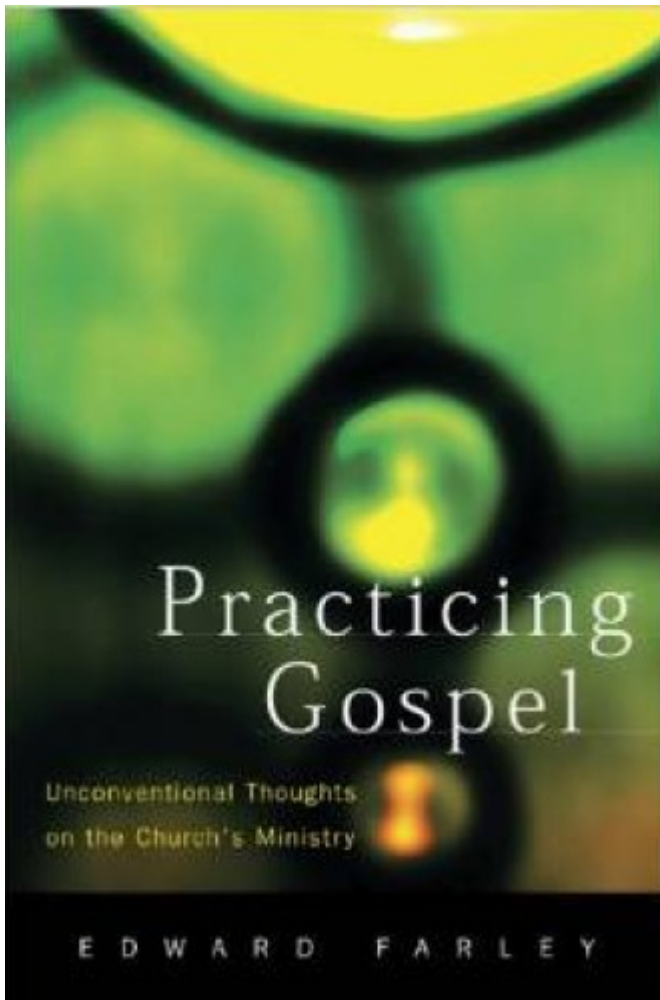


Becca Stevens's favorite books for ministry

selected by [Becca Stevens](#) in the [October 15, 2014](#) issue

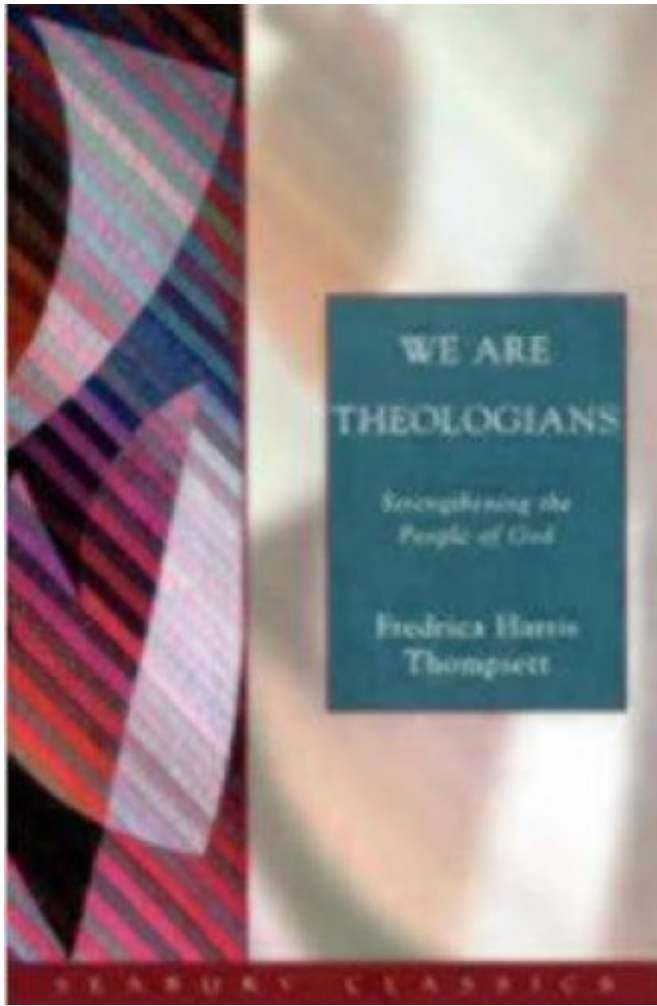
## In Review



### **Practicing Gospel**

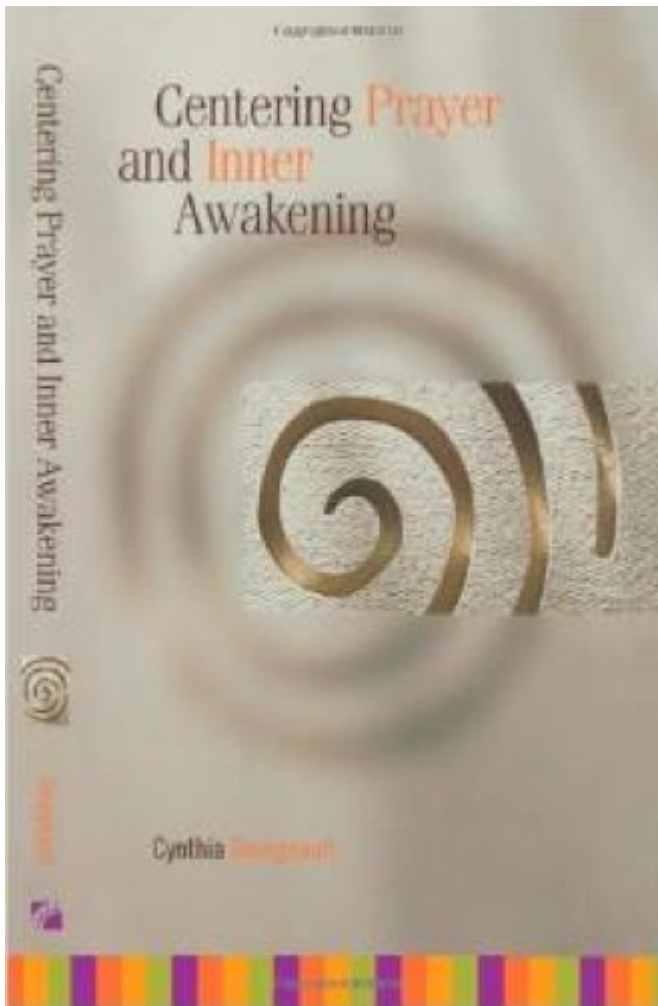
by Edward Farley

Westminster John Knox



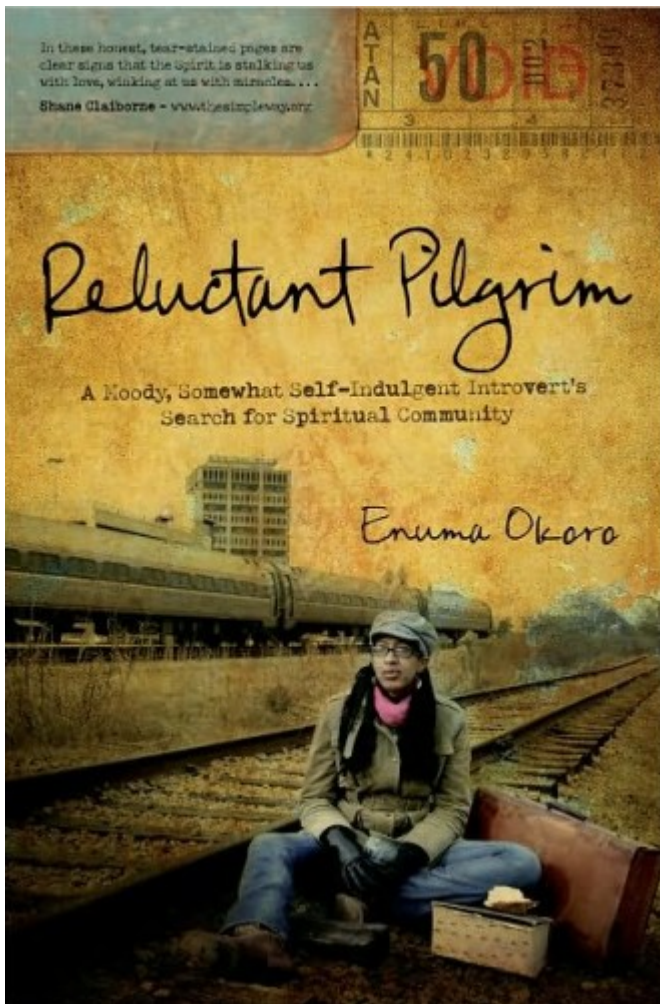
## **We Are Theologians**

by Fredrica Harris Thompsett  
Seabury



## **Centering Prayer and Inner Awakening**

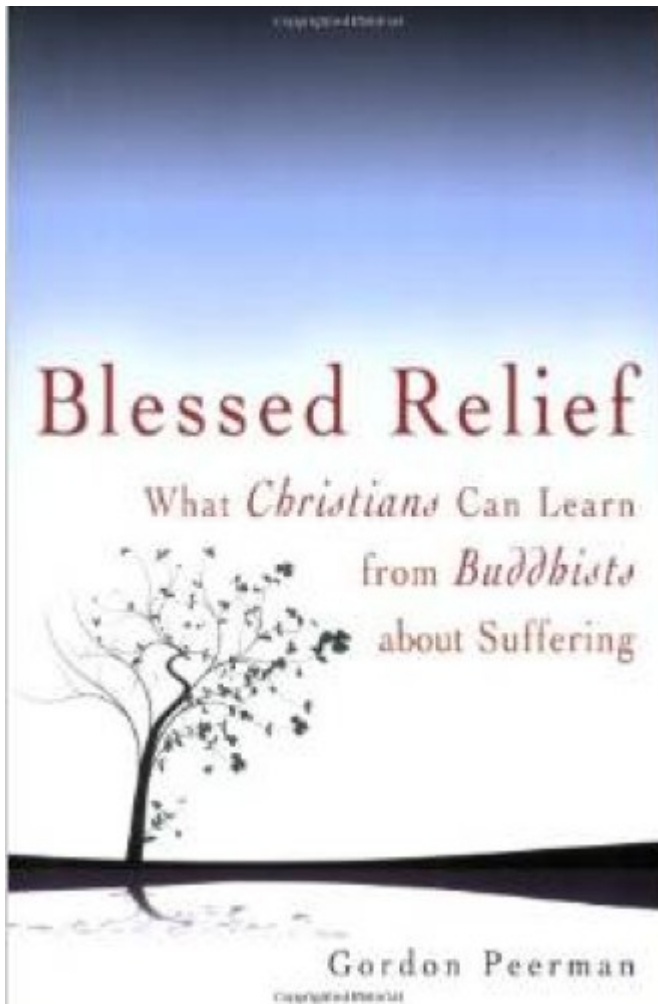
by Cynthia Bourgeault  
Cowley



## **Reluctant Pilgrim**

By Enuma Okoro

Fresh Air Books



## **Blessed Relief**

by Gordon Peerman  
SkyLight Paths

*What are the best books for ministry written in the 21st century? We [asked seven pastors](#) to pick their favorites. — Ed.*

