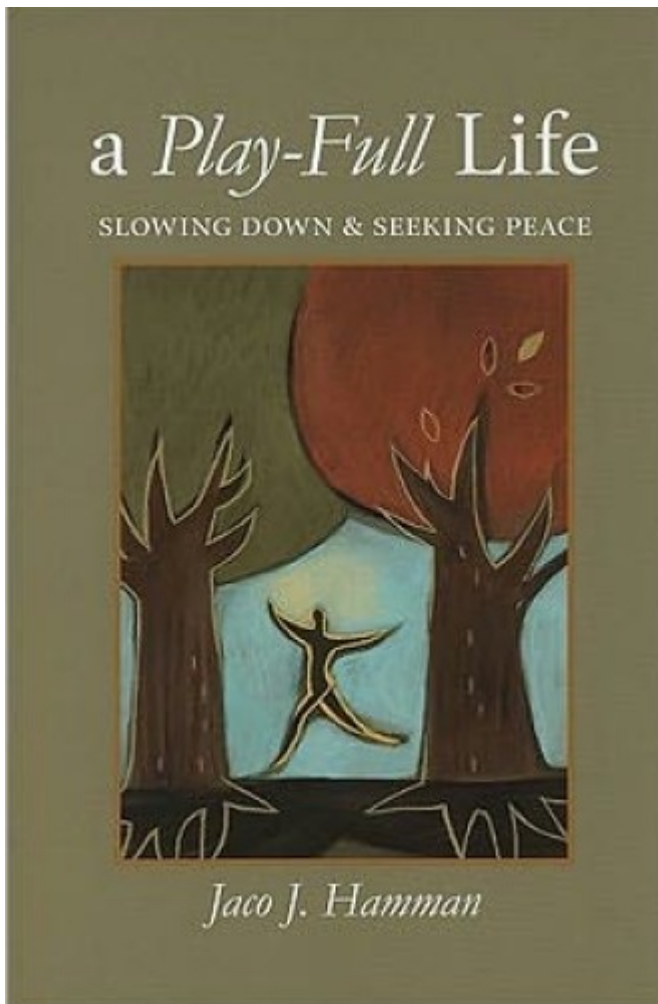


Practical theology

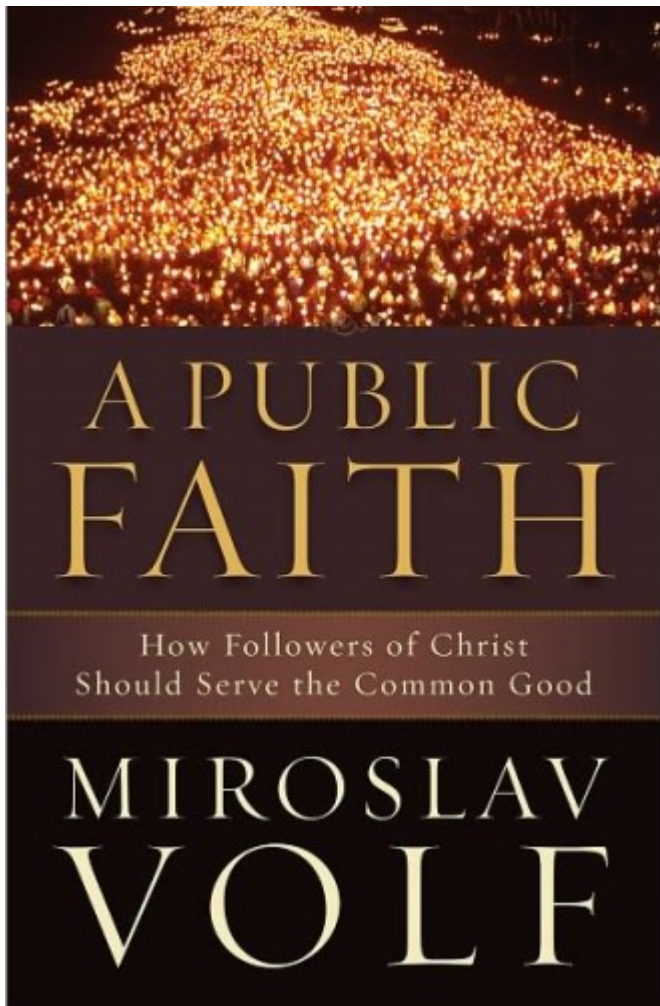
selected by [Anthony B. Robinson](#) in the [October 18, 2011](#) issue

