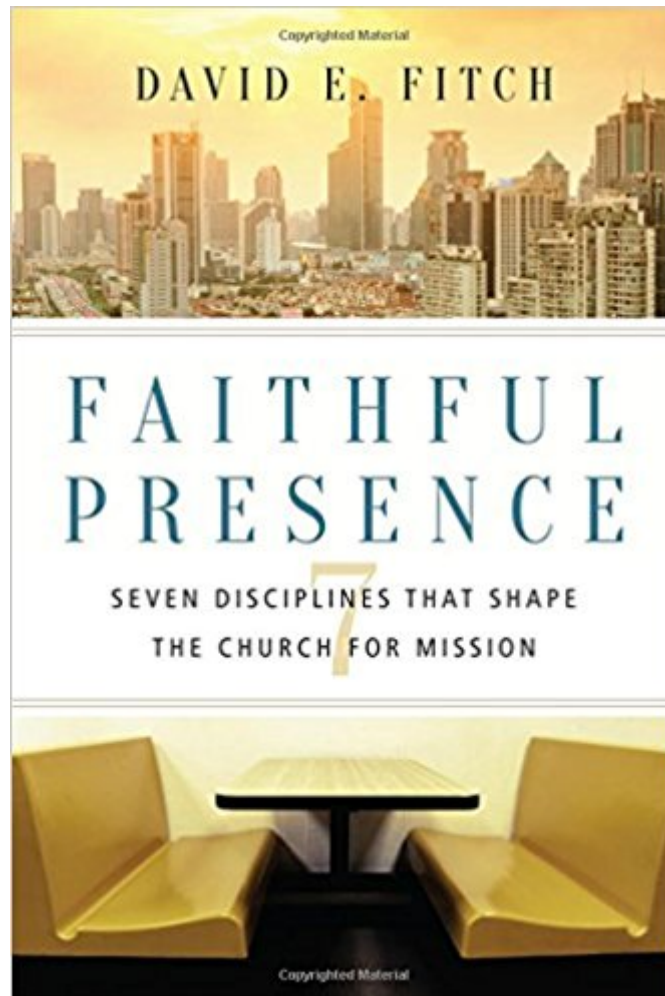




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Faithful Presence: Seven Disciplines That Shape The Church For Mission



Synopsis

In our quest to renew the church, Christians have walked through seeker-friendly, emergent, missional, and other movements to develop new expressions of the body of Christ. Now in the post-Christian world in North America we're asking the question again: Is there a way to be the church that engages the world, not by judgment nor accommodation but by becoming the good news in our culture? In *Faithful Presence*, noted pastor and scholar David Fitch offers a new vision for the witness of the church in the world. He argues that we have lost the intent and practice of the sacramental ways of the historic church, and he recovers seven disciplines that have been with us since the birth of the church. Through numerous examples and stories, he demonstrates how these revolutionary disciplines can help the church take shape in and among our neighborhoods, transform our way of life in the world, and advance the kingdom. This book will help you re-envision church, what you do in the name of church, and the way you lead a church. It recovers a future for the church that takes us beyond Christendom. Embrace the call to reimagine the church as the living embodiment of Christ, dwelling in and reflecting God's faithful presence to a world that desperately needs more of it.

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Customer Reviews

"David Fitch continues his constructive work in ecclesiology by emphasizing the presence the church makes possible in a world that desperately needs God's presence. The disciplines he calls attention to are life giving because they are the disciplines God has given us to be a faithful

