

BOOK REVIEWS



William Kincaid, *Like Stepping into a Canoe: Nimbleness and the Transition into Ministry* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2018), 145 pp.

The metaphor in the title of this book is an apt one. Stepping into an unstable canoe conjures images of an awkward, maybe even comical, transition from the solid ground of seminary to the fluidity of ministry. Kincaid is alerting readers, particularly those about to begin the transition, to have all their senses engaged, to be patient with the process and with themselves, and to take time to reflect along each step of the way. Kincaid writes, “[T]hese pages are devoted to practices that cultivate your emotional and spiritual adjustment to a transition that may take as long as five to seven years” (14).

Under the overarching notion of nimbleness, Kincaid explores five interrelated practices through the transition experience of two clergy, Jennifer and her son Noah who graduated twenty years apart. He acknowledges the difficulty of this transition: “You finish with a new beginning” (23). This of course means loss, grief, excitement, and anticipation. Kincaid counsels that this is a time to fully engage the core of your pastoral vocation “while reflecting on your life and work with a seasoned pastor, counselor or coach” (25).

The five practices that Kincaid then explores are curiosity, clarity, agility, proximity, and temerity. In each chapter devoted to one of these practices, he defines the practice, demonstrates how it is engaged, and then points to key opportunities to engage that practice in a ministerial context. Equally important, Kincaid shows how each of the practices mutually reinforces the others. This is the heart and soul of his book. Systems thinkers will relish his approach!

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I especially appreciate the tender and tough voice of the experienced pastor/scholar that comes through in a deeply pastoral and deeply personal way. The reader will feel it as Kincaid switches from first person singular to second person singular to first person plural. In this final voice, he implicates all of us. We each, in our own way, need to stand with those undergoing the challenging work of transitioning into ministry. Kincaid's book is a tool I recommend that we use.

Canoeing is familiar to me because I grew up in the land of 10,000 lakes. The most popular canoeing happens in pairs, one person in the bow and another in the stern. Each can help stabilize the canoe for the other as they each step into the canoe. William Kincaid is an able canoe partner. His book can have a stabilizing effect for anyone transitioning into ministry. Better yet, I encourage those transitioning into ministry to read this book in an intergenerational clergy group because ministry remains fluid over a lifetime of adventure.

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