

Open Secrets A Spiritual Journey Through A Country Church

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Open Secrets A Spiritual Journey

In his memoir Open Secrets, Richard Lischer describes his ... Yet as we make this journey, God is moving with us. He is always with us and we are only ever in the present with him.

Ministry in the Present Tense

The California Supreme Court ruled today (June 30) that a worker is an employee if the employer has the right to control the worker's behavior. The matter at hand was whether carriers for Antelope ...

The author describes his first church assignment, outlining the clash of cultures that occurred when a young, liberal, educated suburbanite came to a conservative, tightly knit, rural farming community in Illinois.

" . . . a rare jewel, a powerhouse of spiritual wisdom that you can read and reread. " —Joan Borysenko, Ph.D. author of A Woman ' s Journey to God and Seven Paths to God " [Open Secrets] invites us into the most intimate of settings, the whispered wisdom passed from an authentic Hasidic master to his student. It radiates warmth, passion for the divine, and earthy confidence in sacredness. A treasure for the spiritual seeker of any tradition. " —Judith Simmer-Brown, Naropa University, author of Dakini ' s Warm Breath " Open Secrets is my favorite way to introduce readers to the essence and depth of Judaism. " —Bo Lozoff, author and founder of the Human Kindness Foundation " A master teacher. " —Thomas Keating "A prophetic voice for a 21st-century Judaism " —Reb Zalman Schachter-Shalomi The fictional East European Hasidic Master Reb Yerachmeil writes to his hasid Herschel who has moved to America, in response to his student ' s perennial questions about God, what it means to be Jewish, whether all religions are true, about death, the soul, good deeds, intermarriage and more. The rebbe writes, " My Judaism seeks only the heart of the teaching and the essence of the practice and leaves the details to others. " At the urging of his own rebbe, Shapiro, through these letters, creates a " . . . a Judaism for people who wish to learn from it as they do from Buddhism or Sufism, a Judaism for everyone. " Rabbi Rami M. Shapiro is regarded as one of the most creative voices in contemporary American Judaism. He is an award-winning poet and essayist, and his liturgies are used in prayer services throughout North America. His previous books include Minyan: 10 Principles for Living a Life of Integrity and The Way of Solomon: Finding Joy and Contentment in the Wisdom of Ecclesiastes.

Open Secrets is Richard Lischer's story of his early career as a Lutheran minister. Fresh out of divinity school and full of enthusiasm, Lischer found himself assigned to a small conservative church in an economically depressed town in southern Illinois. This was far from what this overly enthusiastic and optimistic young man expected. The town was bleak, poor, and clearly not a step on his path to a brilliant career. It's an awkward marriage at best, a young man with a Ph.D. in theology, full of ideas and ambitions, determined to improve his parish and bring them into the twenty-first century, and a community that is "as tightly sealed as a jar of home-canned pickles." In their own way, they welcome him and his family, even though they think he's "got bigger fish to fry." Thus begins Richard Lischer's first year as a pastor: bringing communion to the sick (but forgetting to bring the wafers); marrying two unlikely couples--a pregnant teenager and her boyfriend, and two people who can't stop fighting. Often he doesn't understand his congregation, and sometimes they don't understand him; for instance, why does his wife hire a baby-sitter and instead of leaving, put on her bathing suit, grab a stack of novels, and hide from the kids? Or why can't Pastor Lischer see how important it is for a woman with little money to buy an elaborate coffin to bury her husband in? There are also the moments of grace, when pastor and parishioner unite for a common goal: when he asks for prayers for his infant son, and can feel everyone in the congregation ministering to him; when old hurts are put aside to help a desperate young woman finish college and raise her baby; or when he helps save a woman from dying of a drug overdose. In Open Secrets Lischer tells not only his own story but also the story of New Cana and all of its inhabitants--lovable, deeply flawed, imperfect people that stick together. With his sharp eye and keen wit, Lischer perfectly captures the comedy of small town life with all of its feuds, rumors, scandals, and friendships. In the end he learns to appreciate not only the life New Cana has to offer, but also the people who have accepted him, at last, as part of themselves.

