

**Carrie Doehring, *The Practice of Pastoral Care, Revised and Expanded Edition: A Postmodern Approach* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2015), 232 pp.**

With this revised and expanded edition, Carrie Doehring has reinvigorated her seminal 2006 guide to pastoral care. This newer edition retains the readability and practical application of the original while significantly updating its language and inclusiveness. In case examples and resources, she draws from Christian, Jewish, Buddhist, Muslim, and other religious sources. Reflecting a broader trend in the field, Doehring has shifted to more utilization of the word “spiritual” in addition to “pastoral.” She references both theistic and secular perspectives—though nontheistic readers will still occasionally need to re-interpret her use of the word “God” into their own spiritual or philosophical frameworks.

The recognition of multiple frameworks is a hallmark of Doehring’s work. As in the 2006 version, the new edition presents Doehring’s “trifocal lenses,” explaining how pastoral caregivers can draw from “precritical,” “modern,” and “postmodern” perspectives in their ministry. Her approach is both “intercultural” and “intersubjective.” For the student of pastoral care, this presents an opportunity for both understanding and decentering their own perspective in order to provide person-centered ministry to people from a range of backgrounds. Consistent with her “narrative” approach, this 2015 version draws much more from Doehring’s own ministry experience and personal history. This sharing brings the book alive.

Doehring’s work serves well as a beginning text, providing a great introduction to verbatims and a helpful overview of skills for active listening, self-awareness, and boundary-setting. It also functions well as a more advanced text, expanding theoretical and practical models for assessment and working with complex situations involving loss, grief, trauma, coping, and family systems. Doehring’s synthesis of theology and the behavioral sciences is one of the book’s considerable strengths. Her intention is holistic. As Doehring puts it, “The goal of spiritual care is liberative spiritual integration that aligns practices, beliefs, and values in ways that liberate persons, families, and communities.” Accordingly, Doehring guides the reader through pastoral care based on “lived theology:” theology that is experienced and embodied, and available for exploration, meaning-making, and growth.

Doehring’s text is unabashedly progressive. A more conservative reader might object to the theological relativism of the text or its emphasis on social justice. Such a reader might, for example, bristle at seeing their “moral theology” described as “life-limiting.” Still, I think this book will be reasonably accessible to the more traditional student, particularly one who is interested in serving in interfaith, pluralistic contexts. Teachers using this book with diverse student groups would do well to facilitate discussion of students’ reactions of resonance with or critique of Doehring’s perspective as a basis for engagement and learning. I imagine Doehring would approve of such an interchange.

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