presence. Hopefully this book will be widely read and used in churches everywhere." (Stanley Hauerwas, Gilbert T. Rowe Professor Emeritus, Duke Divinity School)"David Fitch can write this book not just because he has a heart for mission, but because he has attended faithfully to the presence of the Spirit of the living Christ poured out on all flesh. If you want to know more about Spirit-empowered mission, read this book. But be careful, as it will transform—discipline, even!—your life, your family, and your church according to the shape of the coming reign of God." (Amos Yong, professor of theology and mission, Fuller Theological Seminary, author of *Hospitality and the Other*)"Do you want some practical, pastoral, and theological wisdom and encouragement on how to be the church, rather than merely go to church? Do you want to be a people for God's name and faithful presence—for one another and the world? Read this book. Learn nonnegotiable practices that Fitch and his communities have learned through their communion with a faithful God. These disciplines (including being with and for children), practiced together by the power of the Holy Spirit, will conform us to Jesus. Joined to him, one another, and those he's given us to love with him, we are intentionally shaped for God's missional life among us." (Cherith Fee Nordling, associate professor of theology, Northern Seminary)"Like leaven in the dough, like a mustard seed in the soil, like light in the darkness, the church must be faithfully present in our communities as an outpost of heaven. David Fitch's new book will help us all to practice the kingdom lifestyle now. I encourage you to read, share, and live it!" (Krish Kandiah, founder and director, Home for Good, author of *Paradoxology*)"Are missional churches merely traditional churches with some justice projects added on? In *Faithful Presence* David Fitch says no. Instead, Fitch argues, following the *missio Dei* and living incarnationally only occurs as we practice faithful presence in the world. And such presence requires disciplines. *Faithful Presence* is a meaty and delicious book." (Michael Frost, author of *The Shaping of Things to Come* and *The Road to Missional*)"In *Faithful Presence*, a book long overdue, David Fitch provides a corrective to the work of James Davison Hunter. He offers a winsome vision for following Jesus into the world that Christians across multiple traditions will find challenging, compelling, and inspiring." (Anthony B. Bradley, associate professor of religious studies, The King's College)"When I get up on the average day, I don't know how to transform the world. But I know how to pray, show hospitality, and proclaim truth. With scholarly care and pastoral zeal, David Fitch reminds us that it's in long-term, communal devotion to small but transformative practices that we both discover and reflect the faithful presence of God. *Faithful Presence* gives us permission to step aside from our own efforts at greatness, encouraging us to give our time and attention to disciplines that reveal and proclaim God's presence in our churches, homes, and neighborhoods." (Mandy Smith, lead pastor, University Christian

Church, author of *The Vulnerable Pastor*) "In *Faithful Presence* David Fitch brings heard-it-all-before church leaders both profound insight and a new imagination for spiritual practices that lead seamlessly to an authentic, faithful presence with God in the world. . . . a faithful presence that results in intuitive and organic mission in all aspects of our everyday lives." (Todd Hunter, bishop, *Churches For the Sake of Others*, author of *Giving Church Another Chance*) "The relationship between worship and mission, between the life and practices of the church and its witness to the world, is a matter of continual debate. David Fitch has done us a great service by identifying a holistic pattern of worship and witness rooted in disciplines given by Christ, to be practiced in the different contexts of our lives as disciples. *Faithful Presence* is both theologically grounded and very practical. The only problem with books like this is that you can't just read them, you have to live them." (Graham Cray, former leader, *Fresh Expressions*, Church of England) "Faithfulness is an intimidating idea, so the church can be tempted to find speedy shortcuts to growth, mission, and relevance. David Fitch is helping the church outgrow its obsession with fads to break open space for the reappearance of God's real-time presence in our neighborhoods. There is certainly unflattering press about the church in today's headlines, but *Faithful Presence* gives me genuine hope about what the body of Christ can be when it gathers around these seven practices. This book is appropriately critical at times, but it is fundamentally grounded in inspiring the shaping of a community for God's witness in the world. David Fitch has laid out a pathway for the church being the church again!" (Dan White Jr., cofounder, *The Praxis Gathering*, author of *The Church as Movement*) "Fitch's *Faithful Presence* is . . . timely and extraordinarily helpful. As churches shrink, as 'spiritual but not religious' postures become more widespread, as American Christendom wanes and it becomes weirder, more inconvenient, and less comfortable to commit oneself to a local church, the need to recover this 'faithfully present' vitality is more urgent than ever." (Brett McCracken, *Christianity Today*, January/February 2017)

David E. Fitch (PhD, Northwestern University) is the B. R. Lindner Chair of Evangelical Theology at Northern Seminary. He is also the founding pastor of Life on the Vine Christian Community, a missional church in the northwest suburbs of Chicago. He is the author of *The Great Giveaway* and *The End of Evangelicalism?* and is the coauthor of *Prodigal Christianity*. Fitch coaches a network of church plants in the Christian and Missionary Alliance and he writes, speaks, and lectures on issues the local church must face in mission including cultural engagement, leadership and theology. He has also written numerous articles in periodicals such as *Christianity Today*, *The Other Journal*, *Missiology* as well as various academic journals.

