

BOOK REVIEWS



Gregory Clifton-Smith, *Performing Pastoral Care: Music as a Framework for Exploring Pastoral Care, Studies in Religion and Theology* (London: Jessica Kingsley Publishers, 2016), 160 pp.

The intriguing title of this book is what drew me to explore it further. As a musician, pastor, and professor of ministry, I'm always interested in how these disciplines cross and enrich each other. Clifton-Smith, who lives and serves in the United Kingdom, was trained as a musician, worked in parish ministry, and is now a health care chaplain. Those who share a background in these fields may be the primary audience for this book.

Performing Pastoral Care has six chapters, five of which have the title "Listening to the Voice of . . ." These acts of listening include Historical Experience, Clinical Experience, and Pastoral Experience. Seven brief case studies, presented in chapter 2, are woven throughout the rest of the book. Clifton-Smith's focus, overall, is on "engaging with extreme situations of pastoral care such as dying, suffering, or war." Five musical analogies are introduced in chapter 3 in order to engage in critical dialogue and theological reflection. Each of these compositions was written during a time of war or social fragmentation or speak to these issues in retrospect. They include Olivier Messiaen's *Quartet for the End of Time* and Benjamin Britten's *War Requiem*, as well as a composition by Clifton-Smith.

In her foreword to the book, June Boyce-Tillman, professor of applied music at the Centre for the Arts as Wellbeing, University of Winchester, points to the importance of Clifton-Smith's exploration of chaplaincy, particularly in light of authorities in the Anglican Church who tend to "ignore and marginalize" (p. 9) the work of chaplains in contrast to that of priests who serve in parish ministry. She writes: "The author sees how pastoral

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care sits uneasily with managerial models of church leadership”(p. 10). This is brought to light in chapter 6, in which Clifton-Smith tackles the concept and practice of ‘mission’ in the contemporary church. He debates the pros and cons of the mission-focused church environment, where management and leadership have often risen to the top of the desired pastoral skill set and pastoral care and counseling are found much further down the list. The author concludes that “it is essential for the Church both to understand pastoral care afresh in relation to mission and to understand mission afresh in relation to pastoral care” (p. 135). Although Clifton-Smith writes from within the Anglican Church environment, the questions and challenges he raises will be familiar to chaplains and pastoral caregivers on the other side of the pond.

It may sound as if Clifton-Smith moves rather far afield in the closing chapter, but he succeeds in tying all the threads together at the end. It is not easy to summarize a book that is complex in its approach. Yet, the material presented reads clearly and is not overly technical for the reader. It takes readers in a new and often lyrical direction for the contemplation of pastoral care, even when Clifton-Smith’s focus is on the darker aspects of hospitalization, imprisonment (using as examples St. John of the Cross and Dietrich Bonhoeffer), and institutionalization.

The heart of *Performing Pastoral Care* lies in what is central to both pastoral care and music making—the activity of listening. The author asks, “Can the latter inform the former so that those involved in pastoral care can be challenged to listen in a new way?” (p. 17). This act of listening includes both speaking and silence, the music and the pause between notes, the perceived presence and absence of God, and the bridge that compassionate and discerning pastoral care can build.

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