

Church Planter Resource List

The CHMCE requires regular reading from each of these categories, and also recommends church planters read these books together. Take time to consider the concepts, wrestle through the ideas, and respond with several action items from what you have learned.

EVANGELISM:

Read Packer and Kuiper. These provide both clear theological instruction but also practical encouragement in the Reformed method of evangelism.

Get Real: Sharing Your Everyday Faith Every Day, John Leonard

Evangelism: How the Whole Church Speaks of Jesus (9Marks), J. Mack Stiles

Both of these books offer simple suggestions on living an outward, evangelistic life in the place where God has placed you. And they also offer suggestions on how pastors and sessions might lead their congregations in building an evangelistic culture into the weekly life of a congregation.

A Faith Worth Sharing, C. John Miller

Powerful Evangelism for the Powerless, C. John Miller

Provides encouraging examples of how to pursue evangelism – in the first book, as a Christian; in the second book, as a church.

Preaching: Communicating Faith in an Age of Skepticism, Timothy Keller

Yes, a book on preaching, and a helpful one. (You'll find it on that list as well.) But chapters 4 and 5 offer some good insights that not only help us as preachers, but also as communicators and evangelists (both in and out of the pulpit).

Tactics, Gregory Koukl

Koukl provides clear teaching and some basic principles to help us more carefully hear (and thus respect) our unbelieving neighbors, and by hearing better we also become more effective communicators. This is not only a great resource for pastors but can also be useful in training our congregations to speak with their neighbors.

Secret Thoughts of an Unlikely Convert and *The Gospel Comes with a House Key*, Rosaria Butterfield

Mrs. Butterfield and her books are quite familiar, so there isn't much new to say. But from her experience both before and after conversion, she offers good ideas and habits that will help us grow in hospitality and evangelism – two matters that support each other and are non-negotiable for ministers of the gospel.

I Once Was Lost: What Postmodern Skeptics Taught Us About Their Path to Faith, Don Everts and Doug Schaupp

Everts and Schaupp write from their extensive experience in evangelistic campus ministry. They share many examples of the kinds of gospel communication that the Lord used to bring skeptics to faith, and from those examples they provide some principles to help us more effectively communicate the gospel.

Two resources from the blog of Christopher Chelpka, OP pastor in Tucson, AZ

A link to his review of Honest Evangelism by Rico Tice

(<https://www.whitehorseinn.org/article/honest-evangelism-how-to-talk-about-jesus-even-when-its-tough-by-rico-tice-with-carl-laferton/>)

His comments on the Thom Rainer study as a motivation for evangelism and inviting people to church (<https://www.christopherchelpka.com/2015/09/08/statistical-motivation-for.html>)

CHURCH PLANTING:

Planting an Orthodox Presbyterian Church

This is not simply required reading for church planter training but also a resource to address the ongoing challenges and aims for our church planters. Several sections provide ongoing help in clarifying the targets for which we are aiming (3-6, 15-19, 30-31, 77-85) or the activities that should receive the greatest attention for our church planters (34-36, 54-75, 88-105) and the ongoing evaluation of the health and maturity of the work, including identifying areas that require attention (108-110).

Planting, Watering, Growing, Daniel Hyde and Shane Lems

A good collection of essays from our friends in the URCNA, although Shane Lems is now a pastor in the OPC.

Church Planting Is for Wimps, Mike McKinley

Written by a Westminster Theological Seminary grad and a product of the Nine Marks group started by Mark Dever, McKinley provides a simple description of how to plant (or revitalize) a church. He even dares to take on some sacred cows of the modern church planting movement and provides good instruction in the process, while clearly pointing us to our basic guides for ministry: Scripture, creeds, and confessions.

LEADERSHIP:

From a decidedly Christian perspective:

The Cross and Christian Ministry: Leadership Lessons from I Corinthians, D. A. Carson

As I mentioned, this book is a regular read for me. I've read it at least 4 or 5 times already, and it sits right behind my desk as it has throughout my 11 years in ministry.

