

SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTIST CHURCH  
NORTHERN CALIFORNIA CONFERENCE

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# Ministry Leadership Resource Guide

*Cultivating Meaningful Worship,  
Discipleship & Church Growth resources*

For Pastors & Ministry Leaders  
February 2026

## **About This Guide**

This guide provides curated resources — books, websites, online courses, and conferences — to equip Adventist pastors and ministry leaders in the Northern California Conference. Resources are organized around four priorities: Meaningful Worship Experience, Discipleship Pathways, Church Health & Growth.

# 01 | Meaningful Worship Experiences

Resources for worship that forms, engages, and transforms Adventist congregations

## Why This Matters

Barna Group research shows that 'meaningful worship' and discipleship are one of the top drivers of congregational health and retention — especially among younger adults.

Resource	Description	Type / Format
<b>Majesty: Experiencing Authentic Worship</b> <i>Joseph Kidder</i>	Discover the simple yet profound principles that can guide your church into a genuine worship experience that helps people encounter God	Book
<a href="#">Barna Research: Meaningful Church</a> <i>Barna Group</i>	Research on what makes church experiences meaningful — essential for understanding congregational engagement and retention.	Website / Research
<b>You Are What You Love</b> <i>James K.A. Smith</i>	Explores how worship forms desire and shapes disciples. Foundational for rethinking Sunday services as formative liturgy.	Book
<b>Unreasonable Hospitality</b> Guidara Will	His lessons about service and leadership celebrated the one principle that never goes out of season: the human desire to be taken care of.	Book
<b>Worship Matters</b> <i>Bob Kauflin</i>	Practical, biblical guide on leading congregational worship: theology, song selection, and the leader's character.	Book
<a href="#">Adventist Learning Community (ALC)</a> † SDA Resource <i>North American Division</i>	The NAD's official online learning platform — offers continuing education, pastoral certification, discipleship courses, and ministry training modules for free or low cost.	Online Platform
<a href="#">7 Disruptive Church Trends in 2026</a> <i>Carey Nieuwhof</i>	This podcast explores the annual Church Trends 2026 Church Trends. Such trends include as preaching and meaningful worship experience. Learn how preaching is starting to shift from presentation to encounter. Worship is shifting as a chance to facilitate an experience or encounter between people and God.	Podcast

## Suggested Next Steps

Start with Barna's Meaningful Church research to understand your congregation's felt needs.

## 02 | Discipleship Pathways

*Resources for building reproducible disciple-making systems in Adventist congregations*

### Why This Matters

The Adventist Church's mission — to make disciples who embody whole-person health, the three angels' messages, and active community witness — requires intentional pathways, not just programs. The Adventist Learning Community and Total Member Involvement provide ready-made denominational frameworks your congregation can implement immediately.

Resource	Description	Type / Format
<p><b><a href="#">Total Member Involvement (TMI)</a></b>            † SDA Resource  <i>General Conference</i></p>	The GC-wide initiative equipping every member as a witness and disciple-maker. Rich with training guides, video resources, and campaign materials.	Campaign / Training
<p><b>Discipleship Essentials</b>  <i>Greg Ogden</i></p>	A proven triadic discipleship guide used widely across denominations. Excellent for launching small disciple-making groups in any congregation.	Book
<p><b>The Other Half of Church</b>  <i>Jim Wilder and Michel Hendricks</i></p>	You'll also learn the four ingredients necessary to develop and maintain a vibrant transformational community where spiritual growth occurs, relationships flourish, and the toxic spread of narcissism is eradicated.	Book
<p><b><a href="#">Discipleship in Crisis</a></b>  <i>Carey Nieuwhof and Jon Marc Comer</i></p>	Discusses the major challenges for modern discipleship and the church, and adds his own church trend.	Podcast
<p><b>Creating Healthy Church Systems</b>  <i>Ransom Brad</i></p>	Healthy churches make more disciples. In this book discover the eight essential systems every church needs to be healthy, and how to build and implement them in your church.	Book
<p><b>The Big Four: Secrets to a Thriving Church Family</b>  <i>Joseph Kidder</i></p>	explore four key secrets that not only made the early church a success but also produced thriving Seventh-day Adventist churches that are rapidly growing the kingdom of heaven.	Book

### Suggested Next Steps

Begin with the Adventist Learning Community (ALC) to audit what free training already exists for your leadership team. Pair with Simple Church (Rainer) to evaluate and simplify your current program structure, then use Voice of Prophecy materials for a concrete new-believer follow-up pathway.

## 03 | Church Health & Growth

*Frameworks and tools for evaluating and growing congregational health*

### Why This Matters

Research from the Center for Creative Ministry shows that NCC-region Adventist churches share many of the same health challenges as the broader North American church — stagnant baptismal retention, aging demographics, and unclear discipleship pathways. These resources offer both data and practical solutions.

