

**THE
FUTURE
CHURCH
SYMPOSIUM**

2021

**CHURCH
CONVERSATION
GUIDE**

INTRODUCTION TO THE FUTURE CHURCH SYMPOSIUM

BY JORDAN RIMMER

The Future Church Symposium was an idea I had to bring key thinkers to my region to talk about the way culture is changing and what churches needed to do to move into the future. In truth, it was also a way to get my own teacher/professor, Dr. Leonard Sweet, into my church and with my people. Dr. Sweet spoke at the first Symposium in 2019. Thanks to the support of my church, Northminster Presbyterian Church of New Castle, PA and a grant from the Synod of the Trinity, the Future Church Symposium was born.

The 2020 Symposium was all set to welcome Dr. Reggie McNeal from GoodCities to New Castle, PA. Of course, 2020 also welcomed the coronavirus and we all became familiar with words like pandemic, social distancing, travel restrictions and quarantine. We punted the event to summer, then fall, then it became clear that an in-person event was not feasible.

Yet, with all of the changes the pandemic brought, the material Dr. McNeal had prepared seemed even more relevant and important. We decided, instead, to film the event as a series of conversations. Life situations, technological obstacles and the ongoing demands of leading in a pandemic have pushed back the delivery of this material, so we are presenting it as the 2021 Future Church Symposium. Our hope is, that in this new format,

this material can help a lot more people than the in-person event could handle.

These sessions are made to be short enough so that they could be used at the start of a meeting. And, they also build on one another so they would make an excellent leadership retreat for a church board or staff. Of course, you could also work through them on your own. Included are some thought and discussion questions to go with each session.

The initial material is Dr. McNeal giving core content. As the videos progress, they become more conversational. The most enjoyable part of this experience was having a couple days to hang with Dr. McNeal. He is a fun guy with so much wisdom. Read his books. Go to him for coaching. You won't be disappointed.

I don't know what the Future Church Symposium will look like going forward. I don't really know what next week looks like. But, I do know this is some great material that should be encouraging as well as challenging. My prayer is that God would speak to you through it. If you find it helpful, share it with others.

*With a clean heart and sanitized hands,
Pastor Jordan Rimmer*

The Future Church Symposium is brought to you by a generous innovation grant from the Synod of the Trinity and the ministry and leadership of Northminster Presbyterian Church of New Castle, PA



INTRODUCING DR. REGGIE MCNEAL

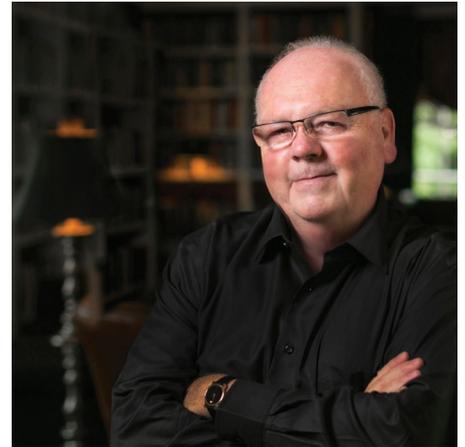
DR. REGGIE MCNEAL enjoys helping people, leaders and Christian organizations determine and experience epic wins with kingdom impact. He currently serves as City Coach for GoodCities of Minneapolis, MN.

As City Coach, Dr. McNeal works with community leaders around the country to build cross-domain collaborative efforts that can move the needle on big societal issues. He provides coaching and consultation for individuals and teams in becoming more missionally-focused and Kingdom-biased in their ministry approaches. Dr. McNeal has helped to shape the church leadership conversation through his extensive speaking schedule and work as an author. He has written ten books. *Kingdom Come: Why We Must Quit Our Obsession Over Fixing the Church and What We Should Do Instead* (Tyndale, 2015) challenges the church to shift its narrative from a church-centric to a kingdom-centric ministry agenda. His latest book, *Kingdom Collaborators: Eight Signature Themes of Leaders Who Turn the World Upside Down* (IVP, 2018), details the character and competencies of effective kingdom leaders.

Dr. McNeal served in local church leadership for over twenty years, including being the founding pastor of a congregation. His experience also includes being a denominational executive and leadership development coach. Dr. McNeal has lectured or taught as an adjunct faculty member for multiple seminaries, including Fuller Theological (Pasadena, CA), Southwestern Baptist (Ft. Worth, TX), Golden Gate Baptist (San Francisco, CA), Trinity Evangelical Divinity School (Deerfield, IL), Columbia International (Columbia, SC) and Seminary of the Southwest (Austin, TX). Dr. McNeal's work also extends to the business sector, including The Gallup Organization, in addition to his role as an advisory board member for several ministry organizations. Most recently, he served for ten years as the Missional Leadership Specialist with Leadership Network, remaining connected with the organization as a Senior Fellow.