A series of essays on homiletics, worship, Christian education, pastoral care, and practical theology, Edward Farley's *Practicing Gospel* (Westminster John Knox) reminds us that ministry should be rooted not in popular psychology or dazzling public speaking, but in a transforming God. He grounds practice in a struggle with the mystery of God's salvific work.

Fredrica Harris Thompsett believes that we are all natural theologians: we are all able to think through questions of belief and relate our answers to our personal and communal lives. In *We Are Theologians* (Seabury) she works through historical and

biblical resources that can guide us in continuing theological reflection on the faith that informs ministry.

Oswald Chambers once said, “Prayer does not fit us for the greater work; prayer is the greater work.” More than a guidebook for those who want to learn about the practice of centering prayer (although it is that), Cynthia Bourgeault’s *Centering Prayer and Inner Awakening* (Cowley) shows us how centering prayer connects with the tradition of Christian contemplation and can lead to a renewed form of Christian practice.

Enuma Okoro’s memoir *Reluctant Pilgrim: A Moody, Somewhat Self-Indulgent Introvert’s Search for Spiritual Community* (Fresh Air Books) gives voice to those struggling to reconcile their faith with the worship service that surrounds them. She recounts the many places along her journey where her search for Christian community ended in disappointment and marginalization.

Gordon Peerman’s *Blessed Relief: What Christians Can Learn from Buddhists about Suffering* (SkyLight Paths) focuses on nine Buddhist teachings and the practices that cultivate compassion, presence, and acceptance. His balancing of contemplation and action yields tools for sustaining a heart that can respond to and relieve suffering.