

*From Nomads to Pilgrims: Stories from Practicing Congregations*, ed. by Diana Butler Bass and Joseph Stewart-Sicking, Alban Institute, 2006. ISBN 1-56699-323-7; 179 pp.

This book grows out of research conducted by the Virginia Theological Seminary in a Lilly-funded study: The Project on Congregations of Intentional Practice. The fruit of this study was first shared in *The Practicing Congregation* a work that discussed the ecclesiology and theory under-girding their study. *From Nomads to Pilgrims* completes the circle by sharing illustrative stories from the lives of congregations participating in the original study.

Following a helpful “orientation” in the first chapter the editors guide us directly to the stories of twelve congregations written by the pastor. By embracing intentional practices with creativity, persistence, patience and pastoral wisdom these pastors speak of the up and down journey to greater congregational vitality. These stories smack of real human experience and God graciously at work. They are ecumenical stories. A reader will find a tradition to identify with and the rest to learn from and appreciate.

Field Educators reflecting on these stories will especially appreciate the connection between the identified practice and observing the pastor ministering authentically out of their sense of call. Our students will find them inspirational and permission-giving. The book calls to mind Parker Palmer’s *Let Your Life Speak*. A final chapter draws the insights together and celebrates the big cultural influences that practicing congregations challenge: consumption, fragmentation and forgetfulness.

~ Matthew Floding