

# KICKING HABITS

## BY: TOM BANDY

Bill Easum and Tom Bandy have written extensively on how congregations may position themselves for effective ministry in the twenty-first century. For a complete layout of their model, and how each of their volumes contributes to its development, see the resource guide on the [Easum and Bandy System](#).

This volume, *Kicking Habits*, builds on the foundation laid in [Growing Spiritual Redwoods](#) by describing the essential difference between thriving and declining church systems, and more specifically the five stages of congregational transformation: *shared vision, congregational spirituality, redefining leadership roles, streamlining the organization, and birthing the new system*. [Growing Spiritual Redwoods](#) describes the **foundations** of their system - *congregational identity, mission, and organization* – and *Kicking Habits* describes the five main **functions** important to their system. Note the study guide, [Coming Clean, The Study Guide to Kicking Habits](#).

The introduction of *Kicking Habits* identifies eight destructive additions that masquerade as authentic missional calls, e.g. redundant management, acceptable mediocrity, worship as information event, debt freedom. Bandy provides a church addiction test, and suggests that awakening from these habits comes only as the church listens in on the spiritual yearnings of the public in the twenty-first century and seeks to faithfully address them. Then they begin on the “twelve-step” journey of breaking free from destructive additions and entering a more authentic missional calling.

In Part One, Bandy explains more fully the difference between a declining church system and the thriving church system. Part Two describes the organization behind these two systems. First is the declining system of structures, committees, and programs where creative ideas are born but die after “115 people take ten weeks and spend 275 hours in order to say ‘NO.’” (110) Next is the thriving system characterized by decentralized control and self-guided mission units, streamlined administration of a gifted few, and unity through the continued shared experience of the transforming power of God. This section develops the pentagon-shaped rubric of five

functional subsystems of the Easum/Bandy philosophy of an effective church: *experiencing God, growing in God, listening to God, serving God, and sharing God*. What energizes the thriving system is the basic vision, the electricity that links and energizes the “electromagnetic field” of beliefs and values.

Within the energy field of basic vision, beliefs, and values there is the ferment of church life. They define the perimeters beyond which church participants cannot go – but within which they are completely free to do whatever they are called to do. (127)

These also form the “basic umbrella of congregational life.”

The stabilization of the thriving system comes from the guiding vision, beliefs, and values, but also from three interconnected teams at the center who provide *pastoral leadership, administration, and human resources* to coordinate, manage, and monitor church life. Their purpose is not to micro-manage all the affairs of the church, but to exercise just enough oversight to make sure all that is done is congruent with the vision, beliefs, and values.

At the core of the thriving church system is worship that celebrates the transforming power of God in changing people, leads to a deeper awareness of who God is and what he is doing, and facilitates discernment of each participant’s call into mission and integrates all the “personal missions” of the church into one “Body of Christ.”

Part Three discusses the five stages through which a church progresses as they seek to become a thriving system. A separate chapter is devoted to each stage. The first stage is *shared vision*, followed by *congregational spirituality*, then *redefining leadership roles*, then *streamlining the organization*, and finally *birthing the new system*. Part Five addresses several important theological shifts that often attend the shift to the thriving church system. One does not have to agree with Bandy’s theological bias to profit from his approach.

Taken alongside the other volumes in the [Easum/Bandy collection](#), *Kicking Habits* is an invigorating picture of a thriving church. It also has value in itself, especially in the discussion of the “basic umbrella of congregational life,” which is one of the best presentations available on church-based statements of vision, beliefs, and values.

## From the Publisher

The best-selling foundational book for church growth (Translations in Spanish and Korean available)

*Kicking Habits* is the groundbreaking book on systemic change that has literally birthed new congregations rejuvenated tired leaders, and transformed declining churches. It tells the story of thriving church life through the experience of the institutionally alienated, spiritually yearning public. It provides the big picture of thriving church life in the postmodern world.

1. *Kicking Habits* means discerning and breaking the self-destructive habits that declining churches repeatedly perform, and chronically deny.
2. *Kicking Habits* means shaping a new attitude toward ministry and making a fresh start to walk with Jesus in the twenty-first century.
3. *Kicking Habits* not only challenges the church to rediscover faithfulness today, but reveals that there is indeed a better way to organize effectively as the body of Christ.

*Kicking Habits: Upgrade Edition* is part of Tom Bandy's Church Transformation Trilogy that includes *Coming Clean* and *Facing Reality*. Each book links with the others to form a comprehensive resource to envision, reflect, and implement a thriving church.