

THE SCATTERING

Imagining a Church that Connects Faith and Life

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Foreword by Craig L. Nesson
with an Interlude by Forrest Walden

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Introduction

Imagine a church that has a huge impact on society. Imagine a church that feeds the hungry in countless ways and places. Imagine a church that provides healing, comfort, and care for the sick and suffering—every day, near and far. Imagine a church with resources that total trillions of dollars. Imagine a church engaged in ministry that is so far-reaching that it's impossible to count, categorize, or report. That is the vision I have for the church.

Only this vision doesn't depend on leaders creating new initiatives, asking people to do something more, or raising more money. In fact, just the opposite may be true.

How is that possible? How can the church have far-reaching ministries without asking people to give more or do more? It's rather simple, actually: by acknowledging that the church—the people of God—is already engaged in feeding the hungry (parents and farmers do it every day), healing the sick (doctors, nurses, and pharmacists do this around the clock), working for common good (we do this when we vote or volunteer in community organizations), and engaging in countless other acts by which God is actively at work in us and through us for the welfare of the other—whoever, whatever, and wherever that may be.

This vision can be achieved by acknowledging the vast amount of ministry that is already taking place *outside the church*, by equipping people to do that work faith-fully, by commissioning all of us for our various ministries, by intentionally acknowledging and talking about how we are doing with our God-given callings, and by offering forgiveness and a chance to try again when we fail. In order to achieve this vision, we may actually need to cut back on our programs, our fundraisers, and our pleas for volunteers. We definitely need to stop seeing congregational ministries in competition

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with the daily lives and activities of Christ's followers. Not all ministry happens, or needs to happen, in and through the gathered church.

Hear this: what we do as the church gathered is important. Meeting regularly for worship is important. Forming faith in children and adults is important. Working together to fight hunger or eliminate malaria is important. In situations like these, we can do more together than we can separately. But hear this as well: what we do as the church scattered is equally important. It's not an either/or choice; it is most definitely a matter of being church and joining God's mission when we're gathered *and* when we're scattered.

The principal reason we have not achieved this vision is because we have been preoccupied with the health and viability of the church-as-institution for far too long. In our dedication to maintaining this model of *church* we have overlooked, and sometimes even denigrated, wonderful and encouraging acts of ministry that happen every day—in *the world*.

My premise is this: *When we become as good at the scattering of the church as we are at its gathering, we will find new joy, new purpose, and new vitality.* We will embody the biblical calling of the church as those who are blessed by God to bless others. We will take pressure off both leaders and members who fear the decline of the congregation's vitality and relevance. We will be amazed to realize how far and wide God is at work in us and through us for the sake of our neighbor.

A JOURNEY OF DISCOVERY AND RENEWED HOPE

This book is a story about a journey. It's the story of the church's corporate journey over the past decades and even centuries, and it's the story of my own personal journey in recent years. It's the story of how dedicated seminary professors labored to form me—and pastors like me—so that I would be aware of and supportive of the ministry that all the baptized have in daily life. It's also the story of how I—and pastors like me, caught up in the demands of parish life—lost that vision. It's the story of surprising discoveries, and the story of how some of those discoveries were wrong. It's the story of how many individuals and groups have labored year after year to restore the vision of a church that supports and empowers the priesthood of all believers, only to see that vision set aside because we could not make a direct connection between the vitality of the institution and all that we do in God's name in our everyday lives.

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This book is based in hope. It's a hope that one of the fundamental precepts of the church—that the church exists not for itself but for the sake of the world—can restore a sense of purpose, vitality, and even joy to the faithful remnant that is reeling from decades of loss: loss of purpose, loss of relevance, and loss of members. It's a hope that we can recast the role of the church in terms of supporting all believers for their ministry in the world, and thereby relieve the stress that comes with a narrow focus on keeping programs humming and finances healthy.

This book is also based on the hope—the promise even—that by re-forming our congregations as communities that prepare, support, encourage, equip, and send people into the world as God's partners in the care and restoration of all creation, leaders in congregations—pastors in particular—will find new meaning, new vitality, new purpose, and even joy in their various ministries. Living out the vision of ministry as something that is shared by *all* God's people rather than provided to God's people by a chosen few holds the promise of lifting heavy burdens from threadbare shoulders.

