
BOOK REVIEW**GOD'S TROUBLEMAKERS: HOW WOMEN OF FAITH ARE CHANGING THE WORLD**

BY: KATHARINE RHODES HENDERSON

NEW YORK, CONTINUUM PUBLISHING GROUP, 2006

247 PP. HARDBACK

ISBN: 978-0-8264-1867-8

“Well-behaved women rarely make history.” There is truth to this bumper-sticker philosophy, though women who make history rarely set out to do so, well-behaved or otherwise. This is particularly accurate among women of faith, as Katharine Rhodes Henderson discovered in this portrayal of twenty women who shared their stories of personal and communal transformation. The author, a Presbyterian pastor and president of Auburn Theological Seminary, introduces her readers to a new breed of entrepreneurial leaders: progressive religious women. Henderson introduces these religiously diverse women out of a concern that the Religious Left has been increasingly absent from the public square. The various reasons for the trend are not as important as her thesis that the world desperately needs those with religious conviction to be prophetic, activist voices in the culture.

Henderson’s interview process identified six attributes of authentic religious leadership that she weaves throughout the book: interdependence and relationships; an ethic of inclusiveness; belief in the possibility of transformation; an entrepreneurial spirit; the importance of a seamless life; and a *resistance faith* (37–38). The next six chapters illustrate the paths the women took to express those attributes in their particular context and culture. The religious expressions of the women are diverse, as are their cultural environments, but all are connected in their commitment to faith and social justice (165). Henderson’s final chapter is a charge to her readers to follow in their footsteps.

Entrepreneurial leaders are inherent risk-takers. As *social and spiritual entrepreneurs*, a term Henderson uses throughout the book, the women profiled all engaged in the socio-spiritual challenges of people learning to live together in a more humane and equitable manner (27). Their work with the homeless, the disabled, prisoners, and battered women and children, came from a holy anger at the social marginalization of classes of people. Their risks are personal, professional, and financial. The willingness to risk derives from an ethical stance embedded in each woman's expression of faith: Jewish, Christian, or Muslim. Whether they intended to become politically active, the subjects found themselves urgently committed to shaping the public's perception of the marginalized populations with whom they work. The integration of private faith into public spaces, combined with a commitment to the marginalized, are the two strands found in the expression of *authentic religious leadership*.

As she describes the components of leadership that make these women formidable, Henderson writes convincingly on feminist contributions to religious leadership (Chapter 4). Though her focus is on progressive religious expression in the public square, she calls for a more robust exploration in her chapter on leadership, particularly as she implicates gender and leadership. Though some of the women interviewed are ambivalent toward organized religion and its leaders, they express a deep and earnest desire to pull their religious institutions into socially just activism for the sake of their communities (Chapter 5). Henderson's interviews reveal that women possess a different way of leading than their religious hierarchies would recognize, which she suggests provides a corrective to the conventional systems in place.

Henderson communicates her subjects' bemused frustration at the cultural disconnect between sacred and secular and among diverse religious expressions. Their determination that faith is deeply connected to the common good may present the greatest challenge to the

dominant culture (169). This reflects a distinctly Western perspective, where religion has been relegated to the margins of the public square. The *seamless life* (Chapter 7), is one that connects all facets of life, and balances reflection with action. Balance also requires that leaders acknowledge the good in all faith expressions. She asks her readers to cultivate a deeper awareness of other religions, developing multi-faith connections for the greater good. Henderson's subjects reveal their deeply held conviction that faith must be at the center of authentic leadership; it is faith that keeps them passionately engaged, and faith that gives them energy to address the concerns they acknowledge as central to social well-being. The women profiled by Henderson all connect their activism with their faith, and their private encounter with the Divine has led each of them in their own way to shape or create institutions and influence public policy (Chapter 8).

Henderson does not attempt to delineate the infractions of the Religious Right that she argues have marginalized the Religious Left, or contrast the activism of those she profiles with that of religious conservatives. Her argument for the progressive perspective would benefit from an investigation, however nominal, of whether the religious attitudes and practices of the profiled women differ from their religiously conservative counterparts in similar activist roles. Her case for religious pluralism as a preferred worldview, which pervades the text, may be perplexing to the evangelical or religious conservative reader. Conversely, Henderson's explanation of activist faith is an essential message for all religious expressions, and should be a part of any person's journey to the center of authentic religious leadership.

