



CHURCH RENEWAL

Letters from Oklahoma Pastors



DOUG PASSMORE

PASTOR

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Dear Fellow Pastor,

The Lay Renewal Weekends have been a blessing in my ministry. In 1980 when I came to First Baptist East, I heard about Lay Renewal Weekends from one of the churches in Lawton. Being a young pastor, I thought we would try it. It turned out to be the catalyst that sent our church on a journey of growth and excitement.

Our attendance shot up from 100 in Sunday School to about 180. Our people became closer as a result of working together to make the weekend possible and the open sharing about their lives. It was so good we decided to offer it again in 1984 so our new members could experience the excitement it brought. Sure enough, we had the same results. By 1990 we had continued to grow and add members and again decided we needed what Church Renewal offered. By this time, we were running over 300. We felt we needed something to pull us together and the Church Renewal did just that.

When I heard they were doing Church Renewals again, we began to discuss whether this would work again for us. We were now averaging around 500 in Sunday School. We had gone from a small church to a large church. After a lot of prayer we voted to have another Lay Renewal Weekend. Most of our people had not been a part of the others. It turned out to be a great weekend. We had over 300 in each session. Our people shared how good it was to get to know other members better in small groups. Some shared great hurts they were going through and it was a thrill to see our people rally around and pray for them.

After going through four Church Renewals, I would strongly recommend them to any pastor. I believe it will bring a church closer together and closer to our Lord.

Sincerely,

Doug Passmore
Pastor



Steve Dennis

Pastor

Do you want to have a weekend that you know will have lasting benefits or a weekend that you can change your life much like a week at Falls Creek? Pastors, layperson, do you want to experience God and feel the power of the Holy Spirit in your church family? I know that the answer to these questions is yes. My question is what are we doing to ask God to bring the change our church families need? Can God cause these dry bones to live again? Yes, God can do whatever God wants to do! I'm so convinced one way God can move and wants to move in our churches is through a Lay Renewal Weekend. Checotah First Baptist Church just finished a Spirit-filled weekend, that as their pastor, I feel will bring a fire back to our church family that's been needed for way too long. This was my first time to experience a Lay Renewal Weekend and what a blessing and life-changing weekend we had.

Jim Davis

Music Director

Hayden Dennis

Youth Director

Donna Davis

Director of

Children's

Ministries

Lynn Featherston was our local coordinator and began to form committees. Walter Prichard, visiting team coordinator, was forming his team of surrendered servants of God from all over Oklahoma and even Texas and the weekend was being bathed in prayer.

Glenda Ryan

Ministry Assistant

As visiting team members started to arrive on Friday night, I did what most pastors do and looked for who wasn't here to support the weekend. Walter in his wisdom said "don't worry about who is not here, just trust God for results". Friday night started with a dinner and a time of everyone together. Then after singing and testimonies we broke into multigenerational small groups for a time of prayer and discussion. After small groups we gathered back to hear reports about the night. Many shared how they felt the Holy Spirit leading them and meeting with them in group time.

Katie Diaz

Custodian

Shirley Williams

Pianist

Saturday morning we had coffees at different members' homes. For the coffees the church family was divided into groups at homes for another time of sharing and prayer, with visiting team members leading. Then, back to church for lunch and fellowship. After lunch, the men went one way and the women went another, each group being led by a visiting team member. Children and youth were also in their areas being led by team members. The youth had the worship team from Moore FBC come down for a time of worship and they were fabulous. From 2:00 p.m. to 6:00 p.m., we had free time, then back to church for dinner and another evening of small groups and fellowship.

Bobbie Martin

Organist

Debbie Dennis

Keyboard

Sunday was like any other Sunday except the team members led in Sunday School and in the worship service. Sunday night after the team left, the church got together to talk about the weekend. It took us one hour and forty-five minutes, but it felt like thirty minutes. Many spoke about the weekend and how it changed their lives and how they felt this could be the best weekend the church has ever had.