In this regard, a word of caution is in order: As you read this book you may find yourself burdened by thoughts, approaches, suggestions, changes, or activities that appear to be additional demands. I can only encourage you to hold onto the premise and the promise that this book is more about letting go than it is about adding on. By letting go of our preoccupation with congregational programs, in finding ways to measure vitality in terms other than contributions and attendance, and by seeing ministry as something that has been given to all God's people, my hope is that we will find new ways to celebrate all that God is doing and wants to do in the world through *all* of us, both in the church and in the world.

A ROSE BY ANY OTHER NAME

The subject of this book has gone by many names over the years: priesthood of all believers, ministry of the laity, vocation, ministry in daily life, calling, purpose, and most recently I've seen it called "spirituality in the workplace." Even though it has been known by a wide variety of names, and maybe precisely *because* it has been known by many names, there is no dominant way to describe it. Every time a name has been popularized, it has been sidetracked or diminished, either by resistance, by confused interpretations, or (to use a phrase that describes the unintentional expansion

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of an endeavor beyond its original goals) by the inevitable “mission creep” that infects all such movements. Personally, I like *vocation*, but that word is difficult to use because many people see it only in terms of a job (hence vocational schools where students are taught skills to perform a particular job), while others see it only in terms of a call to religious service (the priesthood or the convent in particular). Sometimes the word is so foreign to listeners that they think the speaker simply mispronounced *vocation*. Over the course of this journey I used *ministry in daily life* because it was the best option I had, but even that phrase has its drawbacks. In this book I use alternative language based on gathering and scattering that holds the potential to move us forward, though at times I revert to older language as well. My reading of Scripture and my understanding of what happens in the waters of baptism convince me that God’s intent is that all of us are called to be God’s agents of love, reconciliation, hope, and service. That call certainly applies to what we do when we gather as church, but it applies equally (and perhaps even more so) in the scattering—in the roles, relationships, and responsibilities of our everyday lives.

WHO SHOULD READ THIS BOOK

This book is principally for people who are or will be leaders in local congregations: those who are financially compensated for their leadership, those who are training for paid or unpaid roles in the church, those who are elected or appointed to leadership roles, and volunteers serving as informal leaders in small groups or other relational roles. Even if you are not a leader in your congregation, if you are searching for a way to renew and revitalize both your faith and the faith journey of your congregation, you may find hope and purpose in these pages.

A word of confession: I am a Lutheran pastor, and so (for better or worse) I am most familiar with Lutheran viewpoints, history, theology, and language, and I am most familiar with leadership from the pastor’s point of view. Nevertheless, I worked to keep this book as accessible as possible to readers from many denominations, with varying degrees of theological education, and different ministry credentials. Even so, it needs to be noted that some readers will encounter new words or foreign languages. Please know that I don’t do this to intimidate or discourage anyone. It’s just that in some cases these words, when they are carefully explored and explained, can bring new insight to old expectations and understandings.

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In order to broaden the base upon which this book is written, I interviewed people from a wide variety of mainline denominations. This means the findings presented here are applicable across denominational lines. While I often speak Lutheranese and quote Martin Luther more than you might be accustomed to, I also include insights from other traditions. Regardless of your background, I hope you will find insight and new hope for the ministry of the church in these pages.

LOOKING AHEAD

Some of what you find in this book is not new with me. This is due, in part, to the long history the church has had with this topic (which you will hear more about in chapter 4). In addition, some of what I present here is available in other places, but you would have to spend months reading a wide variety of books in order to find it on your own. The good news for me is that I have not had to reinvent the wheel; in places I either summarize or quote the work of others. The good news for you is that if you want more information on any particular point, you can find many sources in the footnotes and read to your heart's content.

What *is* new here falls into three categories:

- 1) my personal journey of rediscovering this call to service in the world—a journey that I am confident is shared by many people in the church;
- 2) the results of interviewing and observing many congregational leaders and members about the confusion that inhibits progress in this area; and
- 3) new language that overcomes stereotypes and opens the door to new ways of being and doing church.