Karen Parchman
Ph.D. Candidate
Adjunct Professor
Fuller Theological Seminary
Pasadena, California

BOOK REVIEW**WOMEN AT THE TOP:
WHAT WOMEN UNIVERSITY AND COLLEGE PRESIDENTS
SAY ABOUT EFFECTIVE LEADERSHIP**

BY: MIMI WOLVERTON, BEVERLY L. BOWER, AND

ADRIENNE E. HYLE

STERLING, VIRGINIA: STYLUS PUBLISHING, 2009

VII-157 PP. PAPERBACK

ISBN: 9781-57922-256-7

Women at the Top, the first in the Pathways to Leadership series, highlights the journeys of nine women to key leadership positions in higher education. Utilizing both first- and third-person perspectives in the narration, authors Mimi Wolverton (series editor), Beverly Bower, and Adrienne E. Hyle offer nine biographical sketches of female college and university presidents and their rise to these positions. The pathways are as varied as the women and the institutions they lead, but each story offers insight and inspiration to those women who aspire to succeed in a perennially male-dominated field.

The book is divided into twelve chapters, with nine chapters (one devoted to each of the nine subjects), sandwiched between an introductory chapter on “story” and two brief closing chapters, offering commentary on the ongoing difficulties for women in leadership and a brief explanation of the research methodology.

As the reader is introduced to each of these nine women, s/he begins to realize the great diversity among these leaders. Some of the women moved intentionally up the ranks in institutions making their way to the goal of a presidency. Others’ ascensions are better described as the result of having been open to a variety of administrative opportunities. Some came from families in which education was a priority; many more came from working class backgrounds where education was a privilege and not one easily gained. Whatever the backgrounds and however diverse the journeys, it becomes increasingly

clear that the path to a presidency in higher education for women is not a clearly marked or easily travelled one.

Whether the presidency is of a state, community, or tribal college, it is interesting to note the similarities among the stories when it comes to the skills and qualities necessary for success, as voiced by both the narrators and the women themselves. Many of the women acknowledge the importance of physical and emotional strength, and throughout the interviews words that recur include determination, optimism, confidence, dedication, and passion. Several refer to the value of learning to read the culture of place (local, institutional and regional), and the consequences of failing to do so. It is equally interesting to note how others see and describe these successful women. In the eyes of those around them, these are women who were not afraid—or if they were, didn't show it—to make bold moves, to raise authentic voices against competing ones. These women are described as emotionally smart, authentic, and many are noted for their good sense of humor. In spite of the odds against their success, these women have achieved a presidency and, in the words of the authors, “[e]ach confronts her world with grace, her work with passion and her life with enthusiasm.”

The authors are to be commended for the integrity with which the stories are recounted. These are clearly the success stories of women and, while it is heartening to find a book dedicated to women who have reached such key positions, the reader is never under the illusion that these women represent a host of women in the workplace or that such success is easily attained. Woven throughout each of the stories are the tales of broken marriages, exhaustion, discrimination, and even presidencies lost. In telling their stories, these women do not pretend that they were not the targets of prejudice, sometimes gender, sometimes race, sometimes both. The proverbial glass ceiling may have cracks, but we have a long way to go in higher education (and many other arenas), before it will not be seen as refreshing and

unusual to have a book focused solely on women in leadership positions.

The nine narratives are two brief but important chapters, “The Road Less Travelled” and “Project Methodology.” In the former, the authors reiterate the difficulties on the uneven and unwelcoming path to college or university presidencies for women, pointing out the roadblocks put up by others (e.g., gender and race discrimination, family obligations), as well as the unfortunate lacunae of positive signals, mentoring, and encouragement along the way. In the final chapter the authors offer a brief explanation of their methodology for the larger ongoing research project on gender and effective leadership begun in 2002, as well as the criteria used in the selection of the participants for the case studies leading to the current volume. (It is worth noting here that this volume, *Women at the Top*, was soon followed by *Answering the Call: African American Women in Higher Education Leadership* (2009), and most recently by *Latinas in the Workplace: An Emerging Leadership Force* (2011)).