Dr. McNeal's education includes a B.A. degree from the University of South Carolina and the M.Div. and Ph.D. degrees from Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary.

Reggie and his wife, Cathy, make their home in Columbia, South Carolina.



INTRODUCING YOUR HOSTS



REV. DR. JORDAN RIMMER is the pastor of Northminster Presbyterian Church in New Castle, PA. He has a Doctor of Ministry degree from Portland Seminary of George Fox University in Semiotics and Future Studies

with Dr. Leonard Sweet. He graduated with a M.Div. from Pittsburgh Theological Seminary and did his undergraduate studies in Sociology at Grove City College, PA. He is currently finishing a book called *The Story Pastor*.

Before Jordan went into ministry, he ran a leadership development, team building and character development company that worked with companies, athletic teams, teachers, school kids and at-risk youth. He implemented experiential methods including a low ropes course, a high ropes course, an Alpine Tower, a rock wall, portable activities, school field trips and even gourmet cooking. Jordan still hangs out on ropes courses and often brings experiential tools into his ministry.

Jordan and his wife, Mandy, are raising their four kids and many pets in New Castle, PA.



REV. CHRIS THOMAS is a pastor in the Presbyterian Church (USA). He has served in eight different ministry contexts including two church plants and runs his own video production business since high school. He has served

the church broadly as a Youth Minister, Associate Pastor and most recently as Senior Pastor. Chris has a Bachelors in Bible and Theology with a dual major in Counseling Psychology from William Jessup University in Rocklin, CA (formerly San Jose Christian College) and a Master of Divinity from Pittsburgh Theological Seminary. For the last ten years, he has helped lead the New Church Development work of the Presbytery of Detroit and is currently working to help churches digitally engage culture in a post-COVID world. Check out more of Chris' content at pastorchristhomas.com

Chris and his wife, Stacy, of eighteen years are enjoying raising their four kids together in Canton, MI, while Stacy is studying to become a Nurse Practitioner.

THE STORY PASTOR

For more material with Jordan and Chris, check out thestorypastor.com

SESSION OVERVIEWS AND DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

INTRODUCTION TO REGGIE MCNEAL

Reggie McNeal and Jordan Rimmer

1. CONVERGENCE OF NEW REALITIES

How the Pandemic and the Digital Age Has Catapulted the Church Into a New Landscape

Reggie McNeal and Chris Thomas

THOUGHT / DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Summarize the changes caused by the pandemic that Reggie is talking about.
2. Where have you seen and felt these changes in your life, family, community or church?
3. What has the pandemic done for your church, positively or negatively?
4. In what ways is your church designed to do ministry for a world that doesn't exist anymore?

NEXT STEPS

Take an inventory of your church. Look at the building, the people and the ministries and put general dates on when things were developed or built or when people came to this church. For each item, ask how the world has changed since those things took shape.

2. KINGDOM COME

How We Need to Stop Building Churches and Start Building the Kingdom

Reggie McNeal and Jordan Rimmer

THOUGHT / DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Summarize what Reggie means when he talks about the change from building churches to building the kingdom.
2. What does the idea of kingdom mean to you? Try to agree on a definition of that idea.
3. What ministries do you have that are kingdom-focused and not church-focused?
4. What would be the biggest obstacles to making this shift? How would you bring people on board with this change?

NEXT STEPS

How much of your effort and discussion as a church relates to building your ministry (and budget)? Try to put a percentage on that in terms of time, energy and money.

3. SHIFTING THE CHURCH CULTURE

How the Church Must Move from Church-As-Institution to Church-As-Movement

Reggie McNeal and Jordan Rimmer

THOUGHT / DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What is the difference between an institution and a movement?
2. Do you see your church more as an institution or a movement? In what ways?
3. Reggie talks about changing the story, changing the scorecard and changing the stewardship. At first glance, which sounds easier or harder for your church to do and why?
4. Can you remember or do you know the history of a time when your church was a movement more than an institution? Describe it.
5. How do you think a church can act as a movement while taking care of institutional responsibilities?