The first two chapters set the stage. We will not make any progress toward equipping and sending the saints if we do not first understand the nature and purpose of the church. Chapter 1 covers that ground, then provides some initial language for this journey. Chapter 2 looks at the conversations I had with pastors and their people that I referred to in point 2) above. Chapters 3 and 4 are foundational for those who want to explore the biblical and theological grounding of the call to ministry that God gives to all believers. Chapter 3 looks at the perceived difference between clergy and laity, and then points to a way that we can talk about ministry in terms of our common calling. Chapter 4 follows up with a review of vocation from

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biblical times, through the Reformation, and into our day. We find that the gathered church has consistently overlooked the church's essential task of equipping the saints for ministry.

Chapter 5 then serves as a turning point from what has been to what might be. It proposes an alternate way of describing the life and ministry of the gathered and scattered church. Following that, chapters 6 and 7 describe essential characteristics for a church that connects faith and life. Chapter 6 looks at the road ahead in terms of dying to our corporate selves so that we are free to love and serve our neighbors. Chapter 7 builds some framework that will enable us to become communities that equip the saints. The final chapter is a foretaste of practical ways by which congregational leaders can begin to implement the premise of this book. I hope these initial ideas will inspire real-world experimentation in your setting. Who knows what might happen? With a little help from the Holy Spirit, a new way of being and doing church is ready to leap from your imagination into life-giving practice. When that happens, I hope you will share your experiments and your experiences at www.TheScattering.org, the companion website for this book. Together we can create and share resources that can help the church live into the promise of the priesthood of all believers.

1

Imagining a New/old Church —Gathered and Sent

Think of how the word *church* is used. “I’m going to church tomorrow,” means of course, I’m planning to go to worship tomorrow. “My church believes in the Bible” could be a reference to the theological orientation of a congregation or of a denomination. “Our church is open to all people” might mean the congregation is intentionally inclusive, or it might mean that community groups can meet in the building. Or someone might ask, “Where is your church?” when they want to know the location of the building. While the easy answer is “We’re located a block from the high school,” I’ve heard a few people respond to this question by saying, “Well, let’s see: It’s Thursday afternoon so Sue is at her office at the insurance company, Bob is probably driving to his next site visit, and Billy is headed home from school.” Of course, this last answer would only confuse people who just want to know the location of the building. These common uses of *church* are so prevalent that few Christians even question them.

While *church* is often equated with a building, denomination, congregation, or a worship service, these things are not *church* in its fullest, richest sense. Because of that, we begin our pursuit of what it means to equip the saints for the work of ministry (Eph 4:12) by first seeking to understand the nature and purpose of the church. This isn’t just an academic exercise; such theological and practical grounding is necessary in order to know who we are and what God is calling us to be and do, both as a community of believers and as individuals. This chapter traces the purpose of God’s

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people through the Old Testament, into the New, and then over the history of the church. We will wind up with some new (well, actually, it's quite old) language that will help us grow into all that God desires us to be.

SHALOM

Any understanding of the church needs to start with an understanding of God's desire for the world. So let's start at the beginning: "God saw everything that he had made, and indeed, it was very good" (Gen 1:31). A better translation would be, "God saw everything that had been created, and indeed, it was exactly what God had in mind." Creation was the way God wanted it to be; all creation and all creatures were in harmony. It was paradise. It was a wonderful and life-giving place to be.

The word in the Hebrew language for this condition is *shalom*. Despite it being a Hebrew word, it is well known around the world; most people translate it as "peace." It means that, but it includes much more. Like the Hawaiian word *Aloha*, *shalom* is used both to greet people and to bid them farewell. But wait! There's more! Shalom means completeness, soundness, welfare, peace, safety, prosperity, quiet, tranquility, contentment, and friendship. It is also used to describe peace with God, especially in the context of a covenant with God. One English word that is missing from this list is a helpful way to sum up many of the synonyms: *harmony*.

This long list of words that translate *shalom* is a great place to begin our look at God's desire for the world. Words like completeness, peace, prosperity, and harmony describe the way God intended life to be from the very beginning; they describe that which God desires for us, for all people, and for all creation.

But it doesn't take long before Genesis describes what happened to this vision of shalom. By the time we get to the third chapter, sin enters in, and God's beautiful vision is broken. The story of Adam and Eve and how they messed up creation is not an irrelevant old tale. It is also our story. This is the story of how our lack of trust in God's goodness causes us to take our God-given freedom, responsibility, and relationships and abuse them, rendering us broken images of God, broken reminders of God's presence and care in the world.

