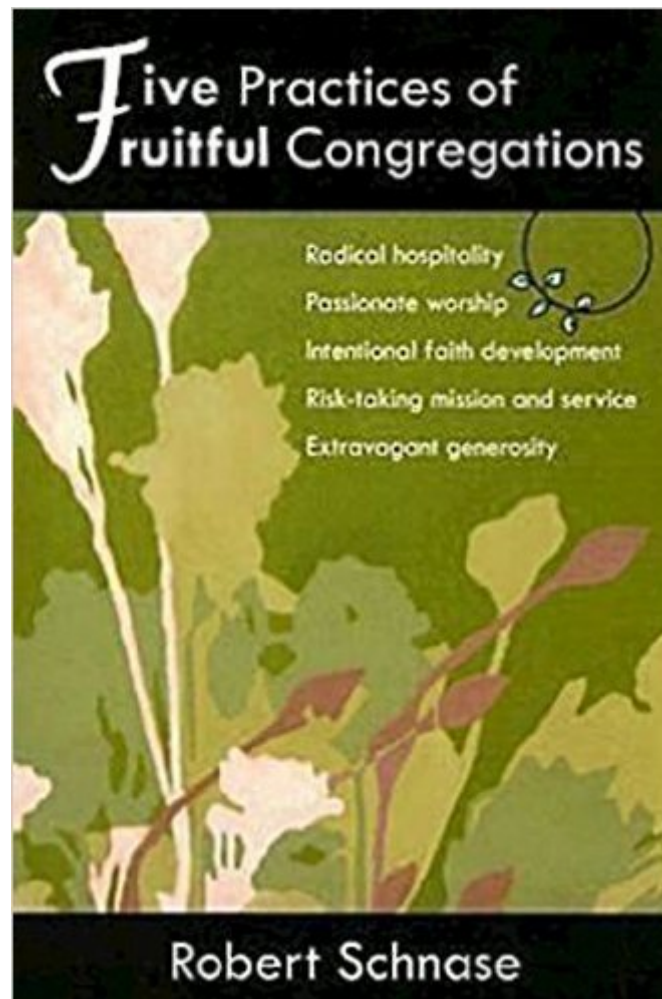


The book was found

Five Practices Of Fruitful Congregations



Synopsis

People are searching for a church shaped and sustained by Radical Hospitality, Passionate Worship, Intentional Faith Development, Risk-Taking Mission and Service, and Extravagant Generosity. These fundamental practices are critical to the success of congregations. Their presence and strength demonstrate congregational health, vitality, and fruitfulness. By repeating and improving these practices, churches fulfill their mission to make disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world.

Book Information

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Congregations,"

I got this for an adult Sunday School class, and we all like it so much that we are thinking about making it part of our new member orientation. It is an outstanding book, along with the prayer book, to get folks out of the pews and doing God's work in the community.

This book fuels the imagination for what churches can be. The author makes the case that healthy, productive churches tend to practice radical hospitality, passionate worship, intentional faith development, risk-taking mission and service, and extravagant generosity. In each chapter he unpacks what each of these practices means and gives several examples of what it looks like. This would make for a good church-wide study. Every church would do well to consider how it is doing in each of these five areas.

I had great hopes for using this as a Lenten study, but I would never ask people to spend so much time reading something which has a very good premise but takes way too long to get through. I like the five ideas, but the coherence through the chapters is lacking, except for constant repetition. We get it already. I'm sorry to sound harsh, but I was really disappointed. However, it is also too United Methodist for an ecumenical audience. Keep pursuing the ideas.

The five practices in this book very closely track many of the ideas I have developed over the years regarding the role of the church. However, Schnase delves into the principles in ways and to a degree that I haven't previously considered. I have read other books about transforming churches and new trends in church outreach, but none of them laid out the basics and then explained them to this measure. What I got from the text was not only that there are five practices that lead to an effective church, but that all five practices need to be exceptionally pursued--"exceptionally" both in the sense of extreme passion and in the sense of high quality. I'm sure that the practices that Schnase discusses (hospitality, worship, faith development, mission and service, and generosity

mission is reaching others and discipling the flock. The challenge is to keep the fire alive and make sure it shows in these five practices. The book convinced me that we need to passionately pursue all the key practices essential to our congregation. It's too easy to focus on one particular practice while we neglect to give the others the attention they deserve. After reading this book, I am now also persuaded that in each of these practices we should be constantly striving for improvement. As the author notes, the church is always changing. We (the church) need to be sure we are changing for the better. To borrow a phrase from the business world, we need to be in a state of constant process improvement. This book is a valuable resource for the church, if it is put into practice. Implemented appropriately, worship would be enriched, the lost would be reached, members would be disciplined, and gifts and talents would be used for God's glory. The final chapter of the book (on fruitfulness) especially spoke to me regarding the kingdom value of the practices. Schnase makes clear that while our mission is to "make disciples," we need to have metrics for measuring how well we're doing. To me, this is key to determining if our efforts are of value. Some metrics are intangible (e.g., who knows what seed planted today will take root and grow later without our knowledge). Other metrics are easily measurable (e.g., membership rolls and baptisms). I would add that even though one soul reached for Christ is worth the effort, we need to have measureable means of figuring out where our efforts are being fruitful and where we need to modify or eliminate efforts. Based on that, I agree with Schnase that we should use these metrics, even though some in the church may use theological arguments to oppose them.

We know what we've been doing is no longer working, but where does one go for guidance? Our church board is using this book to begin a discussion on becoming a church that is faithful to our calling to make disciples and fruitful as this book outlines. We've had a couple lively, productive discussions. So we are on our way!

This book considers transforming personal and congregational practices so that the congregation will experience new vitality through changes in spiritual practices. I have used this in various settings and as either a book study, a discussion starter for various committees,

and so on and so on. If you want your church to grow spiritually, and find a way to embrace the real spirit of being a Christ follower, read this book. Its anecdotes all revolve around United Methodist congregations, but the practices themselves are Bible-centric, not Methodist-centric or John Wesley-centric. It helps that Wesley himself was Bible-centered.

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