In Review



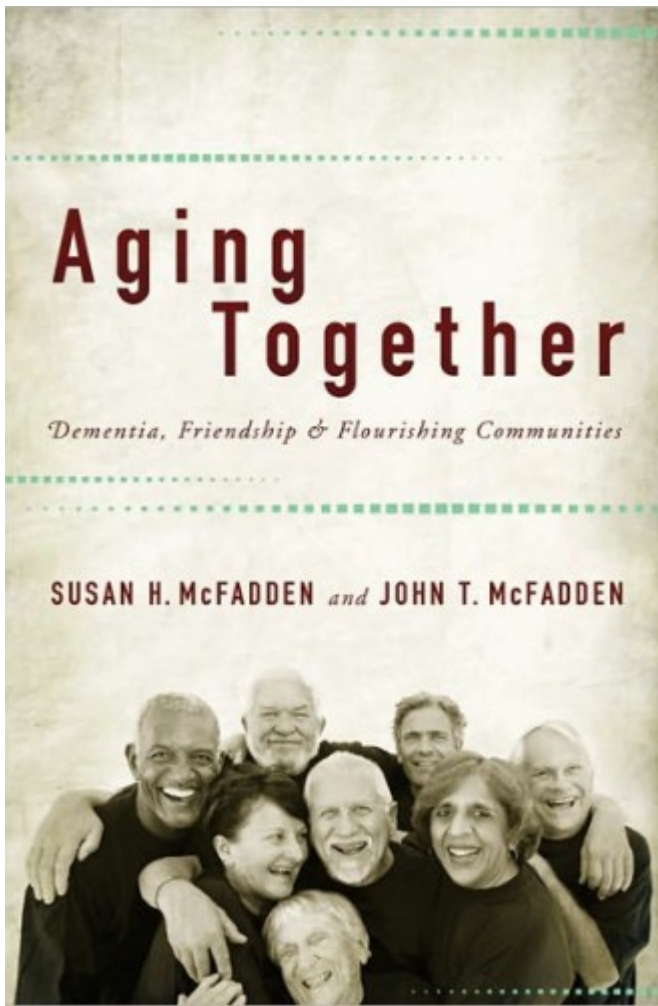
A Play-Full Life

by Jaco J. Hamman
Pilgrim



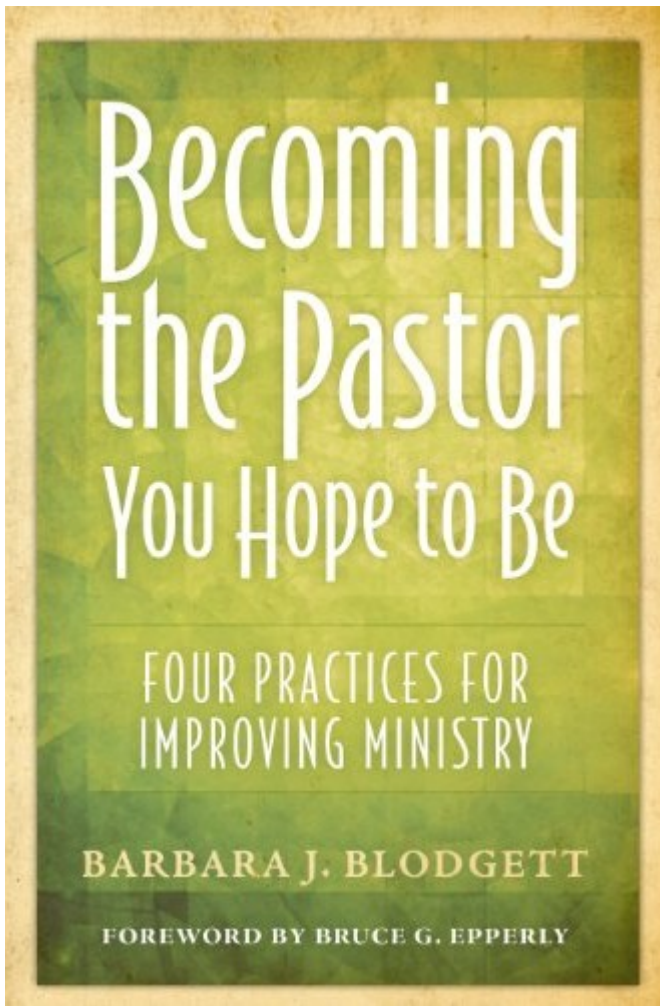
A Public Faith

by Miroslav Volf
Brazos



Aging Together

by Susan H. and John T. McFadden