The stories recounted in *Women at the Top* are not about women in key leadership positions in theological education, but the journeys and the roadblocks are transferrable across disciplines. Theological educators training men and women for leadership and administration will find this a useful tool for illuminating the complexities of the pathway to leadership for women. The accessibility of the narratives can open the conversation for men and women readers. It will be up to instructors to take the conversation to the next level.

Judy Yates Siker

Research Professor of New Testament and Christian Origins
San Francisco Theological Seminary
San Anselmo, California

BOOK REVIEW**THE GIRLFRIENDS' CLERGY COMPANION:
SURVIVING AND THRIVING IN MINISTRY**

BY: MELISSA LYN DEROSIA, MARIANNE J. GRANO, AMY
MORGAN, AND AMANDA ADAMS RILEY
HERNDON, VA: THE ALBAN INSTITUTE, 2011
164 PP. PAPERBACK
ISBN: 978-1-56699-418-7

Presbyterian clergy Melissa Lynn DeRosia, Marianne J. Grano, Amy Morgan, and Amanda Adams Riley have collaborated on an instructional, almost journal-like, how-to book for young women in ministry. As an older, second-career, African American seminarian hailing from the Baptist tradition, I hoped that I would find their writing valuable not just for young women in ministry but for all women—old and young, of varying faith traditions, who were nascent in the ministry. As I delved into the open pages and at many times openhearted sharing of these four women, I found that this was at times the case, but that those times were disappointingly rare.

In fairness to Reverends Delrosia, Grano, Morgan and Adams Riley, my hopes were self-inflicted, and not necessarily motivated by promises offered by the writers. Indeed the authors were forthcoming, and to their credit they attempted early on in the preface to stave off any notions that their experiences would be simpatico with the trials and challenges of a diverse group of clergy women. In their own words: “We recognize that our experiences are limited...For one, none of us is part of a racial/ethnic minority. We see this as a reflection of the state of our denomination [Presbyterian USA] as a whole, and we chose not to seek someone out who had not been part of our group process. Likewise we lack an LGBT...voice...Our book speaks from very particular experiences” (xv).

And they were right. The social location of this book is one of very particular mainstream, majority, privileged, and, yes, youthful experiences. As a result, anyone fresh out of seminary, but not necessarily Anglo, young, and fresh-faced, will be challenged to hear a voice among these four well-meaning clergy that resonates and connects. However, I resolutely approached the task with faith that whether young, old, first-time jobber, or on the brink of the last of several positions before retirement, there would be a core message of encouragement. And in that I was not disappointed.

The Reverend Girlfriends do at times dig soul-deep into the experiences that would shake the footing of any minority who found herself charged with ministering on stony ground. Whether despised or simply dismissed, learning to be diligent to the call is always challenging and often times intolerable. It is also a likely lesson recently matriculated seminarians will need to master.

Among the adjustments readers are warned of is the “seamless garment” aspect of full-time ministry. A lot of the book’s discussion of “robing” for ministry is literal and focuses on whether to high-heel or not to high-heel and how to retain authority while wearing pink (I jest...just a little). Rev. Grano shares the experience of being called to console a parishioner whose brother had just committed suicide and being delayed due to the need to stop at a department store to purchase suitable clothes, because she felt uncomfortable going in the pink pants she was wearing. Although I question whether the parishioner would have been as uncomfortable with pink pants as Rev. Grano was in this situation, this and similar discussions can lead the reader into more thoughtful consideration of how clergywomen can cope with the reality of always being cloaked in clerical garb in the eyes of the community and the congregants. The always “on” aspect of ministry can be disconcerting to newly minted clergy the first few times they find themselves in the unexpected presence of a parishioner, when the clergy are dressed (literally or figuratively), more for a day at the beach than “spiritual” exploits. A bad day emotionally,

spiritually, and even appearance-wise is not allowed. The often one-dimensional perception of clergy as perceived by their congregation is something the authors wisely instruct on managing rather than accepting. They advise readers to manage the expectations of others through self-care, establishing and maintaining connections with friends outside of the church network, and nurturing one's own spiritual life and relationship with God.