It sounds simple and not too complicated and it's not. It is eight weeks of preparation focusing on prayer, spiritual growth, publicity, housing, coffees, and food. I don't know what God has for us next, but I do know the Lay Renewal Weekend we had at Checotah will be remembered for a lifetime and I believe it started a fire that will continue to change our church family and community.



Summary of Sunday night meeting of the Checotah FBC Family:

Almost everyone there shared their reaction to the weekend (including some youth) and they were unanimously positive in their comments. One of the early comments was how 2 songs defined the weekend—"Blest Be the Tie" and "Family of God". One phrase heard over and over is "I've never been this close to God!" What a blessing!

A few statistics will tell the tale:

1. There were 3 people who said they had accepted Christ as their Savior over the weekend.
2. In addition those 3-4 more people said that they desired baptism and church membership.
3. Almost half of the people said they had rededicated their life, that they were giving Jesus complete Lordship over their lives and that they desired to be part of a small group ministry.
4. A full 79% said that they wanted to proceed to the second level of the Church Renewal Journey (although 24% said they would be willing to work on teams).
5. Also, there were a significant number who said that they would like to become involved as a Church Renewal member visiting other churches.

Specific ideas that are in the planning/church approval stage:

Establish prayer chains, revive boiler room prayer teams to pray during services and open the prayer room for prayer time before Sunday School (and encourage people to make use of it).

Small groups:

1. The 5th Sunday small groups in lieu of Sunday School (for classes that wish to participate). We will begin with a time of fellowship and then proceed to divide by counting off. We hope to increase to monthly small groups eventually. By the way, we plan to call these groups Jumbleaya—Jumble All Youth and Adults.
2. Since there was a large number of people who expressed a desire to learn how to share their faith, we are putting together a Bible Study which will teach Share Jesus Without Fear (or something similar).
3. Finally, we are going to be setting up fellowship groups to meet in each other's homes for a meal once a month for three months, then rearrange the groups.
4. Since an overwhelming percentage of our people expressed a desire to move on to the second weekend, our initial thinking is that we will try to schedule that for the Spring of 2016.

Regency Park

BAPTIST CHURCH

Dear Pastor,

I appreciate you taking the time to read what our Lay Renewal Weekend (LRW) meant to our church. I have never been involved in anything that touched and moved the church body as a whole, to a greater commitment to Christ than our LRW.

The testimonies that were shared during the small group times created a time of bonding for our people. After hearing the testimonies of others, many in our church realized that they were not the only ones experiencing difficulties. It was also during this time that many in our church body came to the realization that they truly had a church family that cared for them, and was willing to help them through their difficult times. I also sensed that our church membership felt a greater sense of compassion towards one another after hearing one another's testimonies, and a great awareness of the problems that other people were facing in their lives. I truly believe that through our LRW, our congregation went away with a greater understanding of what Jesus meant when he told us to "love one another."

It was also through our LRW that our congregation gained a better understanding of the power and the importance of prayer. Many of our people rededicated themselves to the Lord and to spending more time in prayer during our 24 hour prayer vigil the day before our LRW started. The importance of prayer was not only emphasized throughout the weekend, but also demonstrated for our people to see. To me, one of the most special times of the weekend was the group and family prayer time on Saturday night. Even after the prayer time was over, I sensed that our people didn't want to leave.

The share time that we had on Sunday evening was phenomenal. As our people shared what God had revealed to them, you could feel our church being renewed in our passion, and being reminded of our purpose.

The LRW that we had at Regency Park Baptist Church was one of the most significant events that I have ever been involved in as a pastor. I truly believe that a LRW will have the same effect on any church that is willing to commit to renewal and allow the Holy Spirit the freedom to move.

