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Education Matters: Readings in Pastoral Care for School Chaplains, Guidance Counsellors and Teachers

James O'Higgins Norman, *Dublin: Veritas Publications, 2014, £16.15 pbk, ISBN 978-1-84730-569-5, 319 pp.*

In this updated, renamed, and revised edition of *At the Heart of Education: School Chaplaincy and Pastoral Care* (2004), James O. Norman has collated a wide range of viewpoints from twenty-four leaders and researchers in the area of school pastoral care. This edited volume attempts to provide a balanced examination of theoretical foundations and practice concerning pastoral care in schools. As the title indicates, the book is intended for school chaplains, guidance counsellors, and teachers. Norman draws his contributions from Ireland, the United Kingdom, the United States, and Australia, where well-being in increasingly diverse school populations is currently a prominent discussion point. Although this limits the scope of the book, it also offers educators globally the opportunity to learn from countries with both established and evolving pastoral care programs in their schools.

My impression after reading the book is positive. The division of the book into three sections: humanistic pastoral care, programmatic pastoral care, and spiritual pastoral care, is inclusive. Norman introduces the first section with the premise that student well-being is fundamental to learning and teaching. He offers a definition of pastoral care, and identifies the varying roles of responsibility in offering pastoral care, positioning them within the school context in Ireland. Williams then competently builds a rationale for the inclusion of care and well-being as educational goals. The subsequent six chapters in this section elaborate on this theme in the specific areas of human development and identity, counselling, parental involvement, and the well-being of asylum seekers and refugees in schools. Reading these chapters left me well-informed, although I felt that the strong focus on adolescence in this section could be limiting in terms of appeal to a broader readership.

Section two of the book examines programmatic approaches to pastoral care. As expected, this section introduces some practical strategies for pastoral care. One example is Pearlman's chapter on supporting children through bereavement.

I found this chapter, which takes a developmental approach to bereavement and gives practical suggestions, one of the few in the book which was relevant to those working with young children. These practical chapters, however, contained valuable information and explored the topics of mentoring, affective education, inclusion, drama, sex education, and mental health from a well-being perspective.

De Souza opens the final section of the book by exploring contemporary spirituality in education, and offering thoughtful insights into the lives of students who link connectedness to spiritual well-being, and therefore their sense of identity. She adopts a broad definition of spirituality, and by exploring both the presence and absence of connectedness, is able to suggest a diverse range of strategies for developing a sense of well-being. She concludes by advocating for care professionals to intentionally target aspects of the school program that promote a sense of connectedness, in contrast to the competitive climate sometimes promoted by educators. Contrasting sharply with the opening chapter in this section, the following two chapters present spiritual well-being and pastoral care in different contexts. McGuckin, Lewis, Cruise, and Sheridan examine the implications of spiritual-based pastoral care in the context of changing religious affiliations in Ireland, and Pimlott explores the topic within the context of the political education agenda in the United Kingdom. The next three chapters all focus on the evolving roles and responsibilities of chaplains. While Moran, Norman, and Murray each approach the topic of school chaplaincy from different perspectives, the combined information from this trilogy provides a comprehensive overview of school chaplains and their role in pastoral care. In the final chapter, Mountain presents a defensible case for the inclusion of prayer in pastoral care programs, using personal experience, church tradition, and research to establish the meaning and function of prayer, and asking, ''Is prayer a natural overlooked resource of childhood?'' (p. 312).

As a lecturer in the area of pastoral care in education, I found this book to be an insightful and valuable resource, especially for care professionals working with adolescents. I felt, however, that a greater balance between approaches to pastoral care for childhood and adolescence would have given it wider appeal. In my opinion, the three sections complement each other, and the end result is a volume that offers both theoretical frameworks and practical strategies for a range of professionals working across multiple contexts with diverse students.

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