Faithful Presence by David E Fitch I LOVED this book, resonated deeply with the premise and thesis and feel empowered, encouraged and excited to keep pressing on in what it means to - with CHRIST - love as and with the church for and with the world! Wow - powerful, practical and profound message in this book. Pick it up if you want to learn more about discerning and joining where GOD is already at work all around you. I see a lifetime of work, exploration, experimentation and actual faithful presence in response to this read and in celebration of the good news!"The church is more than a space where some individuals gather to affirm they believe in something. It is the place where GOD's people discern HIS presence and submit to CHRIST's concrete rule. HE has given us disciplines for doing this. Here a new world is born that is nothing less than HIS kingdom breaking in. Here an incredible faithful presence takes shape."

This book is a remarkable description of the ways Christ is especially present with his people. It is thoroughly biblical and well researched. He really remade my thinking on the Lord's Supper. It's not a take your pick along the spectrum from mystical Catholic sacrament to flimsy Protestant ordinance. The heart is that Christ is with us and this extends into the community. The author's view on "white privileged" is very odd. If the poor and sick, who we identify with and seek out, are characterized by a lack of privilege, then the privileged are simply the opposite. To say a race is privileged in itself is at best a specious historical argument and at worst the very definition of white supremacy. Minor quibble though--buy and read this book, 5 stars.

This book has been an incredible help to me. I was encouraged and challenged in reading it. There is a great mix of stories added that give tangible examples to see the practical working out of what David contends. I also found this book helpful to connect and come to greater understanding on what he writes on his facebook page and says on the podcast, Theology on Mission. I highly recommend this book and very grateful for it. After finishing it I am moved to action and deeper thought on many levels.

This book is fantastic and will greatly shape the way our church community lives as disciples on mission together. The creative work of David Fitch's three circles of encountering God's Presence in our world brings strong continuity to all aspects of a disciple's life, tying together our more intimate moments of communion with God to the times we are interacting in a world that does not know Jesus. These disciplines will greatly help us live a missional life over the long haul and with

faithfulness to Jesus and His Kingdom.

This book was a breath of fresh air. Fitch's models of the close circle, dotted circle, and half circle have helped me articulate to the folks around me why our "program-driven", "build-it-and-they-will-come" ministries aren't producing fruit like they did twenty, thirty, forty years ago. And really, this book challenges the "build-it-and-they-will-come" attitude. I love it. Living our day-to-day lives with intentionality, discerning together the Holy Spirit at work around us, and submitting to Christ's rule and reign as we go about our everyday lives--these are the things that will transform the world around us. I can highly recommend this book!

I began this book with a desire to make the Eucharist or Lord's Table central to all I do. But this is only one discipline that the author encourages. I was surprised that the Cosmic Weaver was already knitting the threads of Kingdom Prayer and the Fivefold Gifting into my life and ministry. I recommend this book to those who want to capture the essence of what it means to be Christ's body on earth. And the author addresses the generation gap that exists currently in the body of Christ. One which I myself see.

I've watched David Fitch for several years as he works out his sharp theological mind & heart of a missionary as a church planter and pastor. I'm drawn to what I see. Most books on church are written by pastors (mega church only). A few are penned by theologians. Faithful Presence is unique in that the author is both at the same time, and continues to be. It is obvious his knowledge of both biblical theology and church history are broad. From that soil, the author points out several life-giving practices we can grow into. Each one is sound, yet some are decidedly counter-cultural in 21st-century North America. While some of Fitch's language is new to me, I can't argue with how organic and genuinely Spirit-led this sounds. What it is definitely not is another book filled with quick ways to get bunch of people to follow an autocratic pastor. Rather, it shows the heart of a caring pastor, the mind of a dedicated theologian, and the hands-on willingness of a missionary to North America today. I look forward to seeing the stories that come from more of us fleshing out these practices in our local contexts.

I've been a United Methodist most of my life. And for about 30 years I was a Pastor in it. The United Methodist Church has been in steep decline for many years and many plans and programs have been tried over the years to stem the decline. All have failed. We do not need another top down

program. We need a way of life, of living together as described by David Fitch in this book. I would urge all my United Methodist friends to buy this book and form several groups to read and discuss it.

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