

Book review: Faithful Presence by David Fitch

This conversation between David Fitch and Alan Roxburgh revolves around David's recent book *Faithful Presence*^[1] and his life in a church plant near Chicago. David describes his book under three headings: The *Presence* of God at work in localities, discerned through *Practices* such as Eucharist, shared meals and reconciliation. We are located in *Places* where sometimes we will be gathered with other Christians and sometimes, in everyday secular spaces, we may be the ones invited to recognize Jesus' presence and to name him. We may need to search out these secular spaces, and David describes how he found a hospitable bar. But he also stresses that this is not to be seen as a project, to be bolted on to church as usual. We are present in our everyday contexts as guest, calling on the Holy Spirit and discerning God. When we live this together as Christians, the gospel becomes visible in our shared lives.

As they continue to talk Alan wonders if our presence in a place, a neighbourhood, can be considered significant given the fact that we are networked and mobile across distance. According to David this lack of rootedness is harmful for us. The church must be the place of healing and embodied relationship, the gospel in our culture and a form of resistance. He describes his own experience of moving away from a sprawling suburb, into a locality with forty or so people from their church plant. Politically, the alternative is a splintered democracy where power is exercised for global corporations, and on the ground, people suffer. Alan and David assert that in this vacuum the church must be at work, reshaping local human life. In this is the gospel. This is where revival and renewal will appear, at shared tables in many neighbourhoods.

^[1] David E. Fitch, *Faithful Presence: Seven Disciplines that Shape the Church for Mission* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 2016).