

William M. Kondrath, *God's Tapestry: Understanding and Celebrating Differences* (Herndon, VA: Alban Institute, 2008), 285 pp.

William M. Kondrath's *God's Tapestry* presents an approach to community transformation that values feelings, imagination, and relationship and employs relational theory as a new paradigm to understand what the real stumbling blocks are to community change. It would be valuable if the guidelines for recognizing and valuing differences that are presented here could be presented and affirmed in all communities of faith.

I especially appreciated the direct application and easy adaptability of the content of this book to my supervision of clinical pastoral education (CPE). I imagine that it will be found just as applicable in supervising and mentoring people who are training for leadership in religious contexts and professions. All the chapters directly address the work of working with people who are learning how to be with people and care for people in all contexts of life. The topics of the chapters directly apply to working and living in our context of the twenty-first century with regard to relationships between and among people and to working together in a diverse society and effectively encouraging and supporting transformation.

Kondrath describes the aspects that come into play when people work and live successfully with each other. In the various chapters, he describes how to understand power and difference. He illuminates the role of feelings in individual and community transformation. He explores how our imagination assists us in transformation. He applies the way that relational theory assists us in valuing differences. An entire chapter focuses on transforming the way people work together. Finally, he concludes by describing the rhythms of transformation.

One dimension of his book is that he has written it directed toward religious congregational life. Initially, I was distracted by this. I soon realized that everything he wrote easily translated into the small group work that is central to supervising CPE. Six subsections really caught my interest. Chapter 1 includes guidelines to enable healthy, diverse communities (it's okay to disagree; it's not okay to shame, blame, or attack; practice self-focus; practice "both/and" thinking; take 100% responsibility for one's own learning;

maintain confidentially; it's okay to be messy and say ouch). I have used these guidelines for the group covenant in my CPE programs.

Chapter 2 addresses the importance of understanding power and difference using race as the primary example (the theological basis for valuing differences; the multicultural process of change; the myth of the melting pot; target and nontarget groups; levels of oppression; old-fashioned racism and modern racism; breaking the cycle of oppression on the personal and interpersonal levels; confronting history and institution-level oppression). These have served me well in group work.

Chapter 3 discusses the role of feelings in individual and community transformation (the role of feelings in learning and transformation; emotional illiteracy; feelings as messengers [FAM]; substitution of feelings; emotional literacy as a personal discipline; theological reflection, Scripture, and feelings; feelings and relationships). This is core to much of the work in CPE.

Chapter 4 covers relational theory as a way of valuing differences (God as relationship; the five good things of relationships; principles of the relational model; relational practice on the institutional and cultural levels; how relational practice has disappeared on an institutional level). Relationships are core in CPE—with colleagues, patients, staff, and families.

Chapter 5 is about transforming the way women and men work together (naming the historical power imbalance; gender is not binary; how we got this way; relational impasses: different ways that men and women get stuck; learning new dance steps; valuing relational practices: women and men working together). With people working together in CPE, this is at the core of what we do. Chapter 6 describes the rhythms of transformation (looking at change on a personal level; different strokes for different folks; feelings and change; managing disequilibrium; a community transformed by naming and valuing differences).

Overall, I found this book to be supportive of what I do in CPE. I found it affirming of our desire in the twenty-first century to relate to each other differently and more responsibly. I also found it to be informative as to how I can be a better person in our society today. I highly recommend this book as a good read for personal and professional support and enlightenment.

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