

MissionNorthwest

Resourcing and developing churches that connect people with Jesus Christ

Leadership Learning Communities 2022 Resource List

JANUARY

A Culture of Scarcity And a God of Abundance: Leading a Church into a Bigger, Better, More Beautiful Story by Jamie McCallum (Pastor of Belfair Community Church, WA) Dissertation.
Part One -- Pages 1 - 96

Jamie tells her story of leading change in her congregation's attitude from "Woe-is-us" to an attitude of "Wow, God is amazing. All resources come from Him! He will empower us to do life-changing ministry". It's been a huge cultural shift for the church resulting in transformation and renewed effectiveness in reaching the community for Christ. The church has also grown in numbers, health, financial strength and most importantly, it has baptized a great number of new believers. Churches are always in need of continuous renewal and transformation. Otherwise they turn inward, abandon the Great Commission and die. This work provides excellent ideas for leading a renewed church.

The dissertation surveys biblical texts revealing God as a God of abundance. It emphasizes focusing on the presence of Christ who gives life to His body as its source and strength. Jamie highlights the importance of eating together in various contexts to strengthen relationships and community. There is an extensive discussion on how to shift the church's culture from an inward-focused, risk adverse culture to one that is hopeful, faith-filled, and focused on ministry to the lost. The dissertation includes wide ranging practical suggestions. These include dialogical preaching, recording front porch talks, the \$10 give-away-experiment and more. There is an excellent section on helping the church move towards risky mission rather than playing it safe. There is a lot of material in this resource to discuss and apply over a 2 to 3 month period.

FEBRUARY

A Culture of Scarcity And a God of Abundance: Leading a Church into a Bigger, Better, More Beautiful Story by Jamie McCallum (Pastor of Belfair Community Church, WA) Dissertation.
Part Two -- Pages 97 - 172

MARCH

After Doubt: How to Question Your Faith Without Losing It by A.J. Swoboda. Forward by John Mark Comer. Part One – Pages 3-108

A. J. Swoboda (PhD, University of Birmingham) is assistant professor of Bible, theology, and world Christianity at Bushnell University. He also leads a D. Min. program around the Holy Spirit and leadership at Fuller. A.J. is the author of a number of books, including the award-winning *Subversive Sabbath*. For ten years he pastored Theophilus Church in Portland, OR. He's no disconnected academic. Instead he writes from the perspective of a shepherd.

On the one hand this is a book that addresses the increasing phenomenon of deconstruction that is taking place among many “former Christians”. On the other hand it's a book about helping people be fully formed in Christ within imperfect churches in the midst of a post-Christendom era. And finally, it's a book about re-centering our faith and our churches in Jesus Christ above all else. All of these subjects are extremely important for pastors to address as they lead churches in our present moment.

People are wrestling with core Christian beliefs today. Too often, what begins as a set of critical and important questions turns to resentment and faith abandonment. Unfortunately, the church has largely ignored its task of serving people along their journey of questioning. The local church must walk alongside those who are deconstructing their faith and help them reconstruct it. Drawing on his own experience of deconstruction, Swoboda offers tools to help people navigate their faith in a hostile landscape. Doubt is a part of our natural spiritual journey, says Swoboda, and deconstruction is a legitimate space to encounter the living God. After Doubt offers a hopeful, practical vision of spiritual formation for those in the process of faith deconstruction and those who serve them. (~ Amazon description)

Additional resource: “In Faith & Doubt” Podcast by A.J. Swoboda & Nijay K.Gupta

Quote: Following Jesus should humble us. But, perplexingly, it can have the opposite effect. I've observed that when Christians believe something passionately, it can lead to a posture of pride and arrogance. There is a kind of arrogance that often comes with having the truth. Rather than allowing the truth to humble us, we use the truth as a weapon. Truth should always first and foremost be turned toward ourselves – never as a rod with which we beat ourselves. What we need is truth matched with great humility... This arrogance is the very reason that so many are disenfranchised with conservative and progressive Christianity. ~ A.J. Swadoba

APRIL

After Doubt: How to Question Your Faith Without Losing It by A.J. Swoboda. Part Two– Pages 109 – 193

MAY

Managing Leadership Anxiety: Yours and Theirs by Steve Cuss; Part One – Pages 1 - 98

This is not your everyday secular oriented leadership book. It's a deeply spiritual, biblical book that addresses in a constructive, Spirit-led way, the challenge of leading in a super-polarized time. The book is more about spiritual formation than organization leadership, yet touches on both.