As tragic as the story is, it is important to note that brokenness is not the last word. In a verse that is easily overlooked, God's grace and continuing concern for the well-being of creation is shown. Genesis 3:21 says,

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“And the Lord God made garments of skins for the man and for his wife, and clothed them.” God knew that clothes made of fig leaves would not protect Adam and Eve from the harshness of life outside the garden. So even after pronouncing judgment on them, and before driving them out of the garden, God made decent clothes that would protect them. This was an act of pure and undeserved grace; God continues to care for both creature and creation.

By the sixth chapter of Genesis, humanity had plumbed the depths of decadence. Verses 5 and 6 read, “The Lord saw that the wickedness of humankind was great in the earth, and that every inclination of the thoughts of their hearts was only evil continually. And the Lord was sorry that he had made humankind on the earth, and it grieved him to his heart.” God’s judgment on human beings, though, did not bring God to a total destruction of all life. Rather, God chose Noah who, according to 6:8, had “found favor in the sight of the Lord.” Noah and his family were told that, through them, God would make a fresh beginning.

The story of Noah and the ark is followed immediately by the story of the tower of Babel, where we see people in their false sense of pride trying to build a tower high enough to reach God. Chapter 12 of Genesis tells of an important turning point in God’s relationship to humanity. Here God’s covenant with Abraham is introduced: “The Lord said to Abram, ‘Go from your country and your kindred and your father’s house to the land that I will show you. I will make of you a great nation, and I will bless you, and make your name great, so that you will be a blessing . . . in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed’ ” (12:1–3). God’s *promise* was that Abram’s descendants would become a mighty nation; the *reason* for this promise was to make God’s love known to all people. Through the rest of the Old Testament we find the record of this nation’s life; we read of their triumphs and their tragedies. As the eons passed, the people remained stubborn and resistant, but God kept trying. Prophets, priests, kings all labored to bring back shalom, always with the same disappointing result.

God’s attempts to fix the brokenness of creation, to restore shalom, is one of the strongest themes in the Old Testament. Like Adam and Eve and all their descendants, we too deserve God’s judgment. But Scripture tells the ongoing story of God who never gave up on us. God never said in desperation, “I’ll let my people fend for themselves, if that’s what they want so desperately!” Instead, through the centuries God continually sought to fix this broken creation, or to use a Genesis 3:21 metaphor, to clothe us

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in righteousness. Despite our brokenness, God continually pursues us in love, seeking to restore us to the position we were intended to occupy in creation from the beginning—as God’s chosen representatives and partners on earth, that everyone and everything might live in shalom.

The stories of God’s attempts to fix the brokenness of creation sound like a tennis match: God keeps hitting the ball into our court, trying to score the winning point, but we keep slamming it back across the net, saying, “Try again!” It must have been a terribly frustrating process, but as we know, God keeps on trying. This saga is summed up in the New Testament’s parable of the wicked tenants:

[Jesus] began to speak to them in parables. “A man planted a vineyard, put a fence around it, dug a pit for the wine press, and built a watchtower; then he leased it to tenants and went to another country. When the season came, he sent a slave to the tenants to collect from them his share of the produce of the vineyard. But they seized him, and beat him, and sent him away empty-handed. And again he sent another slave to them; this one they beat over the head and insulted. Then he sent another, and that one they killed. And so it was with many others; some they beat, and others they killed. He had still one other, a beloved son. Finally he sent him to them, saying, ‘They will respect my son.’” (Mark 12:1–6)

We know how this story played out. We met God’s ultimate volley, drove Jesus back across the eternal net, and thought that we had run God off the court once and for all. But the story doesn’t end with our response; it doesn’t end with the crucifixion. In a sermon on the incarnation of Jesus, Clarence Jordan describes the resurrection in these terms:

By raising Jesus from the dead, God is refusing to take man’s “No” for an answer. He’s saying, “You can kill my boy if you wish, but I’m going to raise him from the dead, and put him right smack dab down there on earth again!” It’s God saying, “I’m not going to take man’s ‘No’ for an answer. I’m going to raise him up, plant his feet on the earth, and put him to preaching, teaching and healing again.”¹

And God’s means for planting Jesus’ feet on the earth, God’s means for continuing the preaching, teaching and healing, was through none other than a chosen and called-out people—commonly known as the church. We are God’s hands, healing the brokenness of the world. We are God’s mouth,

1. Jordan, *Substance of Faith*, 28.

speaking words of restoration and hope. We are God's body, broken-yet-restored people living together as a demonstration and an instrument of shalom: completeness, peace, prosperity, perfectness, and harmony.