Other notable examples of practical advice include fighting the desperation of accepting just any call and ignoring gut feelings. Beyond learning how to interview well for a position, they wisely advise us on learning how to interview a prospective congregation and trusting God enough to pass on a call if it's not God who's doing the calling. Similarly an entire chapter, "The Eternal Associate," is devoted to a discussion of evaluating the role that's right for you in ministry and realizing that Sr. Pastor should not be a universal aspiration.

This—to thine own self be true—is a thread throughout the book, and is good advice from these young women that is applicable to all women regardless of age, race, or sexual orientation. In fact, the authors' thesis could be summed up as: be true to yourself and do not get lost in expectations of what ministry should look like or even sound like. And in the end this makes their without-apology preface confession of homogeneity a bit more digestible. They are simply following their own advice. As a woman in ministry, be true to your identity, your voice, and God's call.

Darice Wright
Student
McCormick Theological Seminary
Chicago, Illinois

BOOK REVIEW**DEAR CHURCH:****INTIMATE LETTERS FROM WOMEN IN MINISTRY**

BY: DOROTHY D. FRANCE

CHALICE PRESS, 2007

152 PP. PAPERBACK

ISBN: 978-0-827206-39-7

Over the centuries, we have had access to pastoral letters written by priests and pastors, by prophets and purveyors of words of wisdom for the church. Rarely, however, have we had a chance to hear the heart of God through the voices of thirty-five women in ministry. And even more unusual is a collection of authors who represent the full spectrum of ministry roles within a denomination—from students and staff to presidents, academicians and those retired. Because of this wonderful collection of letters to the church, we have a glimpse into the heart of the feminine and nurturing side of ministry, where honesty and directness is so very real. Dorothy France gives us this amazing collection of writers who happen to be women in various ministry capacities in the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ).

The letters are all written in a personal format, opening with the salutation of “Dear Church” and closing with the handwritten first name of the author. This personal, intentional style gives one an invitation to come in a sit awhile—to enjoy an intimate conversation with a friend—to slow down and hear expressions of the heart. Within each letter, the authors weave their personal stories and reflections with words of encouragement for the church. Although written in the context of the Disciples of Christ faith community, the letters are for us all, providing rich words to ponder.

France begins with a letter from one who has served the church from childhood—in congregational life and regional, general, and ecumenical work. Sharon Watkins, General Minister and President of the Disciples of Christ,

opens with a broad letter of challenge to the church to “open up the world to these others as you have done with me, so that their rich talents will be available to you—to us” (5). The rich talent is evident as the book continues, providing letters from lead pastors, co-pastors, associate pastors, regional staff, general staff, academic staff, students, publishers, editors, retired persons, mothers and daughters. France concludes the collection with an Epilogue and challenge of her own—the “Ten Commandments for Clergywomen.”

One might expect that the collection was for women in ministry, but France is careful to title the work as letters from women in ministry. These are valuable pastoral letters from all corners of the church, written to us all, in all ministries of the church. Contextually, they may even speak to leaders in various places of ministry, in numerous places around the world.

France concludes with her own understandings and long view of ministry. She acknowledges that her ten commandments were written many years ago as a personal guide for ministry, but also sees their affirmation throughout the letters written for our gleanings. Her ten directives offer a view into the heart of the collection of these letters. They are instructions of her own and have been valuable for her journey of ministry, but also leave us with an insightful summary of the work.

“Ten Commandments for Clergywomen” and for all ministry leaders! (152)

1. Believe in yourself. You are unique. There is only one you! Go out on a limb every once in a while and treat yourself.
2. Be your own person. Recognize and celebrate your gifts and strengths while recognizing your limitations.
3. Serve with gentleness and boldness of heart. When tempted to “roar like a lion,” remind yourself that you must first learn to “purr like a kitten.”

