

Eileen R. Campbell-Reed, *Pastoral Imagination: Bringing the Practice of Ministry to Life* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2021). x + 264 pages. Paperback. \$16.99.

At one point in *The Last Battle*, the final book in C. S. Lewis's *Chronicles of Narnia*, King Tirian finds himself captured and helpless at the end of the world. Left alone for hours without refreshment, he feels parched and famished. Under cover of darkness, a few kind mice come to give him food and drink in the form of tiny nibbles of food and drops of water offered again and again. Surprisingly, Tirian finds that the sips and crumbs are more refreshing and sustaining than chugging a beverage or devouring a feast.

The same could be said of Eileen R. Campbell-Reed's collection of miniature ministry memoirs, which grew out of the Learning Pastoral Imagination (LPI) project that she has conducted since 2009 alongside Chris Scharen. Campbell-Reed completed this book a few months into the COVID-19 pandemic and in the shadow of the killings of George Floyd, Breonna Taylor, and Ahmaud Arbery. She keeps these two critical situations at the forefront of her exploration of the frameworks and practices that sustain ministry within the fraught landscape of the twenty-first century. "The world will keep shifting and changing," she writes, "and communities of faith will continue to need leaders" who live into their callings with the kind of "improvisation" that can only take root within a "holistic" practice that is as subconscious as riding a bike yet, paradoxically, is defined by consistent intentional reflection (3–5). To train these ministerial muscles, Campbell-Reed offers a collection of fifty brief reflections, nearly a year's worth of sips and nibbles.

The introduction lays out the current context of ministry, offers a definition of "practice," and provides background on the LPI project, "the first longitudinal, national, and ecumenical study of ministry in practice," which included interviews with fifty emerging pastoral leaders from a variety of backgrounds and callings as well as with twenty-five ministry veterans (7). Having laid the groundwork, the book settles into a meditative rhythm. Each chapter begins with a theme-setting quote, fleshes out that theme with a story, summarizes a resource for further investigation, and closes with a series of reflective questions and a link to Three Minute Ministry Mentor, a website with videos that mirror the book's content but in an audiovisual format. The quotes, stories, and resources come from a variety

of sources: Scripture, pastoral memoirs, art, and interviews with LPI participants. Each page is suffused with wisdom that Campbell-Reed herself has gained from her years in ministry and in walking alongside those preparing for ministry. This personal touch is a feature, not a bug, not only of this book but also of her research. Sustaining wisdom is gained and maintained through reflection on shared experiences and the mutual vulnerability that comes through that sharing.

This book most reminds me of *There's a Woman in the Pulpit*, a collection of personal essays, prayers, and poetry collected by Martha Spong that I have assigned to my students in the course that runs alongside their required field education experience. The summaries of further resources and the reflection questions move Campbell-Reed's book into a different space from Spong's, inviting reflective journaling or conversations between students and mentors. I chose Spong's book based on the recommendations of peers with whom I graduated from seminary. I asked them what books kept them going on the long, hard, joyous journey of ministry. Now, with great gratitude for the collective wisdom contained within its pages, I can imagine myself recommending *Pastoral Imagination* to both my current and former students, as well as to site supervisors, with the hope that it will help them persevere.

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