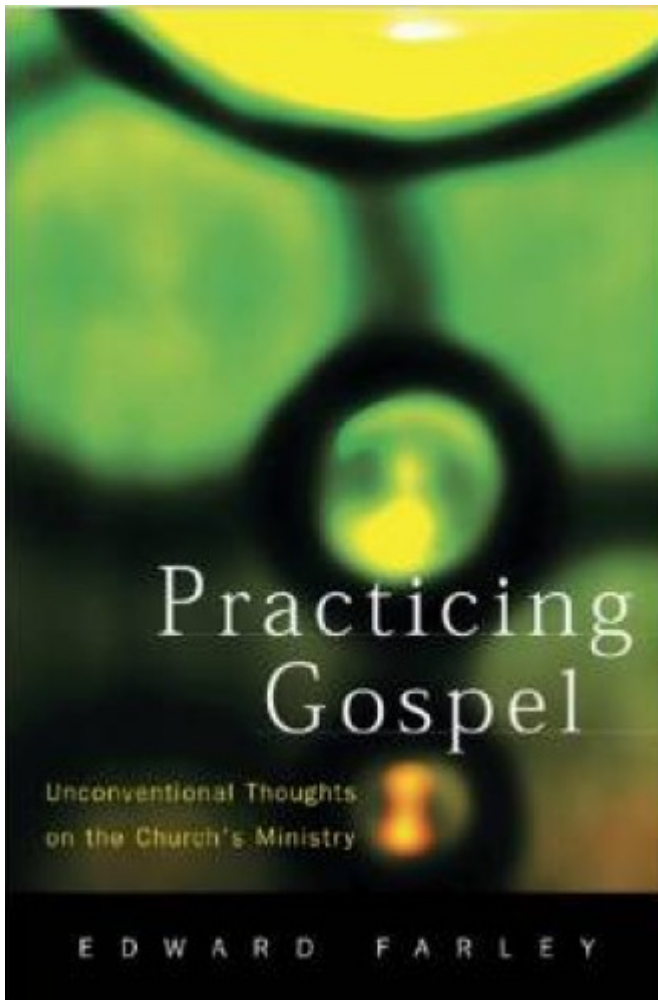


Becca Stevens's favorite books for ministry

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

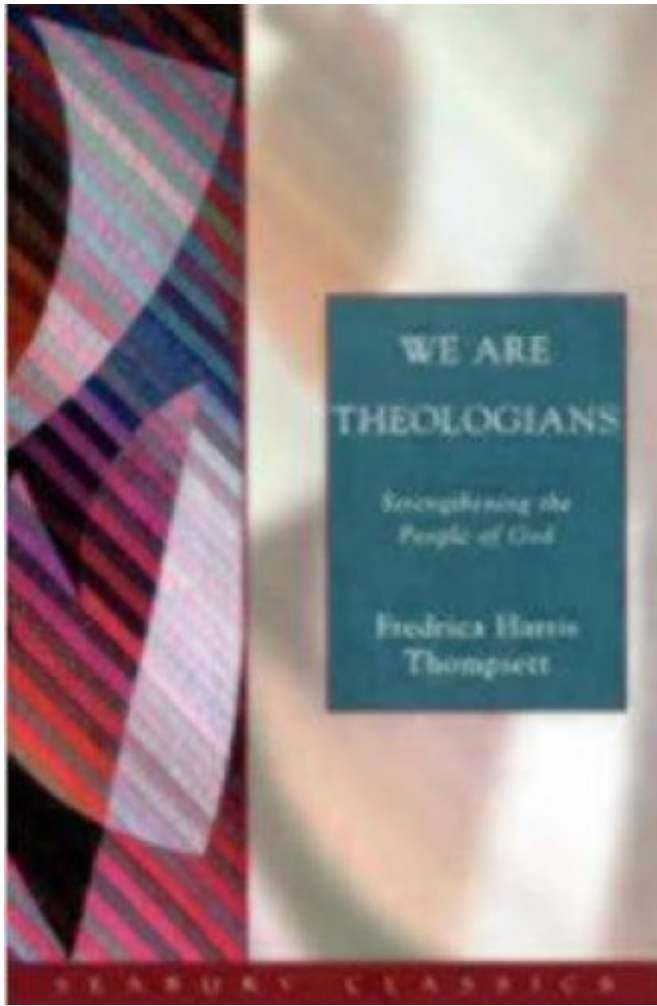
In Review



Practicing Gospel

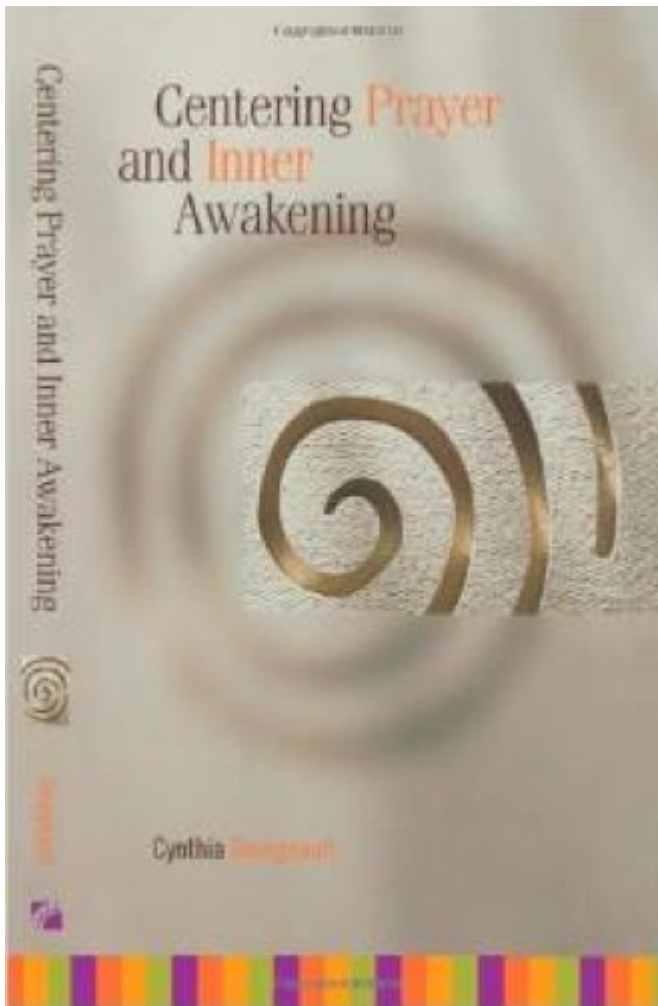
by Edward Farley