4. Set priorities. Be mindful of how you spend your time. It's your life! Learn to choose in order to go about doing good rather than just going about.
5. Trust the big picture. You do not have to know everything. No one has all the answers. Learn to network.
6. Keep a sense of humor and learn to laugh at yourself. It is a gift of grace. Humor gives you a new perspective and keeps God and you in control of a situation. It costs less than therapy.
7. Bloom where you are planted. The great temptation is to follow your own desires, to make your own plans, to be guided by your own will. Sometimes you just have to learn to wait!
8. Light your own candle. Pick your own battles. You do not have to blow out someone else's candle to light your own.
9. Trust God's guidance. When possible maintain an attitude of prayer. God will sustain you. Wait and you will receive God's gift of assurance and direction.
10. Keep your heart moist. Love the people; learn to listen to others and to God as God speaks to you.

Christina T. Accornero

Associate Professor and Chairperson of Social Sciences

Southern Wesleyan University

Central, South Carolina

BOOK REVIEW**CHURCHES, CULTURE, AND LEADERSHIP: A PRACTICAL THEOLOGY OF CONGREGATIONS AND ETHNICITIES**

BY: MARK LAU BRANSON AND JUAN F. MARTÍNEZ

DOWNERS GROVE, IL: INTERVARSITY PRESS, 2011

244 PP. PAPERBACK

ISBN: 978-0-8308-3926-1

Mark Lau Branson and Juan F. Martínez have authored a practical theology book based on the premise that God's love for the world, as expressed in the incarnation of Jesus, calls the church to a ministry of reconciliation and intercultural life. Consequently, they write intentionally, helping religious leaders "to see differently and to gain the skills and competencies needed for multicultural contexts" (13). Branson and Martínez use bible studies, personal reflections, group exercises and case studies to illustrate a praxis that can enable the church to live out the gospel of reconciliation.

The book is divided into three parts: Theology and Context, Sociocultural Perspectives, and Leadership, Communication and Change. In Part One: Theology and Context, Branson and Martínez describe their methodology, which sets biblical narratives alongside our own and uses the praxis-theory-praxis as a way to develop and nurture discerning engagement with the world. While they understand the Bible as authoritative, they do not use the Bible as a blueprint. Their five-step process of praxis-theory-praxis acknowledges that we begin with our own experience and, in that context, we explore theory that then moves us to experiment with new practices. Praxis is a complete cycle of reflection, study, and action. The authors also discuss three spheres of leadership: interpretive leadership, which aids the community as it makes meaning of texts and contexts; relational leadership, which nurtures human relationships; and implemental leadership, which guides activities and structures. They conclude Part One with a discussion of

how social context, ethnicity, culture, and race “affect a missional ecclesiology that seeks to develop intercultural life” (78).

Part Two: Sociocultural Perspectives explores cultural anthropology and uses theorists like Jürgen Habermas and Louis Luzbetak to help the reader look at worldviews such as nature, time, and reality. As they move deeper into sociocultural perspectives, the authors explore how various social relations differ from one culture to another. Branson and Martínez examine Euro-American individualism and how it relates to pragmatism and antistructuralism. At the same time, they challenge leaders to “shape processes that help the congregations discern when to affirm and when to question their cultural background” (168), and urge congregants to learn from one another and confront “those areas in which specific cultures pull people away from the gospel” (168). They close Part Two considering the “unique ways people in different cultures receive, filter and interpret data” (170), arguing that leaders can use the praxis model to help people understand how their perceptions have been formed in their own cultural context. Further, leaders can “rethink how to discern Scripture’s meaning in their lives and mission”(185).

Leadership, Communication and Change are the subjects of Part Three. Branson and Martinez discuss social dynamics such as emotions, sympathy/empathy, power, and relational context; it is the leader’s role to foster attentiveness and awareness in communication. They propose that the topic of leading change “needs to be studied as an element of our context-the societal context as well as cultural and local contexts” (210), contending that each congregation and each leader do its own work rather than adopting answers from outside. In this chapter, they also discuss the work of the leader, and whether an interpretive, relational, or implementational approach is needed in a particular situational context. “Leaders do not need to know the way; we just need the capacities to encourage and guide connections, to link Scripture and context, to engage neighbors and members.

And to sanction questions and insights and innovations” (231).

Branson and Martínez conclude this book with practical suggestions for moving forward. They suggest practices such as sharing cultural narratives, rereading U.S. history, rereading scripture from a multicultural perspective, working from hospitality to shalom, and engaging life together in worship prayer and planning. Further, transformation is about leaders who can transcend traditional models and identify “new models of church that can address the increasingly multilingual, transnational, network-based reality of people” (243).