THE KINGDOM (DREAM) OF GOD

As we just saw, it's not hard to explain the Hebrew notion of shalom. With a little work, we can take the concept from the familiar notion of peace to a fuller, richer understanding.

Interestingly, though, when Jesus arrives on the scene he doesn't talk about shalom. He proclaims and demonstrates a way of life that is identical to shalom, but he uses a phrase that takes a good bit of work to translate for a contemporary audience: the kingdom of God (or its twin, the kingdom of heaven).

When North Americans today read the New Testament, we're often tripped up by this imagery. We don't live under a monarchy, so *kingdom of God* can leave us confused. For a lack of a better explanation, people often define the kingdom of God (or the kingdom of heaven) as that place you go after you die or as a paradise that begins after this world ends. Sometimes that kingdom is nothing more than an inner feeling of peace and contentment, a Christian form of nirvana.

Scholars have attempted other metaphors to get at the heart of Jesus' proclamation. Sometimes the word *reign of God* is used.² Jesus demonstrated and proclaimed a new reign that was wholly different from the political reign of Rome. In this new reign insiders would be outsiders, and the bottom would become the top. In that light, *reign* has some advantages, but it, too, can be problematic. Craig Nesson has experimented with several metaphors; one of the most intriguing is "the dream of God."³ If we use "the dream of God" in every place that Jesus mentions "the kingdom of God" or "the kingdom of heaven," then we have a better chance of understanding what Jesus was proclaiming and demonstrating: Jesus was working to restore nothing less than God's dream of shalom.

Read this description of shalom, and see if it doesn't sound a lot like Jesus' proclamation of the kingdom of God:

2. Cox, *Future of Faith*, 45. Cox prefers to use "the reigning of God" to imply "something that is going on—not a place, but a 'happening.'"

3. Nesson, *Beyond Maintenance*, 30.

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Shalom involves all members of God's creation living in harmonious and life-giving relationship with one another. Shalom begins with the prayerful and worshipful relationship of the human being with God. . . . Shalom at the same time entails human beings living together in harmony with each other, both sharing what is needed for the physical well-being of all and nurturing one another emotionally and spiritually. . . . Furthermore . . . shalom involves human beings living in balance with and respect for the whole of creation.⁴

The central theme of Jesus' proclamation was this: God's resurrected dream of shalom has come near. He sent out the disciples, "As you go, proclaim the good news, 'The kingdom of heaven has come near.'" (Matt 10:7) And what is that good news? What does that kingdom/reign/dream look like?

When [Jesus] came to Nazareth, where he had been brought up, he went to the synagogue on the sabbath day, as was his custom. He stood up to read, and the scroll of the prophet Isaiah was given to him. He unrolled the scroll and found the place where it was written:

"The Spirit of the Lord is upon me,
because he has anointed me
to bring good news to the poor.
He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives
and recovery of sight to the blind,
to let the oppressed go free,
to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor."

And he rolled up the scroll, gave it back to the attendant, and sat down. The eyes of all in the synagogue were fixed on him. Then he began to say to them, "Today this scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing." (Luke 4:16-21)

Or try this view:

Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth; for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and the sea was no more. And I saw the holy city, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying,

"See, the home of God is among mortals.
He will dwell with them as their God;

4. Nessian, *Shalom Church*, 10.

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they will be his peoples,
and God himself will be with them;
he will wipe every tear from their eyes.
Death will be no more;
mourning and crying and pain will be no more,
for the first things have passed away.” (Rev 21:1–4)

The message of the New Testament is clear: Jesus introduces, demonstrates, and proclaims a new way of life. Actually, it’s a very old way of life, one that had its start in the Garden of Eden. Jesus intended that this dawning reality would reshape the course of human events by reintroducing the concept of shalom.⁵

Jesus taught and enacted the coming of God’s peaceable and just kingdom in his parables, teachings, and ministry. . . . The coming of the kingdom meant spiritual reunion between God and humankind through the forgiveness of sins and reconciling love. At the same time the emergence of God’s kingdom entailed the healing of disease, the exorcism of demons, miraculous feeding of the hungry, restoration of broken relationships, and the promise of a bounteous creation.⁶

Far from being a kingdom that can be found only in the afterlife, the dream of God is near; it is something that is happening here and now, in this world. In giving this ministry to the disciples after his resurrection, Jesus passed it on to us, the church. Like Jesus, the church’s purpose is to introduce, demonstrate, and proclaim the nearness of God’s dream—not just for our benefit, but for the sake of all people and all creation.

