

# Forging a new path

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moving the church forward in  
a post-pandemic world



Discussion Guide  
Rebekah Simon-Peter

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# Chapter 1

## The Day the World Changed . . . Again

### Thinking Deeper (10 minutes)

In this chapter, Rebekah talks about how the world has changed because of Covid-19. What are some ways that you have experienced, and are still experiencing, that change today?



### Reflecting on Scripture (30 minutes)

Read Exodus 16. The people of Israel were going through a time of transition. What can their response teach us today? What can we learn about God and about humanity from this passage? Share your thoughts and discuss how times of major transition bring about feelings of uncertainty.



# Chapter 1

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## Personal Reflection (5 minutes)

How have you struggled during the pandemic? Where have you found God's presence?



## Applying What You've Learned (15 minutes)

As you've read Chapter 1, what are some things you can apply in your ministry setting right now? List them and then share them with others.



# Chapter I

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## Closing Prayer

Take a few minutes to list the areas of concern that you have. Pray especially for those still dealing with the impacts of the pandemic, and pray for those who have lost loved ones. Lastly, pray for your discussion group. May your conversations help the church to reclaim its vitality.



## Notes



# Chapter 2

## Three Persistent Questions

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### Thinking Deeper (10 minutes)

In this chapter, Rebekah discusses three persistent questions facing the church: When do things go back to normal? How do we get people (back) to church? How can we do more with less?

Do you find these are the predominant questions you face in your ministry setting? If so, why? If not, what questions is your church asking?



### Reflecting on Scripture (30 minutes)

Read Ezekiel 37:1-14. The story is about Ezekiel and how God brought him to a valley filled with bones. God asked Ezekiel to prophecy over them, and as he did so, the bones came together and formed bodies. This story is about hope and new beginnings amid bones that long perished. In what ways do you see God resurrecting hope and new beginnings today?



# Chapter 2

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## Personal Reflection (5 minutes)

How has the pandemic affected your spiritual life?



## Applying What You've Learned (15 minutes)

As you read Chapter 2, what practical or mental adjustments do you need to make in light of this chapter? List and share your findings.



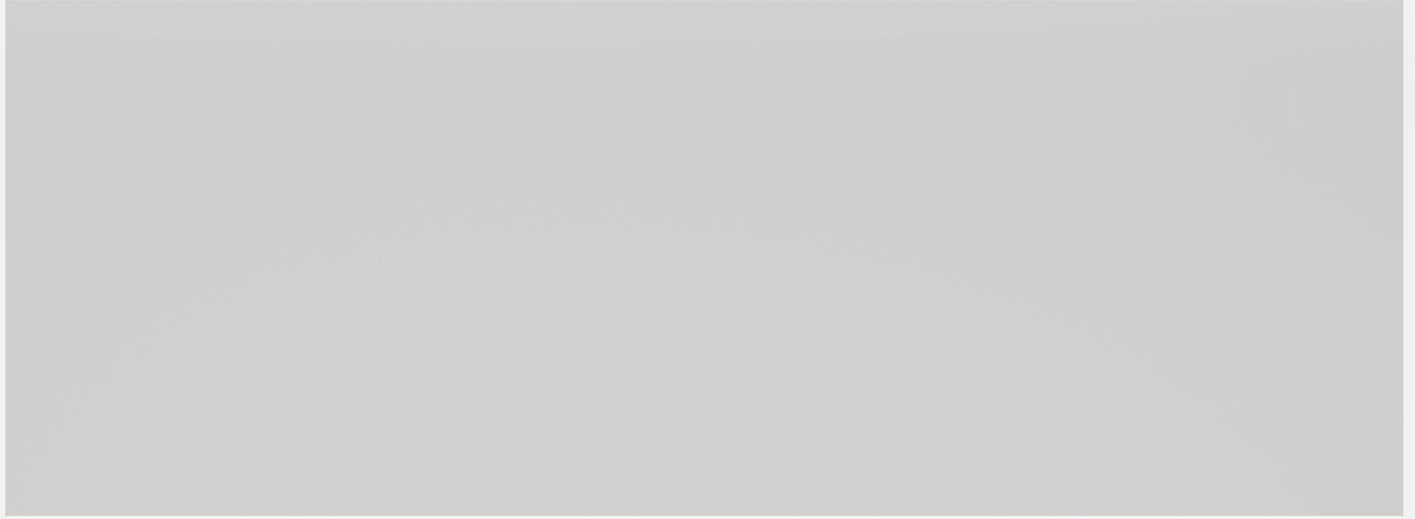
# Chapter 2

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## Closing Prayer

Take a few minutes to list the areas of concern that you have. Then, pray together the following:

God of hope, we thank you that in Jesus Christ, you have given us new life. As we reflect on this story of Ezekiel, we remember times when our lives have felt like a valley of dry bones. We ask your Spirit to breathe new life into us so we may bear witness to your love and peace even in times of hardship. Amen.



