

E. Justes, *Hearing Beyond the Words: How to Become a Listening Pastor* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 2006), 115 pp.

A student approached me, book in hand, asking, “Why didn’t you assign this for our class? It’s great. I’ve handed it to my friends to use in the church.” Published in 2006, the book had not yet appeared in print when the student was in my class. The student’s enthusiastic recommendation echoes my own sentiment about Emma Justes’ book *Hearing Beyond Words*. This book brims with useful ideas and practical suggestions. In my years of seminary teaching, I have come to listen intently to students because they know a good resource when they read it. This is a book for clinical supervisors, spiritual directors, pastoral theology and field instructors, pastoral counselors, seminarians, chaplains, pastors, and all people of faith who want to develop the practice of listening.

Dr. Justes grounds her writing in the scriptural theological practice of hospitality that “bespeaks the kind of relationship best suited for listening and hearing” (p. 1). Throughout the book, Dr. Justes draws together insights and discoveries that can deeply inform pastoral listening. The first chapter of the book develops listening as Christian hospitality and draws on resources from both testaments of the Bible. Dr. Justes here outlines four elements of hospitality that order each of the book’s following chapters and give a distinct theological contour to listening: (1) humility, (2) thoughtful availability, (3) vulnerability, and (4) reciprocity. The pairing of listening and hospitality helps the author to draw out unusually generative insights and practices for pastoral leadership and care.

Dr. Justes demonstrates her effectiveness as a teacher of pastoral listening in the book’s unfolding pages. Exercises at the end of each chapter teach the reader how to engage in meaningful and effective listening. These exercises are easily adaptable to a variety of contexts: field education and pastoral care classrooms, CPE learning groups, clergy training seminars, among others. Several exercises follow a beneficial section on silence and listening in ministry, including allowance for periods of silence in conversation with a partner and direction to “monitor how you feel in these moments” (p. 65). Another exercise asks participants to listen to a speaker without asking questions, a practice that helps cultivate listening through other means of attending without bombarding the speaker with questions (pp. 66–67). Dr. Justes offers wise counsel in helping readers with practical issues, such as working through conflict and criticism (p. 34), listening “beyond the nonverbal” (p. 57), delineating the limits of confidentiality (p. 76), and discerning when to refer (pp. 78–79).

Emma Justes is a wise colleague and friend. Her years of ministry and teaching inform every page of this valuable book. I especially appreciate her bold proclamation: “The church stands in need of pastoral leaders who are clearly self-aware, humble, and able to tolerate vulnerability in relation to God and others... The church is not always open to these leaders because they tend to make the church more dangerous. They tend to get into the

business of enabling the church members to grow in their faith and change from the past limitations of their faith” (p. 109). On the topic of pastoral listening as a transformative practice for ministerial leadership, Dr. Justes knows what she writes about. In a course with my students, I recommend Dr. Justes’ book for use in classrooms, clinics, and congregations, and in all places where leaders and lay people yearn to grow in Christian faith as dangerously hospitable speakers and listeners.

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