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McEntyre's "When poets pray" (book review)

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Book Reviews



McEntyre, M. (2019). *When poets pray*. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans. 140 pp. \$19.99. ISBN 9780802876584

Author and long-time English professor Marilyn McEntyre has nearly two dozen books to her credit, including essays, meditations, poetry, and literary criticism. McEntyre's latest book is a collection of twenty-four meditations on poetic prayers/prayer poems and poems about prayer. McEntyre believes that poetry and prayer are connected, and that poetry may enrich its readers' prayer lives. Poetic language and imagery may open readers' minds and hearts to a deeper understanding of spiritual truths.

McEntyre draws from a historically, ethnically, and gender diverse set of poets, including well-known poets like Robert Frost, Gerard Manley Hopkins, Hildegard of Bingen, and Mary Oliver, as well as lesser-known poets such as the anonymous young Ghanian Christian whose "Truck Driver's Prayer" reminds McEntyre of God's omnipresence. McEntyre also includes one of her own poems in the collection.

The poems and meditations are grouped thematically, inviting reflection on "Nature's God," "Wrestling," "Praying," "Witnessing," and "Known and Knowing." In an afterword, McEntyre recommends practices that will help her readers integrate poetry into their own prayer lives.

With its brief poems and 2-3 page meditations, this collection lends itself to daily devotional or small group use. Many church libraries will want a copy of this book in their collections. Christian college and university libraries may find this book useful to support literature courses and courses in spiritual formation. Students of literature may learn much from McEntyre's skillful interpretation of poetry through the eyes of the Spirit.

Reviewer

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