## Notes





# Chapter 3

## Pandemics Disrupt for Good

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### Thinking Deeper (10 minutes)

The loss of life, disruption of daily rhythms, and social isolation that the Covid-19 pandemic has brought about is horrific. Yet, in this chapter, Rebekah writes that pandemics can be a source of enormous positive change, too. This is because they cause a need for adaptation. What are some ways you have seen good things happen despite, or even because of, the pandemic?

### Reflecting on Scripture (30 minutes)

In Exodus chapter 3, Moses is in the land of Midian when God appears to him. God sees the suffering of God's people and desires for them to be free. However, what stands in their way is the pharaoh, plagues, and a harsh, unforgiving landscape. While they would experience loss and disruption in the journey, God worked on a new plan for their betterment. Reflect on the story. In what ways did God disrupt Moses and the Israelites' lives for the better? How has our current reality, through the pandemic, been disrupted for good? Was it easy or difficult to see the blessings in disguise?

# Chapter 3

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## Personal Reflection (5 minutes)

Can you share one new positive thing the pandemic has done for your spiritual life?



## Applying What You've Learned (15 minutes)

In Chapter 3, Rebekah writes about the connection between the bubonic plague and a period of significant innovation in human history. She relays how uncertainty can drive enormous change within the church and the world. What are some good changes you have seen happen in the church because of COVID-19? In what ways can your church continue to adapt to societal changes taking place? Name one way your church can adapt in order to ride the wave of innovation brought on by the pandemic.



# Chapter 3

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## Closing Prayer

Take a few minutes to list the areas of concern that you have. Then, pray together the following:

We thank you for being a God of innovation. We know you can work within any situation, no matter how dark and bleak it may seem, to bring forth something beautiful. Use us, we pray, to co-create new miracles with you in these days. Amen.



## Notes



# Chapter 4

## Embrace Spirituality as the Next Normal

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### Thinking Deeper (10 minutes)

The pandemic may have disrupted your church attendance, but it has also created opportunities for spirituality to grow. Twelve-step groups such as Alcoholics Anonymous are increasing in popularity. People find that they need to develop a deeper spiritual connection to recover from addiction. At the same time, church attendance continues to decrease. What learnings do you gain from the ideas being presented in this chapter?

### Reflecting on Scripture (30 minutes)

Read Luke 24:13-35. In this passage, we are told of disciples upset about the death of Jesus. But after their transformative experience with Jesus in teaching, journeying, and communion, they are revitalized. This experience is not just an emotional high but a life-changing event that propels them to go out and share the good news. For them, it will be a spiritual experience that they reflect on for years. What spiritual experiences have you had in your life that have been similarly transformational? How did they change your perspective or behavior?

# Chapter 4

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## Personal Reflection (5 minutes)

Spiritual experience is a formative part of discipleship. What is one spiritual experience you've had that has changed your outlook on life, or your practice of faith?



## Applying What You've Learned (15 minutes)

In this chapter, Rebekah writes about the value of faith development and about how this development is happening in ways that do not necessarily conform to current church models. Rebekah states, "Spirituality is learning and experiencing how important you are to God, how you are made in God's image, and how God created you for community with God and with others." How does your community invite people to experience God in their lives? Not just through traditional religious means but also through a spiritual presence that is felt daily. List three tangible ways you might live more fully into a deeper spirituality.



# Chapter 4

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## Closing Prayer

Take a few minutes to model what you have learned in this lesson. Ask each other, "How is it with your soul?" Give time for each person to answer. Allow this historical question from the Wesleyan tradition to inform your closing time. If areas of concern are expressed, pray for these. If joys are expressed, give thanks for these.



## Notes



# Chapter 5

## Invite People Back to Church as Community

### Thinking Deeper (10 minutes)

In the opening line of Chapter 5, Rebekah writes, "People are hungry for community." In what ways have you experienced this hunger in your own life? What are some of the things you long for in a community? How can your church create stronger bonds of community among its people?

### Reflecting on Scripture (30 minutes)

Read Luke 14:1-23. In this scripture section, Jesus describes God's kin(g)dom as a banquet. Some people invited to a party might choose not to come. Jesus then sends the invite to all those willing to come. Why do you think Jesus would expand the invitation? What does this say about the church's role in inviting others to experience God's beloved community?

