

Deborah L. Patterson. *The Healing Word: Preaching and Teaching Health Ministry*. Cleveland, OH: The Pilgrim Press, 2009. 134 pages. \$16.00.

How many pastors have searched for a resource related to faith and health or health care? If you've ever thought about leading your congregation to think about these issues, this would be a resource you would like to read. Written by Deborah Patterson, the executive director of the International Parish Nurse Resource Center in St. Louis, *The Healing Word: Preaching and Teaching Health Ministry* is a collection of sermons and reflections on topics related to health ministry. Patterson is uniquely qualified to speak to preachers out of her own identity as an ordained United Church of Christ minister. Her work is located in St. Louis, MO on the campus of Eden Seminary where her husband Steve is a professor.

Addressed in this volume are topics such as a person's sense of calling to health ministry, the vocation of healing, and the relationship of faith and health. In addition, she raises awareness to more political issues involving access to health care and responsibility for a healthy planet. She does not neglect the spiritual dimensions of health when addressing the need for healthy lifestyles for caregivers and the promotion of health in families. Her focus is both local and global, opening eyes in new ways to the issues of health care in impoverished regions of the world. Her sermon, "Moved by Auto Rickshaw," or her reflection on "flying toilets" hint at some of the more unusual experiences that she shares with the reader. Throughout these sermons and reflections, she prompts the preacher to think more deeply about the injustice of systems and structures and the severity of human need both here and around the world.

Although her sermons offer a treatment of scripture texts in relation to issues of health care, her reflections are, in many cases, more helpful because they provide brief stories, both historical and contemporary, that serve as good material for sermon development. The book is also commended as a study guide for a congregation or group who would like to engage in guided discussion of these issues over a period of 6 weeks or months. Reading these essays may lead preachers to think of addressing the issues of health care through a sermon series in the near future. The valuable insights shared in this publication are meant to be shared in community.

To understand better the context out of which Patterson writes, you might visit www.parishnurses.org for more information about the International Parish Nurse Resource Center.

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