



EXCERPT



***From Pandemic to Renewal***  
*Practices for a World Shaken by Crisis*

May 23, 2023 | \$18, 224 pages, paperback | 978-1-5140-0552-1

The pandemic changed the world. Mental health crises, economic disparities, and escalating violence now mark our times. But these crises can be opportunities for renewal. Chris Rice examines eight interrelated crises of the pandemic era and provides pathways for followers of Christ to be heralds of peace and justice for their communities.

## The Pathway of This Book

I want to slow down to reflect together, to look deeply into and learn from this new and unprecedented time that will permanently change our lives and communities. We will explore eight great challenges posed by our new world. With each challenge I offer a transformative practice. Whether one is making pottery, playing a video game, or learning contemplative prayer, becoming excellent in our pursuits requires forming new habits and disciplines, repeated over and over. Gradually those fresh patterns form us into different people. That is what I mean by a practice. We will explore how these practices are a source of renewal, a means of grace, a pathway to becoming more like Christ—and, along the way, I hope to expand our understanding of what renewal is and how it happens.

Each chapter explores one challenge that has emerged in this new time, as well as one practice for responding to that challenge, providing a pathway of hope and transformation:

- Bearing joy for a world of frantic anxiety
- Centering the vulnerable for a world of rising disparity
- Being peacemakers for a world of surging polarization
- Redeeming power for a world of political mediocrity
- Making transnational disciples for a world of American blinders
- Establishing private integrity for a world of public validation
- Developing moral imagination for a world of unprecedented dangers
- Renewing the church for a world longing for hope

With each challenge and practice, we will not take a long swim but a deep dive. We will explore how these eight practices enliven our witness as we apply them in our lives, churches, and communities, and how they collectively offer a pathway to personal and social renewal in this new era. Although we are in uncharted territory now, many of these challenges are not new. But they have accelerated and become more exposed and more serious, and drawing on wisdom from the past is even more urgent now.

—Adapted from the introduction



Tara Burns, print and online publicity  
800.843.4587 ext. 4059 or [tburns@ivpress.com](mailto:tburns@ivpress.com)

Krista Clayton, author interviews  
800.843.4587 ext. 4013 or [kclayton@ivpress.com](mailto:kclayton@ivpress.com)



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Q & A



## ***From Pandemic to Renewal*** *Practices for a World Shaken by Crisis*

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Chris Rice is director of the United Nations Office of the Mennonite Central Committee, an international relief, development, and peace agency. He served as cofounding director of the Duke Divinity School Center for Reconciliation, and he has worked through the academy, churches, and faith-based organizations to heal social conflicts in east Africa, Northeast Asia, and the American South. He is coauthor of *Reconciling All Things* and *More Than Equals*, which both won Christianity Today Book Awards.

# A Remarkable Opportunity to Ignite New Growth

**What about your personal experiences during the pandemic prompted you to write this book?**

**Chris Rice:** After the pandemic hit, I had a front-row seat at the United Nations and with a global ministry working in fifty countries. I saw firsthand many new crises unfold in the world. Meanwhile my wife was putting her life at risk as a nurse at the frontlines in New York City, and she saw many American realities firsthand. I was also living with my father in small town Vermont, seeking to protect him, and that experience opened up pain in my family I hadn't seen before.

On every front—global, national, and personal—I began to see that the pandemic was like an x-ray revealing many new challenges such as frantic anxiety, rising disparity, surging polarization, political mediocrity, and brokenness in private life. But my life's journey also taught me that crises can ignite incredible new growth in our lives. All this convinced me that this is an unprecedented new time in our world that can become a time of great renewal. That gave me great passion to write this book.

**Do you believe there are pathways toward renewal coming out of the challenges of the pandemic?**

**Chris:** The pandemic has been the crisis of a century, exposing a new time in our world that will reshape our lives for decades to come. But this challenging time we are in is also the opportunity of a century—for renewal in our lives, churches, and world.

My book is about eight challenges exposed by the pandemic and eight pathways to renewal and fresh growth. There is much we can read about Covid-19 as a health and economic crisis. But using a moral and scriptural lens, my book gives readers a bird's-eye view, revealing great challenges that were exposed or accelerated by the pandemic, how the world has been changed, and how a new time has come, which, yes, presents a remarkable opportunity for the renewal of Christian life and public witness in our families, churches, and the world.

**What do you hope readers might take away from your book?**

**Chris:** I want readers to understand and to be gripped by the unprecedented new time the pandemic has opened in our world for decades to come. I want them to gain deep insight into eight extraordinary challenges facing our lives, communities, and churches, which have been exposed or accelerated by the pandemic. I hope people will learn how engaging these challenges—from personal, to social, to political—can become ground for drawing closer to Christ. I want readers to be inspired with hope by gaining fresh knowledge about faithful and effective steps they can take for positive action and change and for becoming border-crossing people. More than educate readers, I want this book to spark renewal in their lives.



Tara Burns, print and online publicity  
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