# Chapter 5

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## Personal Reflection (5 minutes)

How has your view of others changed since reading this chapter? How has your view of God changed? What specific things can you do to help foster belonging, engage in the social sphere, and connect people to a deeply spiritual community?



## Applying What You've Learned (15 minutes)

In this chapter, Rebekah writes about growing a sense of community through intentional practices that foster belonging. What are some things your church can do to help people feel like they belong? In what ways could your church more fully engage in the social sphere? How could your church help others connect to a deep spirituality? List three ways that your church could foster a greater sense of community within the next 30 days.





# Chapter 5

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## Closing Prayer

Take a few minutes to acknowledge the ways you are creating community with each other. Then, pray together the following:

God, thank you for inviting us into spiritual community with you. Thank you for the ability you have given us to connect with each other. Please help us to see you in all things and all people. We long to be people of heart and soul that you use to bring about transformation in the lives of others. Amen.



## Notes



# Chapter 6

## Adopt the Culture of Technology to Do More with Less

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### Thinking Deeper (10 minutes)

Technology, at its best, is a means to connect us in ways we never previously imagined. It can help us connect with people near and far, and even with God. What are some ways your use of technology has changed since the start of the pandemic?



### Reflecting on Scripture (30 minutes)

Read Genesis 6:9-22. In this passage, we find the story of Noah and the Ark. God tells Noah to build an ark because a flood is coming. You can imagine how Noah might have felt when there wasn't even a cloud in the sky. Building the ark represented a massive investment in technology that didn't make sense at the time, even to a faithful man like Noah. In what ways does this story speak to our current need for adaptation in the area of technology? What areas of technology might your church community implement to participate more fully in an unexpected future?



# Chapter 6

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## Personal Reflection (5 minutes)

During the pandemic, how did you personally use technology as a means to engage with friends and loved ones? How did you use it to strengthen your spiritual practice? Name one positive thing you learned about technology during the pandemic.



## Applying What You've Learned (15 minutes)

As Rebekah writes in Chapter 6, "Digital technology is the new reformation. Like books expanded the reach of knowledge post-plague, online offerings erase distance, connect communities, and give instant access to new people and places post-pandemic." What does this mean for the church? In what ways can we use technology to reach people with the love of Jesus? Name one way your community excelled in using technology during the pandemic. What is one way you would like to see your community use technology differently?



# Chapter 6

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## Closing Prayer

Share with each other your gratitude for technology. Then, pray together this prayer:

Lord, we know that you are always moving forward, calling us into a future we have yet to experience. Help us adapt to the changes you bring about in our lives and in the world around us. May we know technology as a means of blessing, allowing us to connect with new people in new ways. Please help us use technology to build up your kin(g)dom and not to tear it down. Amen.



## Notes



# Chapter 7

## Living Out the Mission of the Post-Pandemic Church

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### Thinking Deeper (10 minutes)

In Chapter 7, Rebekah gives us a lens by which to reflect saying, "Throughout this book, I've shown that to forge a new path and move the church forward in a post-pandemic world, it's time to courageously implement three key shifts in culture: embrace spirituality as the next normal, invite people back to church as community, and adopt the culture of technology to do more with less." How can we live out the mission of the post-pandemic church with these shifts in place?

### Reflecting on Scripture (30 minutes)

In Matthew 28:16-20, Jesus commissions his followers with instructions that will give their lives purpose. This purpose, or mission, is to make disciples of all nations. Rebekah states, "These words continue guiding the church today. You could say this commission has defined the mission of the church from its earliest expansion through the many chapters of church life, even up to and through the pandemic."

What does this mission look like in a post-pandemic world? What are some ways that we can make disciples of all nations in a digital age?

# Chapter 7

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## Personal Reflection (5 minutes)

During the early days of the pandemic, fear was a predominant feeling. In what ways can you counteract fear by spreading hope, love, and joy in a post-pandemic world?



## Applying What You've Learned (15 minutes)

Rebekah writes that many in the church pre-pandemic were in the "wait and see" attitude. However, once the pandemic hit, those same churches quickly began to operate from a place of possibility instead. As society returns to some sense of pre-pandemic normal, what would it look like for churches to continue to embrace a "go and do" attitude? List three things that your church started during the pandemic that you would like to see continue. Can you imagine one new thing that utilizes the ideas in this book?



