

This short book is a six-part manifesto about ministry in the mainline context in the twenty-first century. It is written for church leaders, lay and clergy. The premise of the book is simple - God intends every servant of the Resurrected Christ to be a servant of life. God has called all leaders, lay and clergy together, to lead healthy, *growing* spiritual movements.

Any church can blossom and grow anywhere if it will become healthy enough spiritually and pay attention to the needs, experiences, and sensibilities of those it seeks to serve.

For this reason, I refuse to lead a dying church. And I invite you to refuse the same. I invite you to declare that, from this moment forward, you refuse to simply go through the motions and play church. You hereby refuse to help your church gracefully into the grave. You hereby refuse to channel your best ministry energy into community or justice endeavors that are detached from your congregation's life and ministry.

As we shall discover in the pages ahead, this commitment entails six critical choices:

- Choosing life over death
- Choosing community over isolation
- Choosing fun over drudgery
- Choosing bold over mild
- Choosing frontier over fortress
- Choosing now rather than later

It's really that simple: six clear choices that will greatly amplify the impact of our lives and of the churches we lead.

Apostle

Because the word literally means "one who is sent", I define an apostle as any leader who:

- has had *a living experience of meeting Christ* somewhere, somehow, and who then, out of that experience.
- moves with a sense that he or she is chosen, *is sent* out in life to share something of *eternal value* with the world, and who
- *partners with others* of similar faith and experience in that endeavor.

Most mainline pastors tend more to being caretakers and managers of the status quo than to being apostles. We are often driven by the motivation to *help* others - but we seldom believe we have something that can *save* others

Leaders in growing churches care more about everyone coming to know Christ than they are about keeping their churches small enough so that they can know everyone.

Additional Resources

Study guide:

http://storage.cloversites.com/epicentergroup/documents/refuse_study_guide_2.pdf

Follow-up book: [We Refused to Lead a Dying Church: Churches that Came Back Against All Odds \(2012\)](#) Study guide - <http://www.ucc.org/the-pilgrim-press/pdfs/Study-Guide-We-Refused-to-Lead-a-Dying-Church.pdf>