WELL-INTENTIONED REDEFINITION FELL SHORT

It’s not possible to look at the purpose of the church without considering understandings that we have inherited over the centuries. If you ask Lutheran pastors about the definition of the church, they will point to Article VII of the Augsburg Confession: “It is also taught among us that one holy Christian church will be and remain forever. This is the assembly of all believers among whom the Gospel is preached in its purity and the holy sacraments are administered according to the Gospel.”⁷ The Gospel preached

5. See Van Gelder, *Essence of the Church*, 76.

6. Nesson, *Shalom Church*, 10–11.

7. Kolb and Tappert, *Book of Concord*, 42.

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in its purity and the sacraments rightly administered continue to be two of the bedrock principles of the Lutheran church. Similarly, in the Institutes of Christian Religion, John Calvin notes, “the marks by which the Church is to be distinguished, are, the preaching of the word, and the administration of the sacraments.”⁸ A few years after the Augsburg Confession, the Belgic Confession of 1561 (the doctrinal standard for many Reformed traditions) added a third criterion, the exercise of church discipline. In response to the reformers, Catholic theologians of the time countered with their own definition of the church in the Council of Trent. They said that the church “consists in its unity,” and that unity is shown in its one invisible ruler, Christ, and one visible ruler, the Pope.⁹

These definitions may have been appropriate and helpful in their day, but over time they have led to less than healthy understandings. The Catholic Church judged its purity by its authority and leadership. Protestants became preoccupied with doctrinal purity, not only over against the Catholic Church but in struggles between various brands of Protestantism.

In recent years the Catholic definition has shifted from authority and leadership to a gathered community. The Catechism of the Catholic Church says:

In Christian usage, the word “church” designates the liturgical assembly, but also the local community or the whole universal community of believers. These three meanings are inseparable. “The Church” is the People that God gathers in the whole world. She exists in local communities and is made real as a liturgical, above all a Eucharistic, assembly. She draws her life from the word and the Body of Christ and so herself becomes Christ’s Body.¹⁰

8. Calvin, *Institutes*, 4.1.10. Calvin *does* describe the church as the people elsewhere in Book IV. In chapter 2 he maintains that the Nicene Creed “refers not only to the visible Church . . . but likewise to all the elect of God, including the dead as well as the living.” In chapter 7 he notes that *church* is used in two senses. Sometimes Scripture refers to it as “that [institution or organism] which is really such in the sight of God, into which none are received but those who by adoption and grace are the children of God.” But, he notes, *church* is also used “to designate the whole multitude dispersed all over the world, who profess to worship one God and Jesus Christ.” In chapters 9 and 10, though, when talking about the former, he uses language very much like the Augsburg Confession: “For wherever we find the word of God purely preached and heard, and the sacraments administered according to the institution of Christ, there, it is not to be doubted, is a Church of God.”

9. Bosch, *Transforming Mission*, 248.

10. *Catholic Catechism*. See Part One, “The Profession of Faith;” Section Two, “The Profession of the Christian Faith;” Chapter Three, “I Believe in the Holy Spirit;” Article

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start imagining and acting our way into this new (old) way of being church. At times, though, particularly when speaking of the past, I will revert to former words and ways because this language was not available for the conversations and the research that paved the way for this book.

IN SUMMARY

To sum up what we've covered so far, from here on when I talk about *church* or the *Body of Christ* I mean the *people of God*, both as individuals and as a corporate reality, both the people scattered and the people gathered.

It is the whole church that is the Body of Christ, the church at worship and the church at work, the church gathered and the church scattered. Christ's ministry continues through all the people, and not only when they are together in one place "in" what we call the church, but also when they are spread forth over the face of the earth living as disciples and ministers of Jesus Christ.⁴¹

Further, when I talk about *ministry* and *ministries* I mean care, comfort, service, support, encouragement, and other Christ-like acts. Gathered ministers and scattered ministers perform these acts, both when the church is gathered and when it is scattered.

