

**Stephen B. Roberts, ed., *Professional Spiritual and Pastoral Care: A Practical Clergy and Chaplains Handbook* (Woodstock, VT: Skylight Paths, 2012), 460 pp.**

Written for clergy, seminarians, Clinical Pastoral Education (CPE) students, and professional chaplains, this book surveys current methods, skills, and best practices that are useful for professional spiritual and pastoral care. It consists of four sections in thirty-three chapters written by professionals in the field. The sections begin a conversation about the underlying spiritual/theological themes that support and inform the practice of spiritual/pastoral care, the way spiritual/pastoral care is emerging in practice, spiritual/pastoral care to special populations, and topics relevant for addressing professional standards in providing spiritual/pastoral care.

The editor, who has taught and written extensively on pastoral and spiritual care and who is past President of the National Association of Jewish Chaplains, states that section two, the largest section with sixteen chapters, is intended to be “101” course-level material of chaplaincy/spiritual/pastoral care” (p. xiii). I used the entire book as the core text for a second unit of Clinical Pastoral Education taught in a teaching hospital/medical center in San Francisco. The students, with a broad range of ministry and professional experience, were drawn to the material in different ways. Some students were drawn to the practical nature of the book, attracted to questions that had arisen in their first unit of CPE, such as what to do for prayer and ritual, spiritual assessment, end-of-life care, ethics, ministry groups, and interdisciplinary teams in the hospital. Other students were interested in specialized ministry to particular populations, in areas such as pediatrics, behavioral healthcare, the gay/lesbian/bi-sexual/transgender (GLBT) community, people with chronic illness, and among international and immigrant peoples. Those interested in developing spiritual/pastoral care as a profession chose to explore topics around infrastructural issues and standards like strategic planning, outcome oriented chaplaincy, referral plans, quality assurance, Health Care Chaplaincy, cultural competence, use of space, and multifaith communities. As a handbook, each chapter is accessible to those who choose to dive in at the point of personal interest.

Its breadth is a nice quality for learning and teaching. I even found myself reaching for it as we set aside a day for strategic planning for the department of spiritual care. There are numerous features that include graphs, diagrams, templates, and charts that can be used as reference guides and worksheets for those seeking to expand their resources.

Some subjects are well researched and offer helpful statistics, such as Handzo’s chapter on the *Process of Spiritual/Pastoral Care* and Fitchett’s and Grosseohme’s chapter on “*Health Care Chaplaincy as a Research-Informed Profession.*” There is also a personal quality that comes through in the sharing of ministry experiences such as in Jacob’s chapter “*Creating a Personal Theology to Do Spiritual/Pastoral Care.*” Together these qualities highlight the integrity that is inherent in the practice of spiritual/pastoral care. Roberts, and all of the contributing writers, uphold the need to develop the field as a research

informed profession while providing reflections and illustrations that affirm the personal nature of the work.

I have been waiting for a handbook like this to come along and celebrate the collaboration behind writing and producing it. Overall, I found myself wanting more. Especially the first section, with only two chapters on creating a personal theology to do spiritual/pastoral care, could have been thickened with more voices, principally the voices of non theistic chaplains. As an educator using the book to teach beginning students, some of the illustrations were provocative and raised more questions than they answered. It was helpful to have room for discussion. As a primer, however, it has already been a great companion for our students and faculty. One takes away the lingering sense that there is a robust conversation about nature of professional spiritual/pastoral care—a conversation where many voices are welcomed and invited to join.

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