

BOOK REVIEW: The Scattering by Dwight L. Dubois

Reviewed by Judy Twist, CENetwork of the ELCA

- Imagine being able to connect everything you do in life with God's dream of shalom.
- Imagine all God's people seeing their family responsibilities, work, and community involvement as ministry.
- Imagine congregations that equip and empower people for ministry—not just in the church, but in all they do.
- Imagine leaders and members finding a renewed sense of joy, purpose, and vitality as they give themselves away for the sake of the Gospel.

The Scattering lays bare our preoccupation with the Church as a building or location and transitions our thinking to the Church as missional, where the importance of what happens when we are scattered is as important – or more important – than what happens when we are gathered. To Dwight Dubois, God's dream of a "shalom church" (the church as God intended) is for a church that has more scattering than gathering.

Dwight Dubois has a varied background as a parish pastor, congregational renewal professional, teacher, speaker, and coach. In recent years he has worked extensively on making the connection between faith and life. In fact, he is a leader in the ELCA's Life of Faith Initiative. You can join the [Facebook group](#) or check out the [website](#) for more information!

Dubois talks a great deal about the Priesthood of All Believers, the need to equip the laity, and our Christian vocation / identity as "Child of God" that comes with our Baptism. Unfortunately, we often let this identity stop short of its full potential. It is as if we say, "I'm a Child of God; isn't that cool?" and let it go at that. Or we think, "I'm baptized, so I'm guaranteed to get into heaven when I die." In other words, too often we are not aware of how this new identity affects the way we live our day-to-day lives.

Dubois notes the divide that often occurs between clergy and laity and proposes we drop clergy and laity and instead talk about gathered and scattered ministers. He notes that one of the weaknesses of the greater church is that pastors are trained to be gathered ministers, and laity are trained (when they are trained!) to be scattered ministers and offers reasons why there should be some "cross-training" for both groups.

To summarize, the book places great emphasis – and goes into detail of the history of – the Missional Church and the Missional Church Movement. Dubois offers examples of churches whose identity is inward and offers prescriptions for change that turn that identity outward. The examples are helpful; you can look at these and say, "Ah, that's our congregation," where before you might scoff at the idea that your congregation is facing inward in an unhealthy way.

The impact of a scattered church is something pastors and laity alike should reflect on now, when most are not gathering. Over the past year, we've learned many ways to still be church (a faith family) and be THE church (in our homes, out in the world). The book is inspirational in these times and gives encouragement to those seeking to remain in and of the world during a time of isolation.

Dubois believes that to be that church God envisions, we must move from a pastor-centered to a people-centered church, and we need to move from being church-centered to world-centered. There is a great [study guide](#) that can be downloaded from the book's [website](#) that would be useful to Christian educators who are looking for adult ed / Bible study ideas, and would adapt easy to remote learning.