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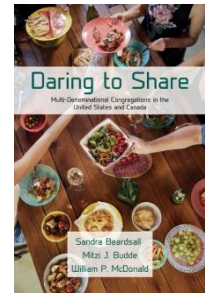
Book Review

Daring to Share: Multi-Denominational Congregations in the United States and Canada.

Sandra Beardsall, Mitzi J. Budde and William P. McDonald.

Eugene, OR: Pickwick Publications, 2018.

D*aring to Share* is a gift to everyone involved in multi-denominational ministry and a ‘must read’ for those for whom ecumenical shared ministry is a new or uncomfortable idea. The shared ministry stories told in this book offer words of encouragement to those who are the brave teachers of ecumenism and the faithful leaders of multi-denominational congregations. *Daring to Share* offers a well-stated challenge to judicatories who oversee these congregations and to single-denomination seminaries who train church leaders. The challenge: dare to think outside of well-crafted denominational boxes and make space for multi-denominational congregations in governance structures; dare to offer learning opportunities for leaders who are already serving multi-denominational congregations and for students interested in leading ecumenical congregations. To all of God’s people, *Daring to Share* says this: “embrace diversity, listen to each other, and let the Holy Spirit lead us” (p. 21).



The authors, Sandra Beardsall, Mitzi Budde and William McDonald, are well-placed to write this volume. As ecumenical ministry leaders and teachers at prestigious seminaries, colleges and universities in the United States and Canada, they are also leaders in the North American Academy of Ecumenists. How fortunate for the Church to have wise teachers like Beardsall, Budde and McDonald who are so able and willing to lead the way in multi-denominational ministry.

Beardsall, Budde and McDonald based their research for this volume on “site visits, observation, and in-depth interviews with clergy and laity in congregations in different regions, contexts, and denominational combinations.”¹ Guided by the stories of many shared ministry congregations, Part I of the book introduces the reader to five models of multi-denominational ministry as it is lived out in several different North American congregations. The first chapter tells the stories of congregations who live together in ecumenical partnership under the auspices of full communion agreements like the “Episcopal-Evangelical Lutheran Church in America full communion agreement, *Called to Common Mission*, [that] describes the unity and diversity at the heart of full communion” (p. 15).² Chapter two tells the stories of multi-denominational parishes who live together without the benefit of full communion agreements. In chapter three, the reader is introduced to brave congregations who have dared to cross the Protestant-Roman Catholic boundary. The stories of multiple denominational affiliations are told in chapter four. These are “congregations housing multiple denominational affiliations, some or all of which may not be in full communion” (p. 54). The fifth chapter of the first part of the book tells the story of Lutheran-

¹ In a footnote on page 7, the authors state that “the key guides for the ethnographic protocol were Madden, *Being Ethnographic*; and Moschella, *Ethnography as a Pastoral Practice*.”

² Unfortunately, the book does not tell stories from any Canadian congregations whose partnership is defined by *The Waterloo Declaration*, the full-communion agreement between the Anglican Church of Canada and the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada.

Reformed Union churches that “are among the oldest ecumenical congregations in North America, with roots in the sixteenth-century European Reformation” (p. 66).

While facing all sorts of challenges, congregations who live together in these models of multi-denominational ministries do so with a sense of stubborn tenacity and good humor. They are led by the Spirit to form relationships across denominational boundaries and are willing to bravely “step out in faith” (p. 25) without, as a member of Spirit of Grace, West Bloomfield, MI reported, “hav[ing] a clue where God is going to take us” while being “willing to go and not stay where we are” (p. 25).

Part II: Living into Shared Ministry Partnerships, is at the heart of *Daring to Share*. The first chapter (six) of this section, describes the parish life cycles of multi-denominational ministries using the sequential steps of birth/infancy, adolescence, prime/maturity, and death and resurrection. Chapter seven considers the important topic of worship in ecumenical shared ministry. Chapter eight makes the case for the crafting of a formal shared ministry governance structure that can bear the weight of the participating congregations and judicatories for years to come. Those who participate in shared ministry will be well served to read with great care the section “From Dream to Reality: Shaping a Formal Interchurch Ministry Agreement” (pp.114-122). Maintaining good judicatory relations in ecumenical parishes is the topic of chapter nine where important attention is paid to episcopal, congregational and presbyterian forms of judicatory oversight.

Multi-denominational ministries can learn a valuable lesson from the Trinity Ecumenical Parish in Smith Mountain Lake, VA who’s governing body’s careful attention to detail leaves “nothing to chance, and parish and judicatories are fully apprise of each step and attentive to variance in practice” (p. 130).

The final part of the book makes suggestions, asks questions, and offers theological reflection for the future of ecumenical partnerships. The most captivating suggestion is the development of ecumenical leaders “who are excited about ecumenical ministry and willing to help make it work” (p. 137). The authors “encourage seminaries to build the capacity for ecumenical engagement and to focus on forming Christians with an ecumenical spirit” (pp. 137-38). Finally, as a crowning piece, the authors offer an ecclesiology for multi-denominational ministries. Along with the historical models of *koinonia* (fellowship) and *communio* (communion), the authors add “an ecclesiology based on a dare” (p. 159). “Multi-denominational congregations,” the authors say, “are local assemblies gathered specifically to witness to the unity found despite disparate denominational identities. And this witness always involves a risk, a dare” (p. 169).

Pastors who serve ecumenical shared ministries, those who worship in multi-denominational congregations, judicatory leaders who scratch their heads and wonder what’s going on in those unusual places of worship, those who teach and form men and women for ministry – all of these people and more should read *Daring to Share* and consider joining the ranks of multi-denominational congregations in the United States and Canada.

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