To connect with a postmodern world with its tumultuous changes in culture and communication media, church and mission leaders need to learn how to utilize narrative, creativity, intuition and innovation in their leadership. Top-down hierarchical models are becoming not just less popular but much less effective to foster missional imagination in teams and churches. Some of the systems-conscious business literature is encouraging more organic approaches to leadership. The literature on missional church is encouraging leaders to develop innovative new approaches to ministry and to help the people of God be creative in connecting God’s story with the rhythms of their neighbourhoods. Intuitive Leadership uniquely invites leaders to adopt language and postures of story and metaphor, meditation and creativity, creativity and chaos, as powerful paradigms for leadership in a changing world.

The author, Tim Keel, is the founding pastor of Jacob’s Well, an emerging church in Kansas City, and a leader with the Emergent Village conversation exploring the meaning of faith, church and mission in postmodern times. His first training was in art and design, and as a church leader he still wants to access his imagination and intuition in collaborative ways with others on the journey of creating, but for the purpose of creating beautiful, hospitable, welcoming spaces for people to connect with God and other people.

Keel maintains that vibrancy in faith and community building will come as leaders connect with their creativity, imagination and especially their story. The book explores this theme in three sections – entering story (since story is at the heart of what God is doing), engaging context (since to respond to what God is doing we need to understand our cultural context, theology about God and the gospel, and structural church systems), and embracing possibility (with a new way of understanding ourselves and our leadership).

The element the reviewer most appreciated is Keel’s biographical reflections on his journey in leadership and mission. It is an inviting narrative of Keel finding new life in community, church planting, preaching, leadership and ultimately finding new vitality in pursuing God rather than ministry. Passionate about creativity and design himself, he affirms the place of right-brain elements of creativity, images, symbols, intuition and taking time for stillness in church. He is passionate about localizing what is good news about the gospel for himself and for his context, and to create space for those outside faith and the church to participate and contribute. Reacting against modern tendencies to consume and compartmentalize faith and localize stories of success in other contexts, he discusses why new kinds of different churches are emerging and underlines the importance of hospitality.

“In a world of globalism and atomization we are desperate for space to engage, create, and respond to the power games that are being played in so many circles around us. In a shrinking, globalized world we are desperate to learn what it means to be in relationship to the other—the alien in our midst (or perhaps we are the alien in the midst) for the purpose of dialogue and engagement. We desperately need to discover recover, learn and live out the ancient Christian practice of hospitality, which is the postmodern means of evangelism” (p. 111).

This is not a church manual for growing your church in ten easy steps. Keel deconstructs that expectation and the reproduction of certain techniques or even best practices, and encourages leaders to help their churches foster missional imagination and find where they can uniquely improvise what the gospel looks like in their context. Intuitive Leadership will be welcome reading for leaders and church hungry for and open to new paradigms for leadership—to understand why we need them and how to practice them.