Quote: The goal of managing anxiety is not simply for relief, it is to connect more fully with God and to raise awareness of what God is doing. Anxiety blocks our awareness of God because it takes our subconscious attention. This means that anxiety can be an early detection system that we're depending on something other than God for our well-being.

Anxiety shrinks the power of the gospel because it presents a false gospel—one of self-reliance rather than reliance on God.

I tend to be a risk-taker by nature, but some leaders have the opposite problem—they don't make enough mistakes. They are so concerned about doing everything just right, they play it too safe. Their anxiety does not come after the mistake, their anxiety shows up well before they make a leadership decision.

Check out Steve's podcast: <https://stevecusswords.com> There's some awesome input at his site.

SEPTEMBER

Managing Leadership Anxiety: Yours and Theirs by Steve Cuss; Part Two – Pages 99-206

OCTOBER

LLC Chooses the Resource to Examine Together

NOVEMBER

LLC Chooses the Resource to Examine Together

DECEMBER

No resource selection for December. Use this month to complete a book that took longer to read than expected, or catch up with one another and reflect back on the year that has passed.

ADDITIONAL RECOMMENDED RESOURCES FOR 2022

Re-Imagining Evangelism: Inviting Friends on a Spiritual Journey by Rick Richardson. This a very practical book on personal evangelism through everyday friendships. It was written before “You Found Me”, however, everything Rick writes about evangelism is golden.

You Gotta Ask: How to Have Meaningful Conversations With Anyone Using Compelling Questions by Jon and Pam Strain. Pitch this question the next time you are hanging out with an unbeliever: “Assuming there is a God, and you could ask God anything, what would you ask? Then follow where the conversation goes. This is a book on evangelism. What makes it different? It gives practical, everyday tools for ordinary believers to engage in dialogue that will steer conversations towards spiritual issues so that people open up their lives to Christ.

The Gospel Precisely: Surprisingly Good News About Jesus Christ the King by Matthew Bates. A summation of Bates two excellent volumes presenting a more robust understanding of the Gospel by lifting up Jesus as the Messiah King. His perspective will help people understand that salvation comes through bending the knee to King Jesus not merely through praying a “sinners prayer” in order to go to heaven upon death. The book “confronts tepid views of Jesus and truncated views of the gospel by guiding us through Scripture and showing us its surprisingly good news.” This book is also suitable for church study groups.

Table Life: An Invitation to Everyday Discipleship by Greg Mamula. Greg is the Associate Executive Minister for ABC Nebraska. “This book presents a uniquely holistic approach to table fellowship as a spiritual discipline. The intentional and interactive process of reflection and action, meals and mission, listening and storytelling, scripture and perspective, communion and neighboring connects us with Christ, the local church, our neighborhood, and our community” (from the back cover) An excellent approach for deepening relational connections in the church and/or within one’s neighborhood.

The Ten Key Roles of a Pastor: Proven Practices for Balancing Demands of Leading Your Church by Gary McIntosh. This is McIntosh’s most recent book and serves as both a primer and reminder of the various roles pastors must live out. It is practical and succinct. A LLC would benefit from choosing to study McIntosh’s take on 2 to 3 of the roles that pastors are struggling with today. He also identifies which roles are more productive for evangelism, disciple-making and community formation within the local church.

One of the Eugene Peterson Books for Pastors or the recent authorized biography of Peterson (*A Burning In My Bones* by Winn Collier) This would be for the LLC that wants strengthening in the area of the pastor’s personal spiritual formation. *Managing Leadership Anxiety*, as indicated previously in the schedule is at least one-part spiritual formation and one-part congregational leadership. This should be taken into consideration if this option is considered. Outstanding Peterson books on the pastor’s spiritual formation include:

- ***Working the Angles: The Shape of Pastoral Integrity***
- ***Under the Unpredictable Plant: An Exploration in Vocational Holiness***
- ***Five Smooth Stones for Pastoral Work***
- ***Tell It Slant: A Conversation on the Language of Jesus in His Stories and Prayers***
- ***The Pastor: A Memoir***

Thom Rainer Short Books

Rainer has published several short studies with a focus on leading during COVID, or after the pandemic. Each is roughly 35 pages long. Much of the content can be found in Rainer email messages during the last 12 months. Each one has some helpful insights. These include the following:

- ***Anatomy of a Revived Pastor***
- ***Leading Post-COVID Church***
- ***Simple Church during COVID***