Johns Hopkins University Press



Becoming the Pastor You Hope to Be

by Barbara J. Blodgett

Alban

GIL RENDLE

FOREWORD BY ROBERT P. SCHNASE

JOURNEY

IN

THE

WILDERNESS

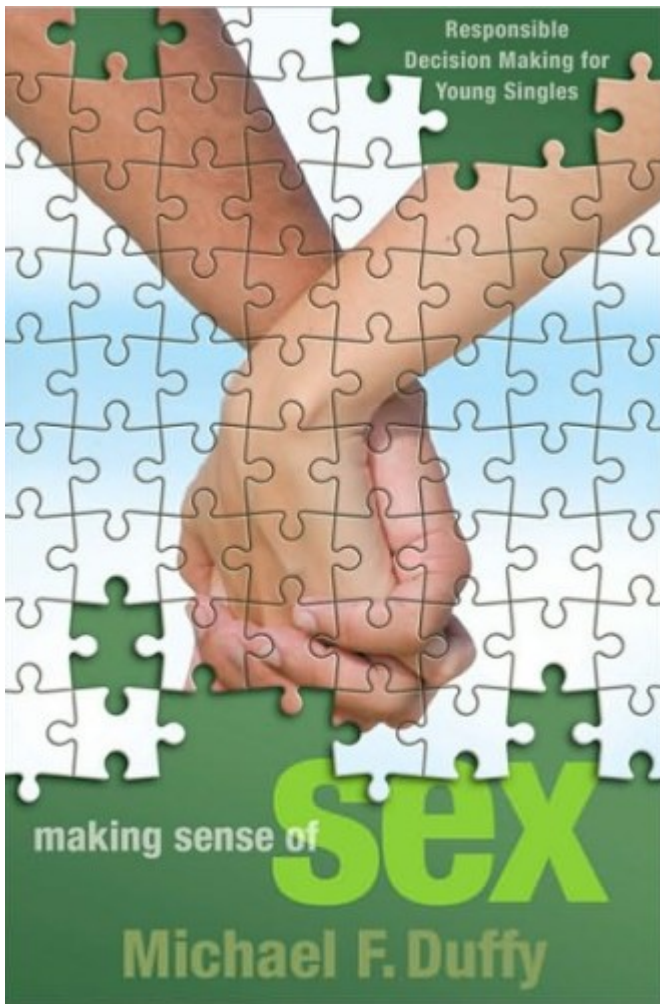


**NEW
LIFE**

FOR MAINLINE
CHURCHES

