

**Daniel S. Schipani and Leah Dawn Bueckert, eds., *Interfaith Spiritual Care Understandings and Practices* (Kitchener, Ontario: Pandora Press, 2009), 328 pp.**

The main question that the book addresses is this: what is desirable and appropriate in an interfaith caring relationship? The editors had the following goals in mind: “to explore the dynamics of interfaith spiritual care as a work of practical and pastoral theology; to identify reliable guidelines for the competent, and duly contextualized, practice of interfaith spiritual care; and to invite further cooperation on this subject among practitioners and scholars.” This book furthers the collaborative reflection presented in their previous work, *Spiritual Caregiving in the Hospital: Windows to Chaplaincy Ministry*: to address the “work of practical theology as a discipline with its four main tasks and dimensions,” which are (1) “observation of interfaith care situations; (2) interpretive analyses; (3) consideration of clinical as well as ethical-theological norms of good care; and (4) identification of guidelines for excellent practice.”

The opening two chapters are personal reflections of pastoral care in interfaith settings. The next two chapters lay the theological groundwork for interfaith pastoral care. Five additional authors share their own practices of interfaith ministry practice in various settings. In Part I, the groundwork is laid for understanding the various factors that come into play in ministry in interfaith situations. Part II presents an international snapshot of ways in which interfaith ministry occurs in eight different geographical settings: Canada, Hawaii, Brazil, Australia, Norway, Germany, Switzerland, and the Netherlands. Authors write from their perspectives in the context of their own ministry, culture, and context.

The authors include verbatim accounts of ministry in interfaith encounters. They use the verbatim as a way of elucidating the specific issue or concern they were addressing. I appreciated the concrete examples of interfaith pastoral care encounters with an analysis of what transpired in the encounter between the spiritual caregiver and the person seeking spiritual care. The authors identified what had gone well and what might have been done differently so that more of the person’s needs were met. Many of the verbatims seemed to show how the caregiver “missed” meeting the person seeking care. It would have strengthened the points they were making if they would have shared their best practices.

Most of the authors write from a Christian perspective. This was a limitation of the book from my perspective. I would have benefitted from hearing from caregivers from other backgrounds and faith traditions. Because the authors focus on chaplaincy ministry, the book will be beneficial for chaplains, people who train chaplains, people who want to be chaplains, and people who are already involved in interfaith spiritual care. It is a particularly valuable resource for any chaplain or chaplaincy department where interfaith ministry occurs.

Rodney W. Seeger, ACPE supervisor emeritus  
Mill Valley, California