



## Resources for Ministry in Small Towns and Rural Communities

Below are resources that those interested in small town and rural ministry may find helpful.

### Books

#### **Rural People and Communities in the 21st Century: Resilience and Transformation**

By David L. Brown

#### **Transforming church in rural America : breaking all the Rurals**, by Shannon O'Dell

Small church buildings dotting the countryside are home to ministries that often struggle with limited attendance, no money, and little expectation that change can revitalize their future. In *Transforming Church in Rural America*, Pastor Shannon O'Dell shares a powerful vision of relevance, possibility, and excellence for these small churches, or for any ministry that is stuck in a "rural state of mind." The book reveals how to generate growth through transformed lives; ways to create active evangelism in your community; no-cost solutions for staffing challenges, enhancing the worship experience, and inspiring volunteers. Experience the blueprint for transforming into effective, dynamic, and thriving churches no matter where the location or how small it may be.

#### **Survival of rural America: small victories and bitter harvests**, by Richard E. Wood

#### **A Big Gospel in Small Place, Why Ministry in Forgotten Communities Matters**, by Stephen Witmer

<https://www.ivpress.com/a-big-gospel-in-small-places>

Recommended by Gospel Coalition

#### **Recommended books from panel members of the PCA General Assembly 2019 seminar "Small Churches in Small Towns – Big Ministry where you least expect to find it," with Chris Accardy, Tim Deihl, John Kinser, and Ken McHeard:**

##### **Transforming Grace**, by Jerry Bridges

In a small community appearances matter. There are the "accepted" and the "outcasts". Most in small town churches are made up of the "accepted" people. They need to wrestle with what God's grace actually is and what it means. Most of the unchurched are "outcasts" that will be drawn by a church focused on biblical grace.

##### **Framework for Understanding Poverty**, by Ruby Bridges

According to most data poverty in small towns is much higher than even urban contexts. It's important to understand how the generationally poor think and act.

##### **The Gospel Comes with a House Key**, by Rosaria Butterfield

Hospitality is a critical and essential ministry of the small town pastor. An inhospitable small town pastor won't last long.

##### **Using Illustrations to Preach with Power**, Bryan Chapell

Learn how to weave stories into expository preaching. Small town people tend to value life stories. A preacher who knows how to use illustrations to explain Biblical texts will connect better to people in the pew.

**The Master Plan of Evangelism**, by Robert Coleman

Evangelism is essentially a life-on-life ministry in smaller towns. There isn't the population turnover like in cities and suburbia. One needs to know how to make unchurched friends and lead them to become disciples.

**Evangelism: Doing Justice and Preaching Grace**, by Harvie Conn

Outreach requires both the preaching of the Gospel and ministries of mercy and compassion in small town environments. This book is dated in the data it presents but the core of the book is very solid. Written by an OPC foreign missionary who ended up teaching at Westminster Seminary.

**Antagonists in the Church**, Kenneth Haugk

This book helps one deal with "problem" people in the church that undermine any positive change.

**The Church of Irresistible Influence**, Robert Lewis

Written with the larger church in mind but the principles apply to churches in smaller towns very well.

**Insourcing**, Randy Pope

Discipleship is the key to developing ministry leaders in the church. Randy Pope and Perimeter Church are the best when it comes to life-on-life discipleship.

**Nine Marks of a Healthy Church** by Mark E. Dever

**Unleashed** by Steve Oeffling (2014)

**Finding a Vision for Your Church ASSEMBLY REQUIRED** by Michael A. Milton

**Body Aches (Experiencing and Responding to God's Discipline of Your Church)** by Kenneth Quick

**The Path of Revival** by Mark Barnard

**HELP We Just Lost Our Pastor** by Ken Moberg

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Below are resources that those interested in small town and rural ministry may find helpful.

The following books were found in an online search and we do not have any recommendations for them at this time, however, they may contain valuable material.

**Inside the Small Church** and **Entering the World of the Small Church**, by Anthony G. Pappas

**Shepherding the Small Church** and **Leading the Small Church: How to Develop a Transformational Ministry**, by Glenn C. Daman

**Small Congregation, Big Potential: Ministry in the Small Membership Church**, by Lyle E. Schaller

**Small, Strong Congregations: Creating Strengths and Health for Your Congregation**, by Kennon L. Callahan, church consultant

**The Healthy Small Church: Diagnosis and Treatment for the Big Issues**, Dennis Bickers, church consultant

**The Little Church That Could**, by Steven E. Burt and Hazel Ann Roper

**Turnaround and Beyond: A Hopeful Future for the Small Membership Church**, by Ronald K. Crandall

## Websites

Village Missions

<https://villagemissions.org/small-town-pastor/>

Small Town Summits resource page:

<https://www.smalltownsummits.com/resources>

Recommended by Gospel Coalition

Small Church Leadership Network

<https://www.ruralministry.net/>

Contains articles, lists of books, internet resources, and training programs related to small town ministries.

Small Church.com

<https://smallchurch.com/>

Contains articles, links and lists for resources

## Papers and Articles

**Effective Ministry in Rural Iowa**, by Larry Hoop and Larry Doughan

Accessible through the CTS Library

Excellent suggestions that have been used in their respective ministries.

**The Common Mistakes of Clergy in Rural Congregations**

Article by James K. Stewart

Accessible through the CTS library

### Papers through the Southern Baptist Convention website

**Development of a Lay Leadership Training Conference for Rural Appalachian Churches**

SBC, By Jimmy D. Wilson

<https://repository.sbts.edu/handle/10392/4966>

Available online as pdf.

Browse “small town” or “rural” under SBC <http://www.sbc.net/search/search.asp?q=small%20town>

Browse here under R, Rural or S, Small town:

<https://digital.library.sbts.edu/handle/10392/693/browse?value=Small+town&type=subject>

**Implementing an Evangelism Strategy at Hornsby Baptist Church, Hornsby, Tennessee**

<https://digital.library.sbts.edu/handle/10392/4636>

## Other Resources

The Church Planters Tool Kit by Bob Logan can be very helpful. It opens all kinds of ideas for planning, strategy, partnering. It has audio lectures, outline, and a self-evaluation.

MNA church planter training can also be very helpful for small town churches.