Dean Nisbett has crafted an excellent book that is carefully researched. He is a masterful storyteller, combining theology, sociology, history, scripture and church architecture into a masterpiece. Writing about the struggle of a suburban parish to build an edifice, the author cites numerous parallels between the Israelites' history and that of the parish. He recasts the Israelites' story into the contemporary, making the Bible relevant in demonstrating the ongoing work of God. Nisbett explores the struggle of African Americans to be integrated into the United States of America. He addresses the tension between West Indians and black Americans and notes the latter's significant contribution to the Episcopal Church. He recognizes the indelible contribution of the first African Americans who penetrated the white enclave of Cambria Heights. Recognition is also made of black Episcopalians for their valuable contribution to the society and for challenging the church to be honest to its Catholicity, insisting that they (black Episcopalians) be included into the "Body of Christ."The author explicates the concept of vocation, the "call" to serve God in His church. He shares his personal experience. Very inspiring! A must read for those contemplating the ordained ministry.The book integrates the Church into the life of the community. It is an excellent tool for congregational development, and could serve as a model for congregations to chronicle their history from a theological perspective. In addition, the book will be useful to those researching the history of the ordination of black Episcopalians and the birth of the black Episcopal congregation in the United States. It is a wonderful resource for those considering church construction. Finally, the author theologizes the building and provides a helpful manual for every worshiper whom the author (in reference to 1st Peter) describes as "living stones" built upon the foundation of Jesus Christ, "The chief Corner Stone."

Kathe Crawford was barely 31-years-old and the mother of two young children when she and her husband received devastating news—information that they agreed to keep secret from everyone in their lives, including their families. As the years passed, this secret weighed heavily on Crawford, even more so as she continued to respect her husband's wishes for more than 20 years after his death.Raising two sons as a single parent, Crawford was determined to build a successful career and a stable home. But this proved increasingly difficult as her secret became an exhausting facade. For so many years, survival had meant hiding the one thing that she thought would harm herself and her family the most. But when she could no longer maintain the protective wall around her heart, she discovered a deeper legacy of keeping secrets that she had inherited from her parents. The only way to heal would be to open herself to her heart and then to allow others to see her as she was, without secrets and without pretense. In her debut memoir, Crawford shares her spiritual journey from hiding in the shadows of her secrets to embracing the light of absolute authenticity, learning that self-love is perhaps the most important love story of all.

The last forty years have seen transitions in mainline churches that feel, for many, like a journey into the wilderness. Yet God is calling us in this moment, not to grieve over the changes we have experienced but to hear the call to a new mission, and a new faithfulness. In Journey in the Wilderness, Gil Rendle draws on decades as a pastor and church consultant to point a way into a hopeful future. The key to embracing the wilderness is to learn new skills in leading change, to reach beyond a position of privilege and power to become churches that serve God ' s hurting people.

Sample Text

In the tradition of C. S. Lewis ' s Letters to Malcolm and Reinhold Nie-buhr ' s Leaves from the Notebook of a Tamed Cynic, this fetching book by Michael Jinkins connects readers with pastoral wisdom that is both timely and timeless. Letters to New Pastors delves deeply into the struggles, surprises, and rewards of congregational leadership and the needs — professional, emotional, and spiritual — of new pastors. Grounded in the experiences of real pastors while presented as the letters of a mature pastor to several fictional recipients, these letters unfold like a novel. Through them, Jinkins explores such themes as developing one ' s own spiritual life, finding balance amid conflicting demands, navigating between culture and faith, and discovering Christ ' s message for the future of the church. Mature pastors will recognize the wistful I wish I ' d known then what I know now at the heart of this book. Now new pastors have a way to gain these insights from a wise and experienced guide.

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