

Why We All Need Frequent, Fresh Touches From God

In church-planting school, we were taught about the life cycle of churches.

The instructor said that churches often begin almost in a revival-like atmosphere. You have the church planter, full of vision and hope. People gather around this planter and their family, and numbers and excitement start to grow. It is a green growth time.

The church expands. Perhaps they have to change their meeting place to accommodate the growing numbers. The day arrives when a first building is purchased. In time, maybe there's a move to another building, construction of a building or expansion of the facility.

But, as time passes, the church becomes established. Programs and routines have been sorted out; staff added. The church hums along, and then it happens.

The freshness is gone. There may have been conflicts that peeled off some members. In time, some have drifted elsewhere to find "more life." Perhaps, there hasn't been enough outreach to surrounding neighborhoods.

At this point, the church goes into a downward spiral. And if something dramatic doesn't happen, the church may head towards its death. How many church buildings have we now seen housing community theaters or sub shops?

In my own life, I encountered this as a student pastor while still in seminary.

I was assigned two churches to lead. One was truly a rural church. The other was in a small town. Just recently, the

small-town church finally closed its doors.

But the other church came back to life in a remarkable way.

It was one of those classic white-sided farm churches out in the middle of fields. The only thing near it was a Grange hall across the street.

When I got there as a pastor, there were approximately 30 people coming each week, and a number of them were related. Most were older adults.

We did have three kids, two regulars and one who came every other week with her grandparents.

I suppose this church could have continued for some time since it was a family church. But I suggested to them that we could bring in more children from the nearby town and from the little houses that dotted the rural roads here and there.

We found a curriculum called The One-Room Sunday School. Eight adults volunteered to do a teaching rotation, and we started working with those three kids. Soon more children joined in.

It was then that the people felt open to having a Vacation Bible School. Again, many of the adults volunteered to teach, make treats and so forth. This brought in a large number of children, and the great love and welcome they received moved their parents to come too. The church had regained a heart for evangelism.

One of the men built a small replica church as a playhouse, and they put it on a trailer in the town parade. All these acts brought more children and grownups. By the time I left that church for the next assignment, the church had doubled its numbers—out in the “middle of nowhere.”

Coming back for a reunion a number of years later, I found the church had built a fellowship hall onto its church building and had launched a thriving youth group. God had truly touched

the church and brought it back to life. I know the steps this congregation took may sound quaint, but they stand as one example of how a fresh touch of God inspired hope can bring a church, para-church ministry or even one's own self back to life.

Recently, I took the time to seek that "fresh touch," going to an impartation breakfast with Daniel Kolenda and the Christ for All Nations ministry in Kansas City, Missouri.

I was deeply refilled by the Spirit at the CfaN breakfast and feel a wonderful new momentum that that time of impartation gave me. I am hungry to move forward, try new things and look for the best to be ahead.

How about you? Do you need to make time for a personal retreat, a Holy Spirit conference, just more time alone with God in your home? I know, for some with jobs, young families and many other responsibilities, it can feel hard to make time for personal renewal. However, it is vital.

Whatever it takes to let God fill and redirect you, do it, especially if you are feeling stagnancy. He wants you to pick up your dreams and your call with renewed hope. He is waiting for you.

As you seek God's presence, what worship songs make you "melt" in this season? What Scripture passages stir your heart to trust the Lord and believe His love for you? Read them, meditate on them, write them out, declare them.

What have been the words spoken over your life? Find them. Dust off the journals in which you hurriedly scribbled those fiery words or find those files on your devices where you collected meaningful prophecy. Get them out and pray them.

Then listen. In the same way a little country church put on a Vacation Bible School after years of not doing that, you'll hear the Spirit give you your own strategies for moving

forward again.

Yes, this always involves some risk. But the boldness giver, Holy Spirit, will guide you every step of the way. God has said, "The Spirit brings life" (2 Cor. 3:6c). {eoa}

Dr. Pam Morrison is a pastor who has both led churches and also ministered in the inner city with recovering addicts. She is the author of *Jesus and the Addict: Twelve Bible Studies for People Getting Free from Drugs*. Her CPN podcast is *Rooted by the Stream*. Find her at

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