In Christ's Service,

Keith Jacobs
Pastor

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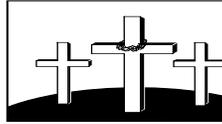
TEMPLE BAPTIST CHURCH

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Dear Pastors,

I am writing this letter to recommend to you and your church something that our church experienced that I believe can be a blessing from God. What is it? It is a LAY RENEWAL WEEKEND!

Our church's Evangelism Committee was working on scheduling a revival meeting when the suggestion was made to pray about having a Lay Renewal weekend. We have had 2 of these meetings in years past but had not heard of any such meetings in recent years. We were pleasantly surprised when we were told that they still have Lay Renewal Weekends under the guidance of the North American Mission Board. As our committee was praying, Brother Walter Prichard, a Coordinator for Lay Renewal Weekends for Oklahoma, called our church office and asked if we would consider having a Lay Renewal Weekend! Wow!!! God was working.

We scheduled a date for the Weekend and went to work with the preparations. Our people worked hard before and during the weekend and the blessings came in bunches! The team members that Brother Walter put together were genuine, sincere, compassionate, and uplifting. Our church members heard people talk about how God has helped them through many issues just like the issues we face in our lives. What a work that God did during those 42 hours!

It has now been about 1 month since our Lay Renewal Weekend and we are still seeing good results from people being honest with God and each other. We are a closer church family because of the Lay Renewal Weekend.

If you have never had a Lay Renewal Weekend, please prayerfully consider scheduling one.

Let the Son shine,

Mike Craig
Pastor



LYNN LANE BAPTIST CHURCH

Loving God, loving people, serving the world

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I want to encourage you to lead your church to participate in a Lay Renewal Weekend (LRW). Our church just completed a LRW this past weekend. It was such a blessing for our people, and for me as well. Many of our members made recommitments of their lives and we had several youth saved. But most of all, our church was changed. People who have never spoken in church shared during the testimony time. Some prayed for the first time publicly. Over 90% of these attending our Sunday morning worship service made a public commitment for Christ. Our "LRW Commitment and Evaluation Service" Sunday night lasted over 2 hours and still people stood around talking after the service. God truly blessed us. We have already committed to the next step, the Church Ministry Weekend in the next 6 months.

Let me encourage you to follow all of the recommendations in the LRW preparation manual. The temptation is to try to do it all yourself. Don't! Form your committees and let your folks do the preparation. It will bless their lives and your church, and you will have found worthy co-laborers in the process. Our lay leaders did such a wonderful job of promotion that we had as many on Friday night for the first session as we usually do on an average Sunday morning. We gained a few people every service, and had as many adults and youth on Sunday night as we did on Sunday morning.

Also, let me encourage you to bathe everything you do with prayer. Trust in the Lord and He will do a great work in your midst just as He did at LLBC. I encourage you, pastor, to contact me if you still have doubts. I will be glad to share with you what God has done and is doing at LLBC.

Yours in Christ,

Keith Stone
Pastor



Dear Walter, Janice and the Church Renewal Team,

Wow! As a pastor of twenty years I understand that God's Word can change a life for all eternity. After experiencing the Lay Renewal Weekend for the first time I now understand how powerful Christian relationships can be also!

The Lay Renewal Weekend is so simple, nothing high tech, no powerful preaching, and no new revelation from scripture. But God definitely used this simple approach to build and strengthen relationships within our church. During the Sunday evening commitment service our people lined up and gave spontaneous testimony for over two hours. That has never happened in our church before.

I want to thank the whole Church Renewal team for taking time to come and minister to our church this past weekend. Their love for Christ was obvious through sharing their lives with us.

I would wholeheartedly recommend every church to experience a Lay Renewal Weekend. If any pastor needs more information about Church Renewal in the local church, please feel free to have them call me (580-482-3377).

In His Service,

Kevin Baker
Pastor



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2014



For more information about
Church Renewal Journey
visit the website at
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This ministry is made possible
by the generous gifts of
Oklahoma Baptists through
the Cooperative Program.