NEXT STEPS

Talk to some people at your church about a time when they felt the church was at its best. Collect those stories and consider what themes stand out in those stories.

4. CHANGING THE STORY

How the Church Must Change How It Talks About What It Does

Reggie McNeal and Jordan Rimmer

THOUGHT / DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. How would you describe what your church is all about and what your church does? Give a 10 second pitch and a 45 second pitch. Notice how different or similar everyone else's story is to yours.
2. What story is your building saying about your congregation? What story does the community perceive about your church?
3. Take a look at your Facebook page or website. What would a person that didn't know your church and didn't have a heart for your ministry see on those pages?

NEXT STEPS

Talk to a few people in the community who do NOT go to your church. What are their perceptions of your church? What have they heard about your church?

Consider getting an out-of-town person who is unknown in your church to come to your church and then report what the experience was like for them. What did they think your church was like?

5. A NEW SCORECARD

How the Church Must Change What It Tracks in Order to Change Its Future

Reggie McNeal and Jordan Rimmer

THOUGHT / DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. How do you think what you measure shapes how you approach ministry in your church?
2. For years, the measurement of a church has been butts and bucks—attendance and offering. How do you think those are changing in today's world?
3. How has it hurt the church to focus on those metrics?
4. What were some examples of new scorecards Reggie gave or you thought of as he was speaking?

NEXT STEPS

Experiment with a few new metrics you could use as a church, or make a list of ways you could measure your kingdom impact.

6. SHIFTING STEWARDSHIP

How the Church Must Widen Its Perspective on What It Is Taking Care of

Reggie McNeal and Jordan Rimmer

THOUGHT / DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. We often use the term stewardship in the church to mean money and specifically relate to capital campaigns. Reggie is using the word differently. What does he mean by stewardship?
2. How has your church done with traditional stewardship? How are your finances and how well kept is your facility? (Don't stay on this question too long.)
3. How does your church see itself as stewards in your community and neighborhoods?
4. What are some examples of how your church has stewarded your community in the past? How could you celebrate and build on those places where you have stewarded in a broader sense?

NEXT STEPS

Get hands on. Everyone in the group commit to talking to someone in the community or meeting a neighbor. Start with the church's immediate neighbor—whether it is a family or a business. Who are they? What do they need?

7. A NEW LOOK AT DISCIPLESHIP

Questions to Ask to Produce Viral Kingdom Agents As Opposed to Church Program Consumers

Reggie McNeal and Chris Thomas

THOUGHT / DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What questions did Reggie ask that stood out to you for either your church or you, personally?
2. What is holding your church back from being full of viral kingdom agents?
3. What is holding YOU personally back from being a viral kingdom agent?
4. What would it look like to be a church that supported and developed these kinds of Christ-followers?

NEXT STEPS

Make a list of questions to ask to become these kinds of Christ-followers. Ask them in church on a Sunday. Put them up somewhere that people will see them.

8.

DISCIPLESHIP QUESTIONS

Some Deeper Conversation About How Discipleship Must Change Shape for the Future

Reggie McNeal and Chris Thomas

THOUGHT / DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What does Reggie mean when he talks about discipleship?
2. What would it look like to be a church that is actively engaged in making disciples?
3. What does your church do well to encourage discipleship? Where could you improve?

NEXT STEPS

Lay out all of the committees/ teams and all of the ministries of your church on cards on a table or on a white board. Ask each group, event or ministry what they are doing to promote discipleship. And, brainstorm what else they could do to be even more focused on discipleship.

9.

VIRAL KINGDOM AGENTS (KINGDOM) LIFE

Five Questions We Need to Answer to Bring Our Best Self to the Service of Others

Reggie McNeal and Jordan Rimmer

THOUGHT / DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Summarize the five questions that Reggie gives.
2. Which do you find easier to answer? More difficult?
3. What could you do to bring more of your best self to your calling?

NEXT STEPS

Take some time to robustly answer these questions for yourself and others.

10.

SUSTAINABLE KINGDOM PASTORS

A Conversation for Pastors (and Others) About Surviving the Process of Leading Deep Change

Reggie McNeal and Jordan Rimmer

THOUGHT / DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. How has the pandemic worn you out?
2. How have you reacted to change and loss?
3. Have you ever experienced burnout?
4. What were some key takeaways from this discussion for keeping yourself going as people and systems resist the change you are called to lead.

NEXT STEPS

Make plans to feed and refresh your soul when you start getting burned out. Try your ideas over a few weeks and report back to someone else about how it went.

