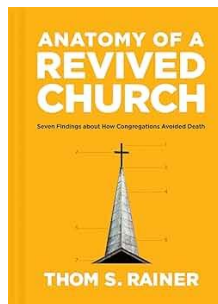


The Covenant Contact

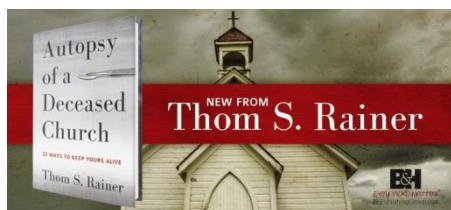
April 2025

Revived Versus Deceased



After researching hundreds of churches, author Thom Rainer put his findings about how churches revive and how churches die in two books: *Anatomy of a Revived Church* and *Autopsy of a Deceased Church*. Only two areas overlapped between the two books: prayer and being more inwardly or outwardly focused.

Churches that died moved their budget inward more and more each year. Churches that died became focused on their facilities and held on to traditions without intentionality.



Churches that revived overcame traditions in all kinds of areas - from the frequency of business meetings, to the time the worship service began, to adapting old ministry

programs to something that may work better.

All of these inward focuses took on different forms because the American church has a lot of variety. The overarching principle was becoming too focused on what was happening inwardly, which is directly connected to the next thing both church seasons had in common: prayer.

Churches that died prayed together, but that prayer was not meaningful or intentional. Churches that revived had a small, intentional group of people praying continually for the needs in the community and the needs in the church. Reviving churches were preceded by powerful and meaningful times of prayer, and intentional prayer is how that revival was sustained.

Every. Single. One.

Acts 2:41-47 says:

Those who accepted his message were baptized, and about three thousand were added to their number that day. They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer. Everyone was filled with awe at the many wonders and signs performed by the apostles. All the believers were together and had everything in common. They sold property and possessions to give to anyone who had need. Every day they continued to meet together in the temple courts. They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts, praising God and enjoying the favor of all the people. And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved.

We often focus on verse 42 – *They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer* - as we consider what church is supposed to look like. We latch on to the teaching, fellowship, prayer, and breaking bread together; we think if we tick all those boxes, we are doing what the early church did.

But the second word of verse 42 is the key - and the finding of Rainer in his research of hundreds of churches. Those that died and those that revived did all of those things. But the ones that revived were devoted to prayer.

For the churches that died, prayer became a ritual and a routine. Prayer was wide-spread, but it wasn't persistent. But for the revived churches, prayer for revitalization in the church and prayer for the community were intentional and it was persistent.

We have been given the model for what the church is to look like in a very basic form: teaching the word, fellowship with one another, breaking bread together, and prayer. But without the those things being something we **devote** ourselves to - thoughtful, steadfast, and true - then we will miss out on the

revitalization that God wants to do in each one of us – and then in our whole church – and then out in our community.

Is God calling you to be part of praying for the revitalization of this church and of this community? We are looking for a few devoted, dedicated, and steadfast people to join together for 30 minutes each Monday evening via Zoom.

Jessica Bedosky is leading this effort and would love for you to join her. Contact her for more information (jbed546@aol.com or 203-910-0945).

In Christ, Pastor Stephanie

Zoom Prayer

Join us on Monday nights, 7:00-7:30 pm, to pray about our community, how to reach the lost and those who don't know Christ, and our congregation's prayer needs. Jessica Bedosky will email the link

Lenten Reflections

Join Pastor Stephanie and Pastor Marcus for reflection sessions on *humility* during Wednesdays in Lent as we prepare our hearts for Easter. For sessions at the Congregational Church, enter by the parking lot side door closest to the front of the church.

4/2 7:00 pm 1st Congregational

4/9 7:00 pm Potter's House

4/17 6:30 pm Maundy Thursday Worship - here

Easter Baskets

As in past years, we are collecting items to fill Easter baskets for Thomaston children identified by the Thomaston Town Pantry. Bring any goodies you want to give by no later than April 13, and the Crafty Friday group will fill the baskets.

Women Ministries

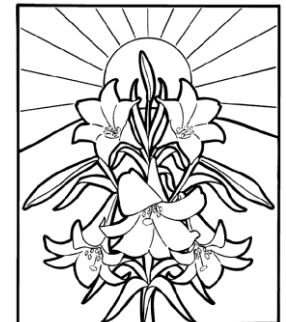


Women Ministries events are for all women of the church and their friends.

- **NEW STOVES:** Women Ministries needs your help! The two stoves in the church kitchen need to be replaced. WM is contributing \$1,000, but more is needed. If you want to donate, please write "WM ovens" on your check memo line. Thank you!
- **WM Planning:** Wednesday, **April 5**, 9:00 am, in the Conference Room
- **Book Club** The group next meets on Thursday, April 24, at 6:30 pm at Jean Morton's. The book to read is *The Thursday Murder Club* by Richard Osman. The book has been out for several years, so it is readily available from several sources. It is available at the Thomaston Public Library.