This book is helpful in a number of ways. The authors tell readers the rationale for their particular positions and perspectives. They draw on a wide breadth of scholars and thought. They are explicit about the concepts and theories they have chosen to inform their work. They repeat key concepts and methodologies throughout the work, refreshing and reinforcing as they move through the book. And throughout, they use bible study and personal and group reflective exercises to help the reader/leader develop the skills to facilitate growth and change. Finally, the book is replete with rich resources—an annotated bibliography, an appendix of theological resources, suggested readings and films for every chapter with guiding questions, as well as reflective exercises and bible studies in each chapter. I recommend it highly.

Joanne Lindstrom

Jean and Frank Mohr Director of Experiential Education
and Field Studies, Associate Professor of Ministry

McCormick Theological Seminary

Chicago, Illinois

BOOK REVIEW**WITH GOD ON ALL SIDES: LEADERSHIP IN A DEVOUT
AND DIVERSE AMERICA**

BY: DOUGLAS A. HICKS

NEW YORK: OXFORD UNIVERSITY PRESS, 2009

228 PP. HARDBACK

ISBN: 978-0-19-533717-4

Polite conversation often stops when the subjects of God, scriptures, and religion are broached. These subjects, however troublesome for an increasingly secular democracy like the United States, are precisely where Douglas Hicks becomes voluble in his important book on the responsibilities and opportunities leaders bear toward the craft of leadership. Bookended by an introductory examination of the epistemic humility of Abraham Lincoln during the war years of his presidency and a memo to Barack Obama in which he informs the new president, “You will be ordained as the high priest of our civil religion. You did not ask for this role, but it comes with the office” (170), Hicks delivers a *tour de force* on the challenges facing leaders in a deeply diverse and devout nation, and the qualities civic leaders must develop to bring the social fabric into a coherent and durable weave.

Hicks avoids facile, melting-pot accounts of religion in American public life in favor of a richly textured, pluralistic religious scene that maintains the difference, dignity, and distinctive contributions of faith traditions. As the title implies, Hicks takes as an American *a priori* that God is, indeed, “on all sides” in the lives of a diverse citizenry. Building on the continental Spanish concept of “*convivencia*,” or “mutual encounter, if not reciprocal engagement” (85), developed during the eight-century-long experience of Moors and Christians on the Iberian Peninsula, Hicks argues for leadership formed at the crossroads of American life. His is an active vision of the role of the religions in bringing people into conversation and constructive civic intercourse with one another, the antithesis of *laissez-faire* co-existence content to remain

ignorant and incurious about the religious commitments of neighbors and intellectually lazy about the faith and ethics of one's own tradition. Time and again, Hicks offers hope that this most religiously diverse nation in the world may avoid the strife of intolerance in favor of the richness of a crossroads community of traditions, ideas, practices, and mutuality where devout differences bless the body politic.

Hicks contends that such an expansion of the American imagination is true to the founding principles of the republic, and even probable when examining the recent history of tensions overcome with the civic virtues of mutual respect, intelligent tolerance, and coalition building such as the post-9/11 experiences of Muslims, Jews, and Christians throughout the nation (120–132). Leadership makes the whole enterprise work, Hicks believes, and he offers a ten-point list of practical initiatives elected leaders and ordinary citizens alike must engage that alone justifies the price of the book (162–167).

This book is clear-eyed: nothing Hicks proposes is easy to do. He is painfully aware that intolerance, exclusivism, and ignorance are sinfully powerful. At times, his visioning comes close to making the fairness mistake that typological reasoning bears within itself (89–97), in which a preferential option for one tradition is masked by a philosophy of fairness (such as H. Richard Niebuhr's *Christ and Culture* espoused in the last century, for example). But leaders are “connectors,” as Hicks argues. By leading with humility, careful handling of symbols and language, and “showing up” consistently among differing groups and communities, good leaders can and do build bridges rather than fortresses of isolation. The transformational leadership Hicks espouses, embracing religious traditions rather than eschewing them, is the catalyst necessary to enable Lincoln's “better angels” of the American spirit to prevail.

