Review

Deedes, R. (2019). *Into the Depths: A Chaplain's Reflection on Death, Dying and Pastoral Care*. Durham: Sacristy Press, 190 pp. (pbk). ISBN: 9781789590326.

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Deedes's book offers a Christian perspective and theological reflection on death, dying and pastoral care. Each chapter is structured in such a way that although the main body is peppered with theological reflection, there is a dedicated section at the end of each chapter to unpack each topic. These theological reflections are based on the narrative of Jesus, and the interpretation and application of this narrative by the author to the topic.

The opening chapter gives an overview of the contents of the book and provides an honest account of the author's practice to date. The following chapters discuss the role and attributes of pastoral care, and numerous contexts and aspects of death and dying that a chaplain may encounter or be witness to. The latter part of the book shifts its focus to care for the chaplain and how to maintain resilience when working in this field.

Chapter 2 unpacks the nature of pastoral care and how to engage in this work with depth and insight. Chapters 3–5 examine in detail encounters with "good deaths", disturbing deaths and deaths which may be considered "good enough". Chapter 6 looks at how to accompany those who are bereaved. Chapter 7 discusses the importance of marking the moments of death, such as rites, rituals and funerals. In Chapter 8, the author considers what is required to sustain work and resilience in this area. Chapter 9 looks critically at how contexts such as hospices and prisons come with associations and assumptions that need addressing. Finally, Chapter 10 offers not conclusions as such, but reflections on how to live with the questions that commitment to this kind of work raises.

Deedes writes this book from her lived experience as a chaplain in prisons, hospices, university chaplaincy and church ministry. Rosie approaches

all these subjects with the honesty of her own experience, with the faith that informs her own practice and her shared experiences with others along the way.

This book would suit those engaging in pastoral care work, especially when accompanying those experiencing significant loss and complex social situations. The author is clear throughout the book about her Christian faith, and the inspiration and strength she draws from this. Experienced practitioners will find many examples in practice which they can relate to and be familiar with the wrestling within it. This book may be particularly valuable to those embarking on chaplaincy or exploring a vocation, in order to gain insight into the breadth and depth of this kind of work and the demands it places upon those engaged in it.

Deedes's book offers additional insight into the field of pastoral care and death and dying by bringing together the author's culmination of experience of chaplaincy in the diverse settings of prison and hospice. The author offers perspective based on lengthy engagement in challenging settings and the wisdom gleaned from these experiences. It is a helpful reminder that chaplains interface both a faith setting and also a particular institution, which will have its own cultural expectations to navigate. In particular, Deedes gives voice to those in prison who are facing death and dying, and the adaptations that have to be made to meet pastoral needs in this environment.

The author acknowledges that "[p]astoral care does not have a single model as a starting point" (p. 46), and while she outlines eight components of good pastoral care, this book also offers insights into putting this theory into practice. The author allows space in the book to cover the value of self-care in work that requires a high level of resilience due to the "relentless succession" (p. 140) of traumas that are encountered.

This book is able to provide perspective on accompanying others facing the reality of death, and the importance of rites and rituals as shared experiences, whether in a prison or in a hospice. She draws upon the wisdom of hospice founder Cicely Saunders, "how people die remains in the memory of those who live on" (p. 87), and writes about how chaplains can contribute to the care of those who live on.

The book contains a substantial proportion of theological reflection from a Christian viewpoint, and readers would need to be prepared to encounter this. Reflections include subjects the author refers to as "taboo", including death by suicide. Deedes uses a framework of biblical text and Christian narrative to explore death and dying and the role of the chaplain in pastoral care. At times, there are mixed messages regarding professional and personal boundaries, and to what degree chaplains are vulnerable with regard

to patients and families in our care. This is not surprising to encounter, however, as this is an area which chaplains are continually navigating in our roles.

The consistent themes throughout the book are that context matters and makes a difference with respect to where value is placed and whose voices are heard and whose needs are prioritized. The book raises awareness about expectations as to what emotions to encounter when someone is dying or bereaved.

Here, you will find an open and honest account of the varied life of a chaplain. The narrative is not dissimilar to a memoir at times, as it gives voice to stories of lives which are hidden and may never otherwise have been told. This use of case studies provides examples from practice and links these to theory and Christian theology. The focus of this book is on the particular loss of death and dying, but is also applicable to losses associated with ill health, imprisonment and other deprivations.

The latter stages of the book bring the reader to an acknowledgment of the total pain to which chaplains are frequently exposed in others, and offer eight areas of pastoral care, also applying these to self-care; for example, our own need to be heard in order to continue to be a good listener (p. 141). Deedes unpacks what it means to live in a liminal space where there is as yet no resolution, and the resulting robust support chaplains need to equip themselves with to dwell here. Experienced chaplains will recognize what it means to be “in the depths” with another when they are at their lowest ebb. This book offers the chance to reflect not only on Deedes’s experiences, but also on the encounters they bring to mind from our own practice. She invites the reader to ask deep questions about life, listening, companionship, trust and non-judgmental pastoral care. In the presence of this book, there is a call to commitment for ourselves as chaplains to give and receive the gifts of being seen, heard and understood.