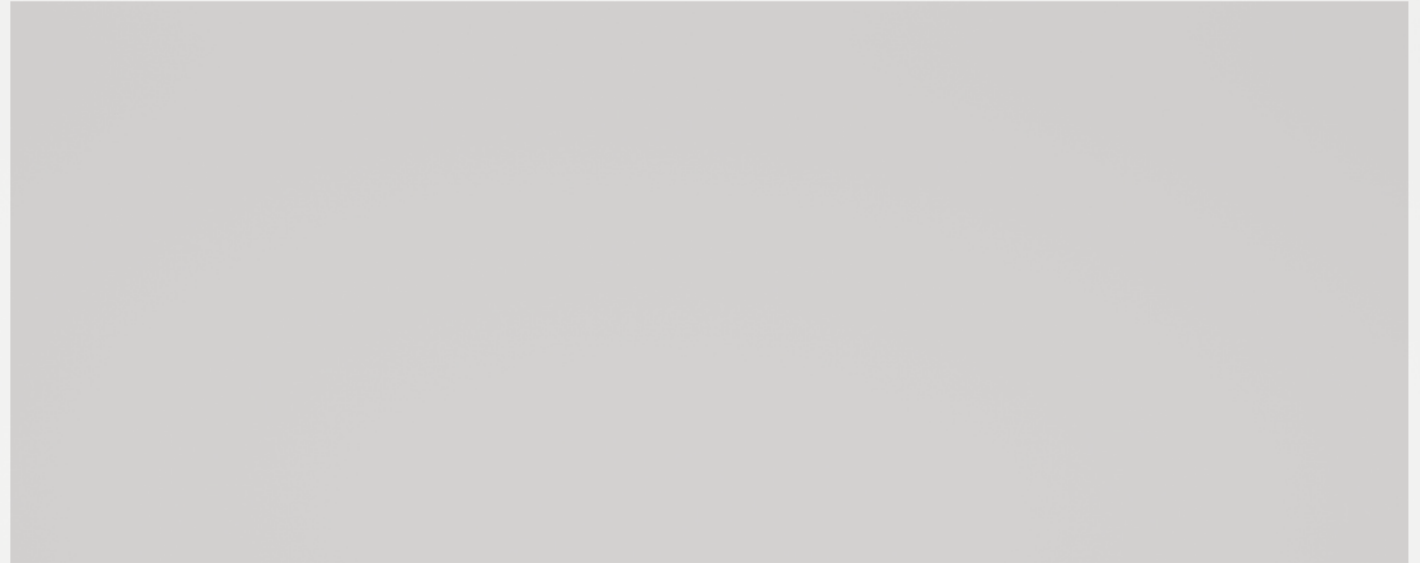
# Chapter 7

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## Closing Prayer

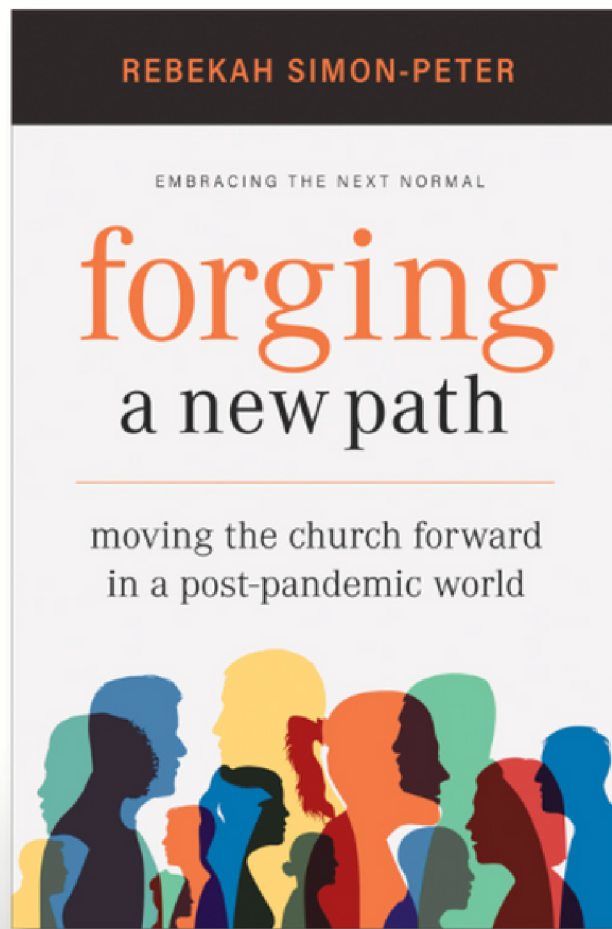
Give thanks for the ways your church responded well during the pandemic, and continues to do well. Then, together pray this prayer:

God, we know that You are a God of love in action. Help us to be a people of love in action too. Help us to go and do Your will. Help us to live a spirituality that is rooted in a fresh and vital faith. Help us to be real community, centered in Your love, and invite all to belong. Help us to use technology in ways that will expand your kin(g)dom in new and beautiful ways. Amen.



## Notes





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