Westminster John Knox



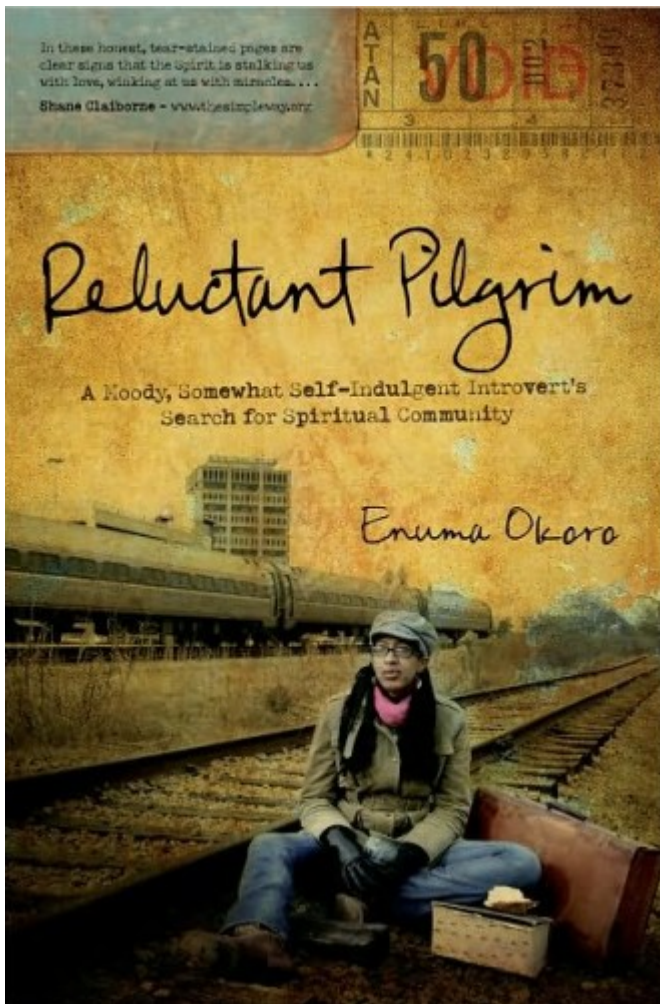
We Are Theologians

by Fredrica Harris Thompsett
Seabury



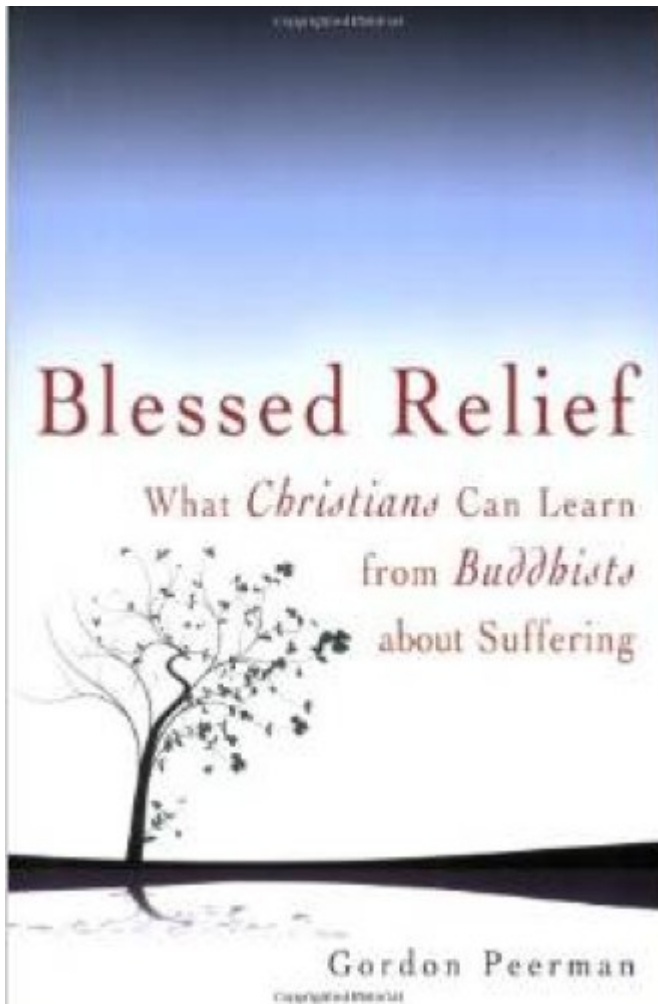
Centering Prayer and Inner Awakening

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.