Based on this foundation, then, we will consider what it means to cultivate an environment that is focused not on a congregation's vitality, but on sending the people of God into the world. But before we can do that we need to examine a bit of resistance that keeps cropping up, threatening to derail this vital work.

41. Crabtree, *Empowering Church*, 30.



Imagine being able to connect everything you do in life with God’s dream of shalom. Imagine all God’s people seeing their family responsibilities, work, and community involvement as ministry. Imagine congregations that equip and empower people for ministry—not just in the church, but in all they do. Imagine leaders and members finding a renewed sense of joy, purpose, and vitality as they give themselves away for the sake of the Gospel.

Dwight DuBois not only imagines these life-giving outcomes in fresh and powerful ways, he shows readers how to create an environment that equips everyday saints to connect their faith with all of life. Based on the real life struggles of pastors and members, *The Scattering* lays bare our preoccupation with the health of the institution and offers powerful new language for the church as being both gathered and scattered. This language breaks down unhelpful stereotypes, and provides readers with hopeful and rewarding ways to interpret who we are and what we do as the church of Jesus Christ.

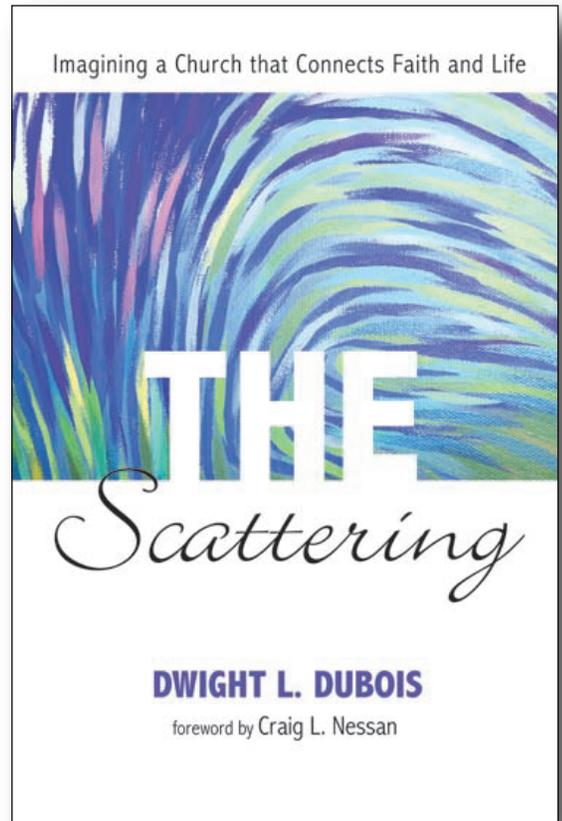
THE *Scattering*

Imagining a Church that Connects Faith and Life

DWIGHT L. DUBOIS

foreword by Craig L. Nesson

Dwight L. DuBois is a parish pastor, congregational renewal professional, and instructor at Wartburg Theological Seminary in Dubuque, Iowa. In recent years he has worked extensively on making the connection between faith and life, in congregations, with college students, and at the seminary level.



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“In these times of change in the culture, anxiety in the church, and the temptation to turn inward on our life inside the walls of the church building, Dwight DuBois helps us reclaim our role as support staff to God’s people in their daily lives. This book is a welcome invitation to refocus our attention, that we might help unleash the power of our congregations beyond our walls as God’s people live faithfully in all of the places they are called to be during the week.”

—**JANICE KIBLER**, Pastor, Grace Lutheran Church, Boulder, Colorado

“Dwight DuBois not only diagnoses the debilitating auto-immune disease from which the church is currently suffering—failing to see the various dimensions of our everyday lives as ready-made arenas for God’s activity and mission—but also offers a prescription as significant as it simple: transform our congregations into those places that equip us to live our faith every single day. Traversing biblical, theological, and historical terrain with both ease and grace, DuBois offers a compelling vision of congregational life that supports a daily life infused by the holy purpose of serving others in the name of Christ. *The Scattering* is, in short, the book we should read in order to create the congregations we—and the world God loves—need.”

— **DAVID J. LOSE**, President, The Lutheran Theological Seminary at Philadelphia

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