**Victoria Slater, Chaplaincy Ministry and the Mission of the Church (London: SCM Press, 2015); 160 pp.: 9780334053156, £19.99 (pbk)**

There are three distinctive and attractive characteristics of this book. The first is the author’s skilful ability to open up her research in an accessible and stimulating way. The second is the quality of theological reflection based, thirdly, in the reflective practice of her experience as a healthcare chaplain.

Six chapters work together towards a conclusion in responding to two questions: ‘What is chaplaincy?’ and ‘What is the significance of chaplaincy within the ministry and mission of the church?’ These questions are discussed within the context of the extensive social reach of chaplaincy and in its ability to connect with a range of people beyond the traditional reach of the Church. We are reminded of the growth and development of chaplaincy in recent years but also of the need for ongoing theological reflection on practice. Slater shows how critical theological reflection is for the illuminating of our wisdom about mission, the nature of God’s involvement in the world and how discipleship and vocation might be nurtured. This narrative takes seriously the significant and seemingly irreversible decline in numbers across church congregations but also challenges some of the marginalization of chaplaincy present within church structures and discourse.

Chapter 1 oﬀers some historical perspective in the context of our pluralistic and ever-changing culture. Chapter 2 models a practical theological approach with a careful use of experience through three case studies. It deals with role, relationship, self-understanding and practice within a theological framework. Chapter 3 looks at the relationship between chaplaincy and mission, opening up some of the tensions that are present in the ways in which we value some ministry above others. Chapter 4 deals with the identity of chaplaincy, necessary Slater makes clear for an understanding of good practice.Throughout there is an articulation of the distinctiveness of chaplaincy. With this in mind, chapter 5 oﬀers some challenges to the institutional Church and the range of ecclesiologies always present when we explore the nature of mission. Chapter 6 keeps an eye on the future as it oﬀers some guidance and frameworks within which to develop practice. It aspires to wanting to support further chaplaincy research and indeed encourage innovation through the setting up of new chaplaincy roles. Dialogue, presence, openness, reflection, faithfulness and transformation are key words fleshed out in and through the shape of the six chapters.

This reviewer shares the author’s conviction that part of the future of Church

will lie in its moving beyond traditional models and boundaries into an engagement that meets and connects with people where they are and through what they are experiencing. This book, therefore, deserves to be used by all those who might want to explore ways in which we might be faithful to the gospel and share its grace. Our structures need this voice to inform this urgent task of reflection on the future shape of being Church.

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