

Thom S. Rainer. *The Post-Quarantine Church: Six Urgent Challenges + Opportunities That Will Determine the Future of Your Congregation*. Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale Momentum, 2020. 118 pages. \$12.99.

Thom S. Rainer states, “Perhaps the most basic and obvious conclusion to be drawn from the pandemic is that it gave church leaders an opportunity to rethink *everything*” (82). The pandemic was certainly unexpected, not only by individuals but also by churches. As churches reopen, Rainer gives them practical advice regarding “*how* they should open,” not “*when* they should open” (6). In this short and succinct book, he lays out six challenges that churches need to accept to move them forward in the post-quarantine era.

In chapter 1, “Gather Differently and Better,” Rainer challenges churches to turn “the purpose of our church buildings upside down” (17). Rather than using the church facility for members only and on Sundays only, he asks churches to open their doors to community members throughout the week.

In chapter 2, “Seize Your Opportunity to Reach the Digital World,” Rainer challenges the mindset of going back to a pre-pandemic normal because such a thing no longer exists. The digital world is, he argues, “a mission field—a largely untapped area for local church ministry” (28), and “the opportunities are too important to ignore” (29).

Chapter 3, “Reconnect with the Community Near Your Church,” is a wake-up call for neighborhood churches experiencing slow erosion due to their turning inward and “replacing the Great Commission with a great complacency” (48). What are the needs of the community? What are the ways a church can have a positive impact on its community?

In chapter 4, “Take Prayer to a New and Powerful Level,” Rainer brings our attention back to the heart of Christian ministry—prayer. As church buildings closed during the pandemic, prayer meetings expanded greatly in the digital world, and he argues that they should continue in the post-quarantine church: “Don’t lose the emphasis. Don’t stop praying” (65).

Chapter 5, “Rethink Your Facilities for Emerging Opportunities,” describes how churches have become “an exclusive social club” and how the Great Commission has become “a great *omission*” (72). Looking at church facilities that are used as often as college football stadiums, which he calls “poor stewardship” (79), he asks church leaders to find ways to partner with local organizations and share their physical spaces.

In chapter 6, “Make Lasting Changes That Will Make a Difference,” Rainer highlights not only why churches fail to accept change but also how they can lead for lasting change. Changes and thus membership losses are inevitable in the post-quarantine era. But, he cautions, “[T]he rules have changed,” and church leaders have to “get ready to adapt” (99).

This book is a product of Rainer’s long years of experience and struggle as a pastor, educator, CEO, and church counselor. He notes that the pandemic has brought to our attention what is obvious but many have avoided seeing: “Churches that refuse to change will inevitably decline or even die. Blunt but true” (101). This book lays a good foundation for clergy and laity on how to better adapt to changes happening in the post-quarantine era and better serve the congregation in the church and the community.

The book, however, has limitations. First, its content is redundant. For example, chapters 1 and 5 do not appear to be different from one another at their core. By the time I read chapter 6, it felt like a review of the earlier chapters. Second, the title is catchy but the content is not novel. His suggestions, such as connecting with and inviting people from the community to the church, utilizing the digital world, and focusing on prayer have been foci of church ministry for years. It

seems that Rainer is simply presenting them in a different context with a new book cover. Third, he is speaking to mid-size and large churches that have their own buildings. What about small churches that do not have their own buildings? What about congregations that are small and elderly? I wonder how much he considered their needs.

Despite these limitations, I think this book is worth reading, especially for churches wondering where and how to restart in the post-quarantine era. I recommend this book to pastors and church leaders as a sourcebook or book study material. It will motivate you to accept necessary changes, adapt the ways you have always done things in church, and serve your congregation and community better.

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