Creating a Missional Culture is a timely book on congregational culture and collaborative leadership. There is a growing dissatisfaction with hierarchical models of leadership that major on control, shunt the imagination, silence dissent and are slow to welcome new leaders. That is not just an urban caricature. In my denominational body, the Baptist Union of Victoria, the National Church Life Survey shows us we are going so slow as the national average to welcome newcomers to leadership that, until they have hung around for five years, we are less likely to appoint younger people as leaders (see our forthcoming article at batj.net.au). Moreover, for all our tall tales, almost every church has a solo or senior pastor. Where is our experimentation with other models of leadership, or do we want to experiment with vocationality style? Polycentric leadership models seem more than necessary, but they are not systematically developed and are not always postmodern and post-christian - when leaders function mutually through collaboration, maintain cohesion through relationship, and rotate leadership functions around a team. In my local context at Jubilee, we are exploring how to cooperate with what God is doing in our neighbourhood and how best to reimage our staffing and leadership. We have things to learn from this book.

JR Woodward is a church planter who cofounded Karoo Los Angeles (he and a colleague were co-leaders who shared the load) and the Encourage Network (a relational network for missional churches to dream together and share resources). Woodward's writing has been for those who seek new and theoretical possibilities - he has been prominent with and taught at what he believes.

The thesis of the book is that church culture is more important than strategies and plans. Edgar Schein suggests that leaders create culture while managers run culture. Woodward explains you can discern a church's "cultural web" through its language, rituals, institutions, ethics and narratives. For example, he says a church's narrative is its guiding story that answers the question "what is God's calling for our church?" He encourages leaders to reflect on what theology, doctrines and Bible they contemplate and how the church's history is rehearsed, and to evaluate what extent they are missional.

The encouragement of the book is to identify and release a team of leaders in a church with different faceted concerns. Woodward adds to the small but growing literary, theology of a post-missional church: his "postmissional" understanding. This book encourages leaders to reimage how they do theology, theologies and Bible in the church's history is rehearsed, and to evaluate what extent they are missional.

The book is very comprehensive and challenges many facets of church leadership, a development I am excited about. Woodward's writing, speaking and resources are a valuable resource for leaders who want to make changes in their congregations. The book is well written, with examples and stories that illustrate his points. Woodward's writing has been for those seeking new and theoretical possibilities - he has been prominent with, and taught at, what he believes.

The book includes practical steps for experimenting and implementing a polycentric model. Woodward suggests forming "workshop groups" to gain different types of leaders together i.e. gather the convener and the community. He suggests creating more co-pastors rather than senior pastors. His advice to leadership teams is to unify the senior pastors role and discuss how to share those responsibilities rather than presuming they need one person, or rotate them around. He suggests that leaders should talk about their ideas and listen to others who have unique perspectives and experiences. Woodward has written a book that is a valuable resource for church leaders who are looking to create a more missional culture.