Journey in the Wilderness

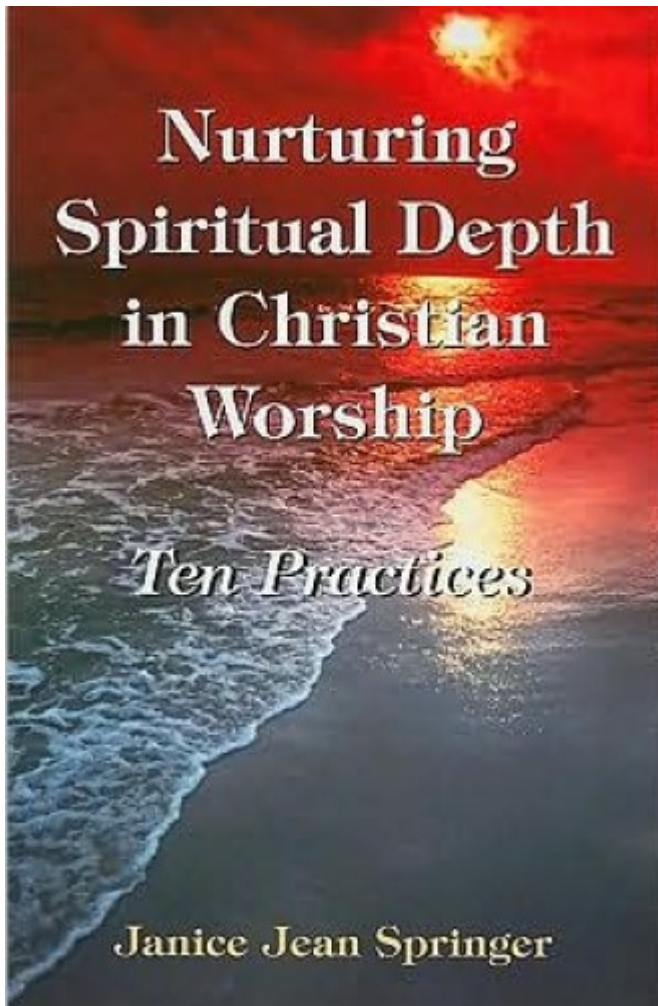
by Gilbert R. Rendle
Abingdon



Making Sense of Sex

by Michael F. Duffy

Westminster John Knox



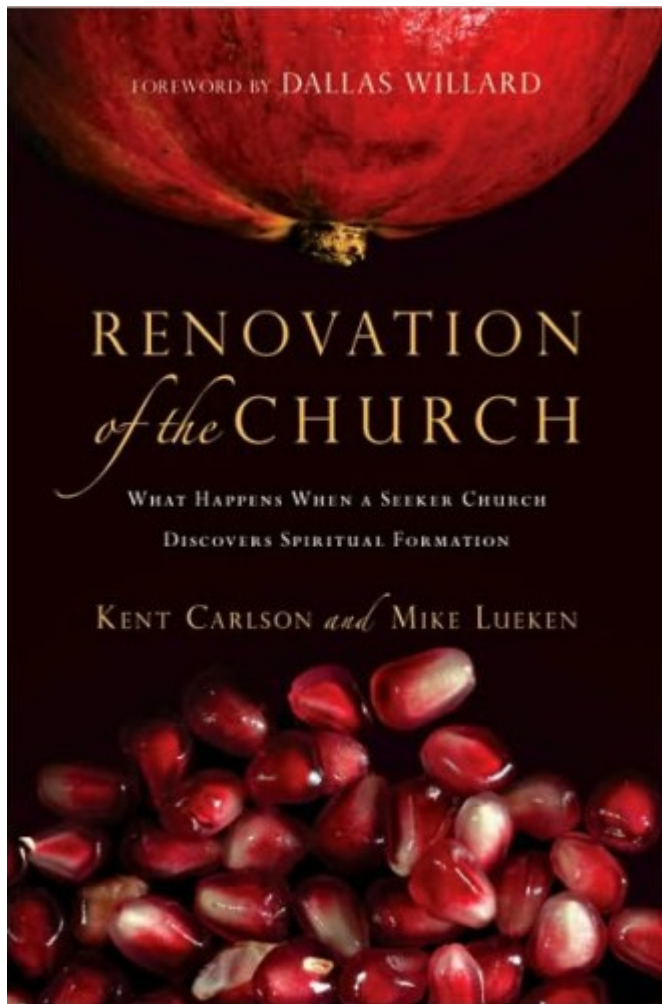
**Nurturing
Spiritual Depth
in Christian
Worship**

