

Phillis-Isabella Sheppard, Dawn Ottoni-Wilhelm, Ronald J. Allen, eds. *Preaching Prophetic Care: Building Bridges to Justice, Essays in Honor of Dale P. Andrews*. Eugene, OR: Pickwick Papers, 2018. 340 pages. \$39.99.

In 2017, we mourned the untimely death of the Rev. Dr. Dale P. Andrews. As his colleagues learned of his illness, they set to the task of gathering essays for a *festschrift* in honor of his work as a homiletician, theologian, teacher, minister, and social justice activist. His legacy of prophetic care and bridge-building was quickly preserved and reseeded into this collection by scholars and practitioners who understood the importance of his work. The twenty-seven chapters are gathered into six parts: preaching and practical theology; the pastoral and prophetic in preaching; prophetic care, preaching, and the wider community; learning to preach in the mode of prophetic care; particular topics; and sermons that embody prophetic care.

Andrews advocated for preaching what he called “prophetic care”—a way of understanding prophetic preaching as an *expression of pastoral care*. Rather than seeing the two aspects of ministry in contrast or even opposition to each other, Andrews saw pastoral care and prophetic proclamation as inextricably fused. When pastors care for their people, they call out sin (especially systemic sin) for the way it harms individuals, families, communities, the nation, and the planet. And when preachers are prophetic, it springs from their deep and empathetic—even suffering—love for God’s people. All of this is done in the spirit of *bridge-building*—seeking ways to span the seemingly uncrossable polarizations between people of different political orientations, religions, races, ages, genders, sexual orientations, physical/mental abilities, and socioeconomic strata.

Each of the authors in this volume explains how the pastoral and prophetic are both interdependent and arising from each other. Prophetic care means that the dual callings of confronting sin while also extending loving concern are complementary, interconnected, and interrelated. As Ted Smith describes it:

In the dialectic Andrews envisions, neither the prophetic nor the pastoral disappears into the other. And neither approach must compromise its deepest commitments. Rather, dialogue elucidates the prophetic dimensions already present in the best pastoral practice. And dialogue pushes prophetic theology toward practice in ways that help it fulfill its own telos of making change in the real world. The two approaches remain distinct, even as they require one another for fulfillment (38-9).

Robert London Smith points out that Andrews’ bridging methodology sprang from his endeavor to cross the chasm between black theology (academics) and black folk religion by articulating a “black practical theology.” Yet the lessons and insights he drew from the lives and experiences of black churches and communities are a gift for the whole church. For example, David Schnasa Jacobsen’s essay explores how the white mainline church can create “communities of solidarity” that move past their privileged obliviousness that enables them to turn a blind eye to suffering. Likewise, Amy Steele’s essay highlights the necessary juxtaposition and fusion of divine wrath with divine love, noting that “for Andrews, social justice preaching necessitates an unrelenting love for the other at its core, a core that is always reaching and seeking the others” (240). In other words, for preachers tempted to settle for a more milquetoast version of proclamation that leaves out “the wrath of God’s love,” Andrews’ work is a necessary

corrective. The essays in this book demonstrate how to apply that corrective to different aspects of preaching and ministry.

Andrews' work also inspires creative pedagogy, as seen, for example, in L. Susan Bond's essay, "Building Bridges: Pedagogical Reflections on a Black Lives Matter Resistance Hermeneutic for Preaching," where she describes the art project she assigns for students to help them connect the Jesus Movement and the Black Lives Matter movement and its history. Similarly, the sermons by Luke Powery and Anna Carter Florence show how we can homiletically build "bridges between people rather than the construction of walls on existential borders" (289). In Florence's sermon on Jesus's bridge-building with the woman at the well in the Gospel of John, she articulates both the longing and vision for the church to fulfill its potential in our fractured world: "Wouldn't it be incredible if the church could step up and model what real on-the-border, crossing-the-border, long conversation looks like—if *we* could teach the world to choose a well over a wall?" (293).

Yet, as Ron Allen notes in his essay, not all bridges work, and despite our best efforts some structures will collapse, or at least need repair or restructuring. Allen's chapter includes a section addressing the reality of "bridge failure" and offers sage advice for how to respond, reassess, and rebuild. He also reminds us that while preachers cannot take responsibility for how listeners receive and react to a prophetic sermon, we *are* responsible for "framing the sermon in such a way as to minimize unnecessary interference between the speaking and the hearing, and to offer as clearly as possible optimum opportunities for recognizing the value of embracing a pastoral approach to life and for suggesting initial steps on that journey" (57).

This collection of essays will serve both seasoned preachers as well as those just entering the field. The current fractured state of our body politic seems poised to be our reality for at least a generation, making Andrews' work—and the scholars who've practiced and reflected on his legacy in these chapters—all the more timely and vital for the church. In fact, the church should be one place that actively seeks to build bridges, since the ministry of Jesus embodied bridge-building and prophetic care. As Gennifer Brooks describes it:

True pastoral, prophetic preaching brings into consciousness the word of God for the whole people of God. It is the task of the preacher to build those bridges through offering the proclamation of the good news of God's active presence in the lives of people. It is a pastoral task that bridges the divides that separate and disenfranchises some even from their God-given access to the free grace of God (67).

Indeed, raising up the vision of justice, hope, forgiveness, and reconciliation that is given by the prophets and Jesus Christ is one way to elevate the conversation above the partisan fray. Inspired by Dale Andrews, *Preaching Prophetic Care* offers the church a robust, multi-faceted resource for this holy work of our time.

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