

REFORMING CHURCH: HOW GOD IS AS AT WORK IN REVITALISATION MINISTRY

George Crowder (Church Society)

This book, published last year, offers readers an overview of Revitalisation Ministry. For those less familiar with the term, Crowder defines it as a ministry in which churches are given a fresh vision for mission – one that places the gospel, the salvation of the lost, and the building up of the body of Christ through the faithful ministry of Word and Sacrament at the forefront. In this book, Crowder addresses theological, ecclesiological and administrative considerations, all undergirded by a prayerful aim that ‘local churches [become] roadworthy mission vehicles’ (pp. 24, 25) – that is, confident in the gospel, mature in their discipleship and connected with their communities.

I found the breadth of experience and anecdotes Crowder uses throughout the book very helpful. There was no ‘magic formula’, but rather an honesty that, even when things were going (or went) well, we are not immune to unforeseen discouragements. At one point, when describing the rather makeshift technological musical accompaniment to hymns in his own parish, he explains: ‘Hymns were selected using a lectionary guide, and if the number of verses written didn’t equate to the number of verses played, then the congregation accordingly sang a capella or listened to the organ recording in silence’ (p. 24) – I chuckled because I have been there!

Crowder shares why he believes revitalisation should be a priority for all: ‘Church revitalisation may be the best way to bring the gospel to a community. In some places... it may be the only way’ (p. 10). He highlights that ‘...much of the rationale for investing in revitalisation ministry in the Church of England is based on the conviction that this [the Biblical foundations of the Church of England] is a legacy worth retrieving, renewing,

and reviving’ (p. 10). It seems in our cultural moment, with so much reflection on negative legacies from the past, that many are also discovering positive legacies from the past – and yearning for a return to them. I commend this book to all who have a hunger for revival and renewal in the Church of England today.

The Rev Phillip Young
Rural Missioner to the Harwich Deanery