Stephen V. Sprinkle
Director of Field Education and Supervised Ministry, and
Associate Professor of Practical Theology
Brite Divinity School
Fort Worth, Texas

BOOK REVIEW**TRANSITIONS: LEADING CHURCHES THROUGH CHANGE**

EDITED BY: DAVID MOSSER

LOUISVILLE: WESTMINSTER JOHN KNOX PRESS, 2011

248 PP. PAPERBACK

ISBN: 978-0-664-23543-7

In the current challenging environment, change is constant for all of us. Our lives and our organizations are in continuous flux as we attempt to adapt to our dynamic environment. In this reality, deep transformative changes are also occurring in congregations and in those who pastor them. Yet change inside a congregation is different from that of other organizations. Business literature regarding change can provide some help, but understanding congregations' unique struggles with change is key to success or at least survival, for both pastors and people. Yet few pastors have received training on navigating deep change and transitions. As a result, the congregational landscape is littered with failed change initiatives and hurting leaders and people. Thus finding a book full of experienced perspectives on change and transitions is very welcome.

In *Transitions: Leading Churches through Change*, editor David Mosser has compiled a thoughtful and thought-provoking collection of essays and sermons for pastors of congregations in the midst of change, which today is nearly everyone. He has drawn on the wisdom of experienced pastors, gifted homiletics, researchers, and consultants to provide inspired perspectives on undergoing planned, and especially unplanned, change. The authors are generous in sharing their own experiences about mistakes they have made as well as what works and what does not. The collection offers a number of excellent sermons to both encourage and give direction to pastors encountering the choppy waters of change in their congregations.

The text is divided into four sections. The first section, "Clergy in Chaos," focuses on developing successful strategies for clergy as they navigate challenging circumstances. Several authors offer specific suggestions on addressing and surviving anxiety-producing situations. One essay provides a method for "exegeting the congregation," which would be especially useful for new pastors. Another essay describes how outgoing and incoming pastors can support each other, and their congregation through a pastoral transition. The author of the closing essay in this section reveals a Sunday when everything seemed to go wrong, a situation to which all pastors can relate.

"The Congregants in Adaptation" recognizes that pastors preach to people undergoing many types of change unrelated to what may be occurring within the congregation. Thoughtful essays on effectively preaching to the elderly and developing funeral sermons are provided, as is a reflection on Christian marriage (and divorce). Also included is excellent guidance for creating persuasive sermons, which are especially needed in the midst of adaptation and transition, whether in individual lives or the congregation as a whole. This section also offers several sermons well-founded in biblical texts.

The third section, "The Congregation in Crisis," explores what happens when crises occur inside the congregation, whether it is scandal, pastoral transition, transitions brought on by circumstances such as a changing neighborhood, strong resistance to planned change, or physical disasters. Experienced pastors share their wisdom here and several have provided sermons they preached during these crises.

The final section, "The Community in Transition," opens with a sermon on disruptive innovation, relating it to Jesus' ministry. One essay provides thoughtful steps for congregations wanting to embrace a changing neighborhood. Another essay examines the role of core symbols in how we understand reality and what happens when those symbols change. An author reflects on how some aspects of pastoral care have not changed. The final

essay explores working with change and transition through the changing liturgical year. Overall, this last section is more theoretical than the other three.

Several themes are woven throughout the collection. One theme is the deep anxiety that change and transitions engender in pastors and people. Each section tackles this theme as it pertains to the topic with specific and helpful approaches. A second theme is the necessity of self-care strategies for leaders during change. Again, specific and helpful advice is provided. A third theme is the wealth of sermons based on biblical texts. The overall tone of the collection is that God is present in the midst of challenging circumstances. These authors have survived their transitions and are convinced that God gives wisdom in the midst, no matter what the challenge. Yet there is an understanding that change and transitions are deeply challenging to all who experience them.

Although many of the authors are United Methodist, the perspectives they offer transcend denominational boundaries by addressing issues common to all pastors and congregations. The perspectives on sermon preparation would be very useful within any theological framework. This collection provides wisdom, encouragement, and guidance for those walking through congregational transitions.

Diane Zemke
Independent Scholar and Consultant
Spokane, Washington