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Plantinga's "Reading for Preaching: The Preacher in Conversation with Storytellers, Biographers, Poets, and Journalists" (Book Review)

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reader's thoughts and heart. Some of the prayers are based on scripture and bring passages to life in uplifting new ways. Study questions are provided at the end of the book and short video clips are available on the web to make this book an easy tool for a group study. Whether individually or in a group, no one should miss the opportunity to read and study this excellent book.

**Reading for Preaching: The Preacher in Conversation with
Storytellers, Biographers, Poets, and Journalists,**

by Cornelius Plantinga Jr. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2013. 133 pp.

\$14.00. ISBN 9780802870773

*Reviewed by Steven Paschold, Research Services Librarian,
John Brown University, Siloam Springs, AR*

Arising from a series of seminars for preachers, this book, by noted author Cornelius Plantinga, Jr., President Emeritus of Calvin Theological Seminary, aims primarily to encourage preachers to read widely, given the limitations on their time to do so. He expects preachers to read to gather material for sermon illustrations, but beyond this, he promotes wide reading as a means for preachers' own growth and well-being. As per the subtitle, Plantinga recommends reading fiction, biography, poetry, and journalism, to which he adds essays, children's literature, and blogs, but he emphasizes fiction, both novels and short stories. The author effectively shows how, while the Biblical text is always paramount, other literature can illustrate or supplement that text and the great themes that the preacher seeks to expound in the sermon. The works that the author cites are understood to be representative of many other worthwhile texts. Plantinga treats the reader to winsome and pithy discussions of, and quotations from, a number of these works, including Steinbeck's *The Grapes of Wrath* and Hosseini's *The Kite Runner*.

Plantinga seems to aim the book toward preachers of his own Reformed background or other Protestant mainline traditions as he speaks of the perhaps standard 24-minute sermon that exegetes a scriptural text and its themes, without acknowledging other possibilities for the sermon. Evangelical readers may be puzzled, perceiving this type of sermon as almost *passé* because sermons have more variety in evangelical churches: for example, preaching through a whole book of the Bible, or preaching on topics or issues using multiple scriptural texts. Also, the widespread practice of preaching a sermon series rather than separate stand-alone sermons goes unacknowledged.

Is this book of value to readers who are not preachers? The answer to that question is “Yes,” because the author introduces a fine selection of literature, worthwhile for the person who may have limited time to read, and the “Selected Reading List” is useful. The book is recommended for academic libraries whose collections include books on preaching, or other books by Cornelius Plantinga. Of course, librarians can assist preachers in starting or developing their reading programs.

Spiritual Guidance Across Religions: A Sourcebook for Spiritual Directors and Other Professionals Providing Counsel to People of Differing Faith Traditions,

edited by John R. Mabry. Woodstock, VT: SkyLight Paths Publishing, 2014.
384 pp. \$50.00. ISBN 9781594735462

Reviewed by Elizabeth Pearson, Library Director, Montreat College, Montreat, NC

Spiritual directors are increasingly seeing people from diverse faith traditions in this day of interfaith ministry. In working with clients from different traditions, spiritual directors need to be prepared to offer effective guidance even though they may not have been formally trained outside of their own faith. More people and people of more varied backgrounds are now seeking spiritual direction. John Mabry is a United Church of Christ minister, adjunct faculty in the pastoral ministry program at Santa Clara University, and director of the interfaith spiritual direction certificate program at the Chaplaincy Institute in Berkeley, California. In this book, he has compiled information on world faith traditions from twenty-seven contributors as a professional resource to help those whose work involves providing spiritual direction to people from a wide variety of faiths.

The scope of the book reflects our religiously plural world, with each chapter devoted to a different faith tradition as well as independent approaches to spirituality. Included are chapters on Evangelical Christians, Roman Catholics, Mormonism, Judaism, Muslims, Buddhism, Daoism, Confucianism, Jainism, Sikhism, Hinduism, Zoroastrianism, Unitarian Universalism, Baha'i, Native American religions, Shinto, Neo-Paganism, New Thought, humanism and eclectic spiritualities. Each contributor is a spiritual guidance professional whose credentials are noted at the beginning of the section contributed. The brief, introductory chapters provide an overview of each faith and its basic beliefs, methods of spiritual guidance within that faith, and tips on offering spiritual guidance to clients from those traditions. Discussion includes practical advice for the spiritual guide on common spiritual issues experienced by clients. Many of the chapters conclude with brief notes and lists of additional resources. The book is written with North American readers in mind, and points out important cultural differences between Eastern and Western practices.