Flowers to decorate the Sanctuary for Easter

If you would like to purchase flowers in memory of or in honor of a loved one, they will be \$12 each and there will be a variety. Email Dawn or see her at church by no **later** than Sunday, April 13. Please pay her in cash or by a check (made out to Dawn Johnson, not the church) so she can track how much to give the florist. List how many flowers you want and who they are in memory of. A list of contributors and memorial dedications will be published in the bulletin on April 20.



Summary: Quarterly Meeting of March 2

Pastor Stephanie highlighted our need as a small church of average size to pay attention to the areas we are good at. If we pay attention to what we are good at, that may be what God is calling us to do.

General Fund offerings through eight weeks were \$22,890.40, which is under budget by \$2,244.52. Two worship services in February were canceled due to weather. Our bills are up to date. As of February 28, 2025, the General fund balance is \$28,135.52. About \$73,000 were moved from restricted funds to Investments.

The church will alternate Wednesday evening Lenten services with the First Congregational Church starting March 12. A town-wide worship music fund raiser for the town food pantry will be held at the Opera House on May 30 at 5:30. Dave McClay is removed from the Diaconate list and Peggy Schwetz is added.

A water leak in the Fellowship Room furnace room will be evaluated and fixed. Various toilet issues will be fixed. The hot water heater for the ladies' room off the Potter's House will be replaced. Steeple repairs will be re-evaluated and addressed. The electronic doorbells were not working correctly and have been removed. People who want to meet with Pastor Stephanie should call ahead for an appointment.

CE and WM will co-host a bake sale to raise money for camperships. Campership forms have been emailed to all the Sunday School parents.

Missions & Evangelism will partner with the Worship Team for the town-wide worship music fund raiser for the Town Pantry at the Opera house in May. We will fill Easter baskets again this year for the Town Pantry. The church submitted a narrative and pictures of the church to Thomaston's 150th Anniversary Committee. How else to participate in the celebration is under consideration. The church's website and outreach on social media are being reviewed. Jonathon

Bedosky is willing to provide free legal services for the church.

Women Ministries has "scholarship" funds available for anyone who needs financial help to attend the Exhale retreat on April 4-6.

PRC is meeting with Pastor Stephanie to set goals for 2025. The church authorized her to be the church's delegate for the East Coast Conference annual meeting on May 2-3.

John Bedosky, Church Chair

Fire Extinguishers:

- All our fire extinguishers have been tested and are in working order. Locations: 1) the Kitchen; 2) the Potter's House near the dehumidifier; 3) the coat room in the Narthex, just inside the main front door; 4) the hall running between the Nursery and the Gathering Room, behind a chair against the wall; 5) upstairs classroom hall across from the door to the Men's Room.

Fellowship Time after Worship

- **Coffee Fellowship after worship** is hosted by the boards (CE, M&E, Trustees and Diaconate), Women Ministries, and the Social Committee, with each group responsible for two months per year.

Since some of these groups have a lot of overlap, it would help if other individuals (or a group of friends) could sign up to host for some particular Sunday. Food and beverages are provided by the church, so what is needed is setup, serving, and cleanup.

Sign up for your turn on the clipboard located by the Kitchen. Thank you.

Youth Groups

Trailblazers/Pathfinders is for students in Grades K-6. Leaders are Brenda Tousignant, Lori Vigeant, and Haley Morton. They meet once a month



4/6 11:30 am Regular Meeting (Potter's House)

D/C (Discipleship/Confirmation) is for students in grades 7-8, a two-year journey, exploring who God is and what God means in our life. All junior high students are welcome to attend. Pastor Stephanie is the leader. They meet on Sundays at the 9:00 am Sunday School time.



CHYG (Covenant High Youth Group) is for all students in grades 7-12. The leaders are Beth Campbell and Sue Sundell.



4/12 6:00 pm Paint Night (Fellowship Room)

Christian Education

Lasagna for Camperships! Save the date of Friday, May 9 and plan to come for a delicious dinner made by our own talented cooks. Prices are \$10 for adults, \$7 for children, (maximum \$40 per family). Get your tickets ahead of time. Takeouts available.

Save the Date

Worship Night at the Opera House: Several Thomaston churches and their Worship Teams will join together on Friday night, May 30, to worship and sing together to raise funds for the Town Pantry. Details to follow or check with Glenn Hafele.

Banquet of Blessing

- **Need:** canned vegetables, canned fruit, condiments, fruit cups, crackers, granola/snack bars, paper towels, toilet paper, tissues.
- **No perishable foods. Check expiration dates.** We don't give away out of date food.

Kids Snack Packs

Snack Pack bags need donations. Please put "snack pack" in your check memo or leave food donations on the Potter's House counter. Thank you!

Prayer Chain

Contact Prayer Coordinator Mary Butkevich for prayer concerns and rejoicings.

Meal Coordinator

Providing a meal to someone during a difficult time is one way to show how much we care. If you know someone who might benefit, contact Sandy Dunn.

Crafty Fridays

In the Potter's House, 6:00-8:00 pm. If you have a craft to do, bring it. If you don't have a craft but would like to visit and chat, that's okay! Contact: Ruth Johnson.

Giving Made Easy

- Give online in just two minutes. You can opt for one time, weekly or monthly donations. Just open the camera app on your phone and scan the QR Code. You will then be taken right to the Giving Page on our website.

Covenant Church of Thomaston

Giving Page QR Code

