mann, Alice, ***Raising the Roof: The Pastoral-to-Program Size Transition***. (Herndon, Virginia: The Alban Institute, 2001)

This book focuses specifically on the challenging transition from a pastoral to a program size church. It provides a 5-step process enabling the learning team to engage a wider circle of congregational leaders and members in study, discernment, and planning.

Available from The Book Room

Oswald, Roy M., ***How to Minister Effectively in Family, Pastoral, Program and Corporate Size Churches***. (*Action Information* (Volume XVII, Number 2, March/April 1991 – pages 1-7) and 3, May/June 1991 – pages 5-7)

This resource is helpful for ministers who are moving from one size of congregation to another or a minister who is trying to lead a congregation through a size transition. It provides helpful descriptions and stories related to different church sizes from the family to the corporate church.

Available online at [www.alban.org/conversation.aspx?id=1214](http://www.alban.org/conversation.aspx?id=1214)

# Congregations in Transition

## Renewing Congregations

The following resources may be helpful for congregations seeking renewal.

Boyer, Keith, *The Tipping Point – A Consultant’s Perspective* (Potentials in Print)

This article, written by the former Mission Consultant for The Presbyterian Church in Canada Synod of Central, Northeastern Ontario and Bermuda, helps congregations that are seeking renewal. It refers to Malcolm Gladwell’s book *The Tipping Point* and addresses the issue of why congregations resist change.

Available from The Vine

Bush, Peter, *In Dying We Are Born: The Challenge and the Hope for Congregations* (Herndon, Virginia: The Alban Institute, 2008)

This book, by a Canadian Presbyterian minister, bases its theories for renewal on the innately Christian relationship between death and resurrection to new life. Bush gives congregations permission to give up trying to fix problems and instead proposes that sometimes we need to die to one way of being the church in order that a new way may rise. This book is helpful for congregations that are struggling to keep their doors open or even for those that are just struggling with their identity and vision. This book can help congregations identify if they may need to close their doors or if they need to dramatically change their culture and ways of doing ministry.

Available from The Book Room

Cawley, Janet R., *Who Is Our Church? Imagining Congregational Identity* (Herndon, Virginia: The Alban Institute, 2006)

This is a general book that could help a minister and congregation to revision or solidify their identity and vision. It is helpful for a congregation that is seeking to renew its ministry. It provides scriptural examples, practical steps and exercises.

Available from The Book Room

Crandall, Ron, *Turnaround Strategies for the Small Church* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1995)

This volume in the *Effective Church Series* focuses on how to renew a small, struggling church. It proposes turnaround strategies that focus on leadership development, evangelism and community outreach. It presents twelve key factors for turning around a congregation. It evaluates and illustrates special approaches to discipleship in churches where ethnic and cultural changes are underway.

Available from The Book Room

# Congregations in Transition

## Renewing Congregations

Goodwin, Steven J., ***Catching the Next Wave: Leadership Strategies for Turn-Around Congregations*** (Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg Fortress, 1999)

This book focuses on helping individuals and committees turn a declining or plateaued congregation toward health and vitality. It is a practical and concise book on how to renew a struggling congregation. It is divided into 6 parts:

- defining congregational health
- designing a turn-around process
- studying the congregation, the mission and vision
- creating a vision and planning a strategy for mission
- providing leadership to act out the vision and mission,
- tending the vision.

A companion workbook is also available.

Available from The Book Room

MacLean, Paul, ***Evoking and Sustaining Hope: What Can We Learn?*** (Toronto, Ontario: ***Potentials in Print*** (Spring 2008) Potentials)

This booklet focuses on how to begin and maintain times of congregational transition, how to stay hopeful and how churches need to be willing to transform and change their identity.

Available from The Vine

Pappas, Anthony C., Ed Please, Norm Faramelli, ***The Bivocational Congregation: Tomorrow's Church*** (***Congregations*** (Winter 2009, Number 1).

This article describes how to revision and renew the church in the 21st century. It discusses how a church should be both functional and missional and provides five cases in different congregations to illustrate the qualities of a "bivocational" congregation.

Available online at [www.alban.org/conversation.aspx?id=7010](http://www.alban.org/conversation.aspx?id=7010)

Mann, Alice, ***Can Our Church Live? Redeveloping Congregations in Decline*** (Herndon, VA: The Alban Institute, 1999)

This book on redeveloping a struggling congregation provides practical options for congregations, leadership challenges for laity and clergy, and ways to work with denominations. Detailed and engaging questions provide a basis for congregational planning, such as: why is your congregation in trouble now? This is a well-written and helpful resource, but, keep in mind that it is written from an American context.

Available from The Book Room

Smith, Daniel P., Mary K. Sellon, ***The Messy Work of Renewal*** adapted from ***Pathway to Renewal: Practical Steps for Congregations*** (Herndon, VA: The Alban Institute, 2008)

This article, directed towards ministers seeking to lead their congregations into renewal, spells out three phases of renewal: developing readiness, surfacing a vision, developing and implementing strategies that move the congregation toward the envisioned future.

Available from The Book Room and online at [www.alban.org/conversation.aspx?id=6850](http://www.alban.org/conversation.aspx?id=6850)

## Closing a Congregation

The following resources may be helpful when considering the closing of a congregation.

Gaede, Beth Ann, *Ending with Hope: A Resource for Closing Congregations* (Herndon, VA: The Alban Institute, 2002)

This book for clergy, lay leaders and congregants describes how congregations can “die” with dignity and look at the positive side of their ending. The book is divided into three parts:

- the decisions and dynamics of closings
- stories about closings
- resources for leaders

The book gives closing congregations a vision for hope and the understanding that in closing they are not failing but redirecting resources for new ministry. The book recognizes feelings of grief but also the joy of new life.

Available from The Book Room

*Guidelines for the Dissolution or Amalgamation of Congregations* (Toronto, Ontario: The Presbyterian Church in Canada, 2009)

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If you know of any resource not listed in this booklet that you have found helpful, please contact The Vine at [thevine@presbyterian.ca](mailto:thevine@presbyterian.ca) with the title and a brief description, or call us at 1-800-619-7301.