Ten Practices

Janice Jean Springer

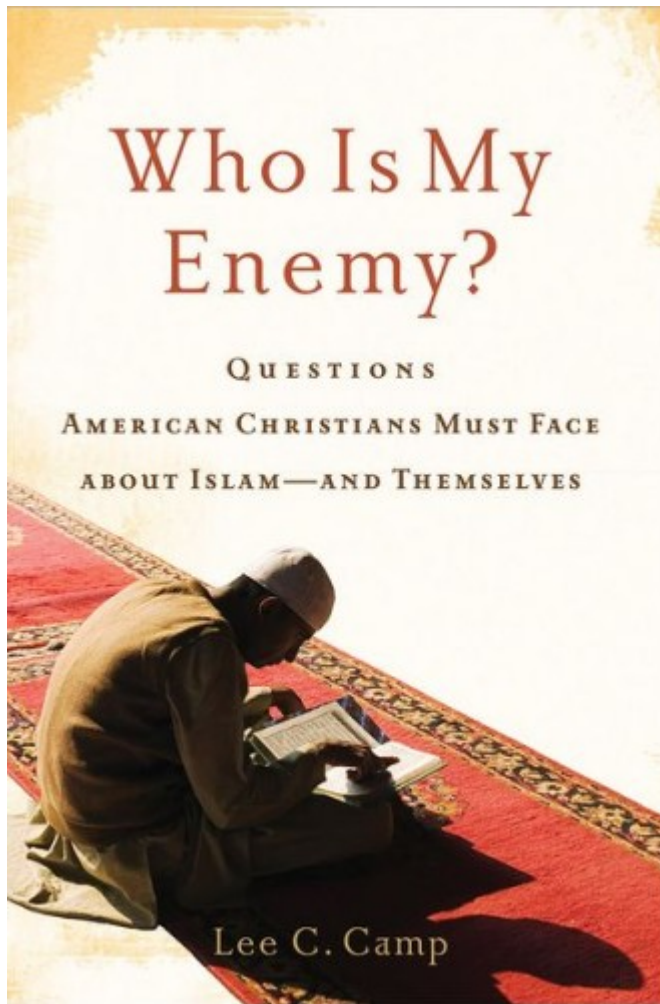
Nurturing Spiritual Depth in Christian Worship

by Janice Jean Springer
Resource Publications



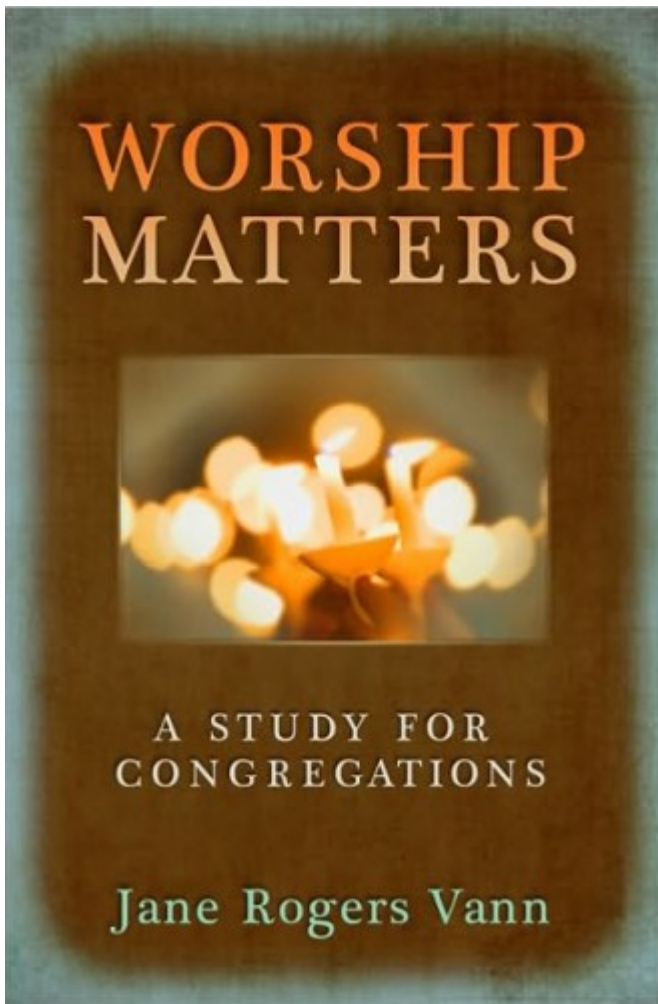
Renovation of the Church

by Kent Carlson and Mike Lueken
InterVarsity Press



Who Is My Enemy?

by Lee C. Camp
Brazos



Worship Matters

by Jane Rogers Vann
InterVarsity Press

A Play-Full Life: Slowing Down and Seeking Peace, by Jaco J. Hamman (Pilgrim, 224 pp., \$22.00 paperback). In an era and society in which fear, worry and anxiety are ever-present and constantly amplified, Hamman offers a play-full life as both an alternative and a form of faithful resistance. For Hamman, play is less a specific activity than a way of being and an attitude toward life. Like deep sleep (also at risk for many these days), "play helps us manage our destructiveness and rejuvenates the mind."

