**Autopsy of a Deceased Church by Thom Rainer**

The Symptoms of Terminal Church Sickness

Slow Erosion – no urgency of change; business as usual; gradual decline goes largely unnoticed.

Declines in vibrant ministries; the prayer lives of members; community connections, and the hopes and dreams of those who remain (13).

The Past is the Hero – dying churches focused on their own needs instead of others. They looked inwardly instead of outwardly. The highest priorities were the way they’ve always done it, and that which made them most comfortable (22).

The Church Refused to Look Like the Community – those in the church were more concerned about protecting the way they did church than reaching residents of the community (27). Members didn’t want growth unless that growth met their preferences and allowed them to remain comfortable (44).

The Budget Moved Inwardly – the church ceases to be a ministry and becomes a possession. The church spends for their way of doing church (35). Ministries and programs with outward focus are first to be cut when money is tight (34).

The Great Commission Becomes the Great Omission – members are unwilling to go into the community to reach and minister to people. They were unwilling to invite their unchurched friends and relatives. They weren’t willing to expend necessary funds for a vibrant outreach. They just wanted growth to happen—without prayer, sacrifice, or hard work (44).

The Preference-Driven Church – *my* music style; *my* desired length and order of worship services; *my* desired color and design of buildings and rooms; *my* activities and programs; *my* need of ministers and staff (49).

Pastoral Tenure Decreases – pastors who initiate or even suggest change meet fierce resistance; or, pastors adopt the attitude of recalcitrant members and make no attempt to lead to change or outward focus (60).

The Church Rarely Prayed Together – people do not pray before worship services, in small groups, or for their communities (68). Any prayer that does happen amounts to little more than reading names off a list (67).

The Church Had No Purpose – no one asks what they should be doing; they were too busy doing what they’ve always done (74).

The Church Obsessed Over the Facilities – mission is compromised for protecting the building; memorial gifts give certain individuals control over the design and usage of church facilities with no thought of mission or the future (80)

# Bibliography

Rainer, Thom S. 2014. *Autopsy of a Deceased Church.* Nashville: B&H Publishing Group.