The Conviction to Lead, Albert Mohler (short, easy chapters with simple lessons)

The Imperfect Pastor, Zack Eswine (currently the resource for Al's teaching during the quarterly church planter phone calls)

From Embers To a Flame and *The Leadership Dynamic*, Harry Reeder

From a not necessarily Christian perspective (though filled with evidence of common grace as the writers often articulate principles with Biblical roots), these are well worth reading and learning:

Outliers: The Story of Success, Malcolm Gladwell

Tipping Point: How Little Things Can Make a Big Difference, Malcolm Gladwell

This is my favorite. Lots of helpful insights that are consistent with Scripture and life, and considers the kinds of gifts and people necessary for healthy growth in any organization.

The Captain Class: The Hidden Force That Creates the World's Greatest Teams, Sam Walker

For sports junkies like me, it shares leadership principles that you find in many business books while telling great sports stories. Finished on the flight home.

Creativity, Inc., Ed Catmull

Does the same for creative types as *The Captain Class* does for sports types. Business and leadership principles told through the story of Pixar.

Leading Change, John P. Kotter

A business leadership classic and best seller since 1996. Almost embarrassed that I just started this, but it did come out one year after I graduated from college with an Economics degree, so it wasn't part of the business or leadership curriculum during my college years. That's my excuse.

Made to Stick: Why Some Ideas Survive and Others Die, Chip and Dan Heath

Makes the connection between good leadership and good communication, so particularly relevant to pastoral leadership and preaching – thus why it is listed also under preaching.

PREACHING:

All our church planters will have received seminary training in homiletics, and they are also required to take the course on preaching from MTIOPC. So this list is not intended to replicate the reading lists from those classes. This list particularly relates to preaching the gospel clearly, assuming that they have received good instruction on all the other aspects of homiletics.

Everything mentioned above in evangelism and outreach can be useful to inform our preaching, in particular thinking of how to clearly communicate the gospel in our opening of the text. Of special note from that list: Keller, Koukl, and Everts.

Read or listen to good sermons, devotionals, and commentaries that give examples of good exegetical work and clear communication.

On Speaking Well, Peggy Noonan

Don't be distracted by her politics and whether you agree with her or not. Peggy Noonan is a clear communicator in print and speech. Every preacher needs to grow in their ability to speak in clear and interesting ways, and Noonan provides some helpful instruction.

Made to Stick: Why Some Ideas Survive and Others Die, Chip Heath and Dan Heath

While this book doesn't address preaching specifically, it helps us think about how to use words to effectively communicate ideas that stick in the mind – to preach and teach in ways that are memorable so our people retain the truths of Scripture we have communicated.

PRAYER:

If God Already Knows, Why Pray? Douglas Kelly

Kelly provides helpful teaching for the Reformed believer or pastor on how prayer fits beautifully with our confidence in the sovereign goodness of God. This is solid theological and practical instruction.

Prayer, Ole Hallesby

Helpful instruction from a 20th century pietistic Lutheran minister in Norway. This book is likely overlooked by many Reformed ministers, but it provides significant encouragement on a matter in which most of us struggle. Read Alan Strange's review in the March 2012 issue of *Ordained Servant*. A few quotes from that review:

This is one of the best books that I have ever read on prayer, and likely to be of significant comfort and help to saints struggling with the holy calling of prayer.

It's impossible to replicate in a review the encouragement and, frankly, delight that this book affords. But for the struggling and the discouraged, for those keenly sensing their helplessness, I have not read anything in memory more fitting than Hallesby's work on prayer. If that "sweet hour of prayer" seems to be eluding you, perhaps it would be worthwhile to peruse (prayerfully, of course) Hallesby's modern classic.

A Method of Prayer, Matthew Henry

A classic available in many formats, including online versions that walk you through the book day-by-day. Here is practical instruction on prayer, and in particular Henry makes the connection between Scripture and prayer quite clear.

Pray with Your Eyes Open, Richard Pratt

Pratt offers lots of helpful insights and advice. This is not only a great tool for the individual pastor, but also lends itself nicely to Bible study or Sunday School classes.

A Praying Life, Paul Miller

Wow! This book is challenging and encouraging with clear biblical instruction and comfort.

Thoughts on Public Prayer, Samuel Miller

A classic. Not sure I need to say anything other than every minister who has a public praying responsibility should probably read this.

The list of helpful books is quite long. Consider also Calvin's Institutes, Owen, Keller, Witsius, and the Reformed confessional documents (not only Westminster standards, but especially those).