A Public Faith: How Followers of Christ Should Serve the Common Good, by Miroslav Volf (Brazos, 192 pp., \$21.99). At once erudite and accessible, Volf explores the place and role of religion, Christianity in particular, in public life. He offers an

alternative to two common options: religious totalitarianism on one hand and relegation of faith to the private or familial on the other. He wrestles with many of the most vexing contemporary questions, such as the alleged link between faith and violence.

Aging Together: Dementia, Friendship, and Flourishing Communities, by Susan H. McFadden and John T. McFadden (Johns Hopkins University Press, 256 pp., \$55.00). A psychologist-gerontologist and a pastor-theologian join voices and perspectives to address the rising incidence of dementia and the challenge it presents to individuals, families, the church and society. This book offers an alternative to the tendency to either seek medical miracles or isolate sufferers and withdraw from them. It is an alternative rooted in Christian faith, the "subversive practice" of friendship and the life of congregations that imagine "aging together."

Becoming the Pastor You Hope to Be: Four Practices for Improving Ministry, by Barbara J. Blodgett (Alban Institute, 181 pp., \$17.00 paperback). Arguing that capable and wise pastors are not born but made, Blodgett carefully explores four practices that help pastors grow and flourish: soliciting feedback, mentoring, peer-group learning and leadership in public ministry. This very helpful book is useful not only for clergy and clergy groups but also for personnel and pastoral relations committees that want to deepen their conversations and know how to better encourage and strengthen the pastors with whom they work.

Journey in the Wilderness: New Life for Mainline Churches, by Gilbert R. Rendle (Abingdon, 176 pp., \$16.00 paperback). A longtime Alban Institute consultant, Rendle surveys what mainline congregations have faced, tried and learned during the challenging recent decades. Affirming that mainline congregations and leaders have learned quite a lot, he consolidates key insights and looks over the Jordan to a new land on the horizon.

Making Sense of Sex: Responsible Decision Making for Young Singles, by Michael F. Duffy (Westminster John Knox, 176 pp., \$20.00 paperback). Although his book is primarily addressed to young adults, such as the college students he teaches, Duffy's approach to sex and decision making should be helpful to people of many ages and in various types of relationships. He avoids telling his readers what to think or do but suggests a way to think and factors to think about in making choices about sex. Honest, calm and straightforward.

Nurturing Spiritual Depth in Christian Worship: Ten Practices, by Janice Jean Springer (Resource Publications, 160 pp., \$21.95 paperback). This is a particularly helpful book for worship leaders and planners. Springer takes the much-needed approach of considering what happens with energy in worship. With chapters like "Move People Out of Their Heads," "Make Every Part Match" and "Use Fewer Words," Springer helps worship planners to create experiences of spiritual depth that have integrity.

Renovation of the Church: What Happens When a Seeker Church Discovers Spiritual Formation, by Kent Carlson and Mike Lueken (InterVarsity Press, 185 pp., \$15.00 paperback). This is the story of two pastors and a church that drank deeply at the well of the megachurch seeker model but came to suspect that such churches were in the business more of religious consumerism than of making disciples. The book provides a view into the evangelical world and culture and some of its struggles. The lessons are transferable to mainline churches facing similar issues.

Who Is My Enemy? Questions American Christians Must Face about Islam—and Themselves, by Lee C. Camp (Brazos, 192 pp., \$17.99 paperback). Camp examines Islam and Christianity and argues that Christians have much to learn about both faiths, including perspectives on war, peace, violence and other religions. Noting that contemporary views of Islam often tend toward one of two extremes—that all Muslims are warmongers or that all religions are the same and are peaceable—Camp goes deeper, asking Christians to learn not only about Islam but about themselves. Timely and provocative.

Worship Matters: A Study for Congregations, by Jane Rogers Vann (Westminster John Knox, 152 pp., \$20.00 paperback). Vann notes that congregations don't talk often or deeply about worship and argues that they need to. In this guide for study, conversation and strengthening worship, she emphasizes the varied languages, or elements, of worship that come together in the central event of congregational life.