Resource	Description	Type / Format
<a href="#">Center for Creative Ministry</a> ♦ SDA Resource <i>Monte Sahlin</i>	Adventist-focused research and consulting on church health, sociological trends, and growth strategies in North American Adventism.	Website / Research
<a href="#">Natural Church Development (NCD)</a> <i>Christian Schwarz</i>	A globally used assessment identifying eight quality characteristics of healthy, growing churches. A powerful diagnostic tool for congregations of any size.	Book / Assessment
<b>The Unstuck Church</b> <i>Tony Morgan</i>	Practical roadmap for diagnosing where a church is stuck and moving toward health across various life stages of a congregation.	Book
<b>Transformational Church</b> <i>Ed Stetzer &amp; Thom Rainer</i>	Research-based study distinguishing churches that transform communities. Helpful for self-assessment and vision casting.	Book
<b>Transforming Church</b> <i>Kevin Ford</i>	Identifies five dysfunctions of an unhealthy church, and shares the five key indicators of a healthy, vibrant congregation. You'll discover the keys for creating a church that transforms lives, your community, and the world.	Book
<b>Future Church</b> <i>Ted Parkman and Rob Hoskins</i>	The authors call for new approaches to discipleship, decentralized and flexible ministry structures, and greater engagement with emerging generations so the church can remain missionally effective in a rapidly changing world.	Book
<b>Comeback Churches</b> <i>Ed Stetzer and Mike Dodson</i>	Stetzer and Dodson identify the key factors that contributed to their turnaround, emphasizing spiritual renewal, missional focus, strong leadership, intentional evangelism, and long-term commitment to change.	Book
<b>Transformational Mission</b> <i>Ed Stetzer &amp; Thom Rainer</i>	Research-based study distinguishing churches that transform communities. Helpful for self-assessment and vision casting.	Book

## 04 | Top Resources

*Essential reading and listening for ministry leaders across all focus areas*

Resource	Description	Type / Format
<b>You Are What You Love</b> <i>James K.A. Smith</i>	Explores how worship forms desire and shapes disciples. Foundational for rethinking worship services as formative liturgy.	Book
<b>Creating Healthy Church Systems</b> <i>Brad Ransom</i>	Healthy churches make more disciples. Discover the eight essential systems every church needs to be healthy, and how to build and implement them in your church.	Book
<b>Future Church</b> <i>Ted Parkman and Rob Hoskins</i>	The authors call for new approaches to discipleship, decentralized and flexible ministry structures, and greater engagement with emerging generations so the church can remain missionally effective in a rapidly changing world.	Book
<b>Transforming Church</b> <i>Kevin Ford</i>	Identifies five dysfunctions of an unhealthy church, and shares the five key indicators of a healthy, vibrant congregation. Discover the keys for creating a church that transforms lives, your community, and the world.	Book
<b>The Other Half of Church</b> <i>Jim Wilder and Michel Hendricks</i>	Learn the four ingredients necessary to develop and maintain a vibrant transformational community where spiritual growth occurs, relationships flourish, and the toxic spread of narcissism is eradicated.	Book
<b>Discipleship in Crisis</b> <i>Carey Nieuwhof and Jon Marc Comer</i>	Discusses the major challenges for modern discipleship and the church, and addresses current church trends in a timely, accessible format.	Podcast
<b>Majesty: Experiencing Authentic Worship</b> <i>Joseph Kidder</i>	Discover the simple yet profound principles that can guide your church into a genuine worship experience that helps people encounter God	Book

## Appendix | Quick Reference: All Websites & Links

*All online resources from this guide in one place*

Resource	Category	URL
★ <b>Adventist Learning Community</b>	Discipleship / Training / SDA	<a href="https://www.adventistlearningcommunity.com">https://www.adventistlearningcommunity.com</a>
★ <b>Total Member Involvement (TMI)</b>	Discipleship / SDA	<a href="https://tmi.adventist.org">https://tmi.adventist.org</a>
★ <b>Center for Creative Ministry</b>	Church Health / SDA	<a href="https://www.creativeministry.org">https://www.creativeministry.org</a>
Barna: Meaningful Church	Worship / Research	<a href="https://www.barna.com/research/meaningful-church/">https://www.barna.com/research/meaningful-church/</a>
NCD International	Church Health	<a href="https://www.ncd-international.org">https://www.ncd-international.org</a>
The Unstuck Group	Church Health	<a href="https://theunstuckgroup.com">https://theunstuckgroup.com</a>

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This resource list may be updated as new materials are identified. Feedback and additions welcome.