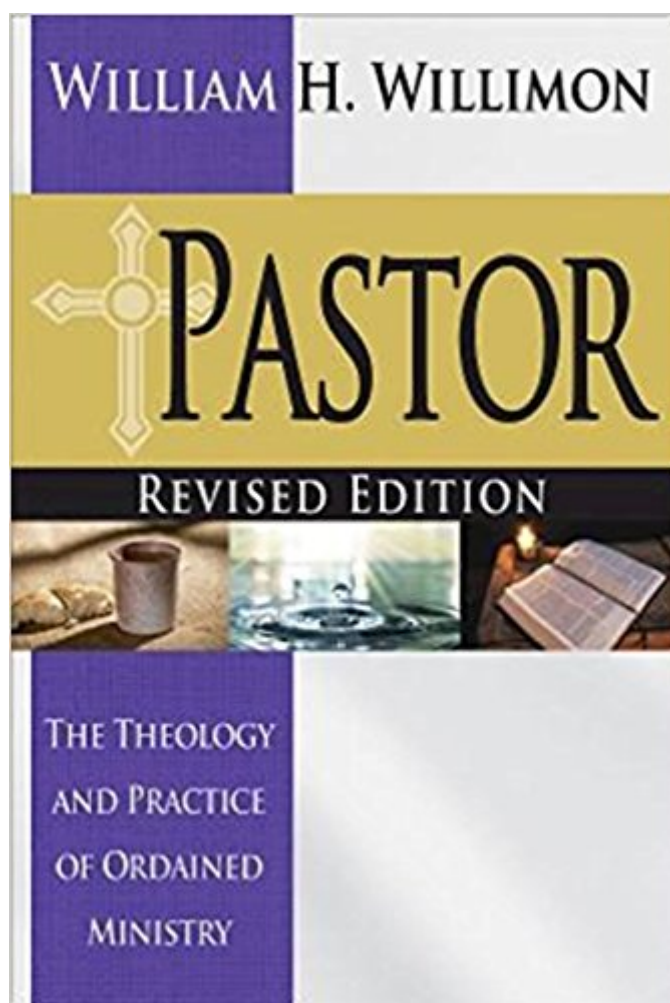


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Pastor: Revised Edition: The Theology And Practice Of Ordained Ministry



Synopsis

Ordained ministry, says Will Willimon, is a gift of God to the church—but that doesn't mean that it is easy. Always a difficult vocation, changes in society and the church in recent years have made the ordained life all the more complex and challenging. Is the pastor primarily a preacher, a professional caregiver, an administrator? Given the call of all Christians to be ministers to the world, what is the distinctive ministry of the ordained? When does one's ministry take on the character of prophet, and when does it become that of priest? What are the special ethical obligations and disciplines of the ordained? *Pastor: Revised Edition* explores these and other central questions about the vocation of ordained ministry. It begins with a discussion of who pastors are, asking about the theological underpinnings of ordained ministry, and then moves on to what pastors do, looking at the distinctive roles the pastor must fulfill. The book also draws on great teachers of the Christian tradition to demonstrate that, while much about Christian ministry has changed, its core concerns—preaching the word, the care of souls, the sacramental life of congregations—remains the same. Ordained ministry is a vocation to which we are called, not a profession that we choose. To answer that call is to open oneself to heartache and sometimes hardship; yet, given the one who calls, it is to make oneself available to deep and profound joy as well.

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Customer Reviews

A comprehensive guide to the joys and challenges of pastoral ministry by one of today's foremost

preachers. "For anyone who is working out 'with fear and trembling' what it means to be in ministry, this book is a gift. Will Willimon's book is solid theology with a profound understanding of Scripture for this ministerial calling." --Tony Campolo, Eastern College "Pastors are a battered breed these days. Images and impressions range from cheap to glittering to dogged. Will Willimon will have none of it; he counters with an enormous infusion of dignity, but it is dignity without a trace of pomposity. By articulating our baptismal, biblical, and theological foundations, he trumps a demeaning culture and a trivializing church, and restores honor to our vocations." --Eugene H. Peterson, Professor Emeritus of Spiritual Theology, Regent College. "There is great confusion these days about the role and function of a Protestant pastor. Writing out of his deep knowledge of Scripture and church history, and out of his long experience in the pastorate, Willimon furnishes some clear and compelling answers. I would recommend that every pastor and seminarian read, study, and reflect on this book." Elizabeth Achtemeier, Union Theological Seminary in Virginia "Pastor is the crowning achievement of Willimon's years of experience and research. It covers everything, from one's calling to ministry to every facet of personal and pastoral work with thoroughness and evangelical passion. Anyone who follows this theologically grounded, deeply practical guide will experience a rebirth of their calling and evolution of their ministry." Robert Webber, Northern Seminary --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

Feeling most at home behind a pulpit, Will Willimon's deepest calling is to be a preacher and truth-teller of Jesus Christ. He is Professor of the Practice of Christian Ministry at Duke University Divinity School and retired Bishop of the North Alabama Conference of The United Methodist Church, after serving for 20 years as faculty member and Dean of the Chapel at Duke University. He lives in Durham, North Carolina. Will Willimon has published many books, including his preaching subscription service on MinistryMatters.com, Pulpit Resource, and *Fear of the Other: No Fear in Love*, both published by Abingdon Press.

I am nearing the end of my seminary education, and this book was assigned to one of our culmination courses. I didn't know what to expect but quickly came to appreciate what Willimon offered to someone like me, trying to sort out my calling to the pastorate and my vocational future. Throughout this substantial book, he offers encouragement about the joys of being a pastor, shares some challenges about the role, and consistently grounds his ideas in robust theological thought and frequent biblical foundations. He is clearly an intellectual and academic, so the entirety of the book is not merely "practical application." But despite his headiness, the book was very accessible,

a much quicker read than I expected for a 330+ page book. To be sure, with such depth and exhaustive content, I didn't agree with everything that Willimon mentioned. I thought his discussion about potentially contentious issues like homosexuality and the ordination of women was rather dismissive, almost implying that those conversations have been unanimously resolved. With his background entrenched in the Protestant mainline, I found his periodic references to the evangelical church to be somewhat caricaturish and overly simplistic. And that mainline background informs his bias towards more "high church" models of corporate worship, which made some of his instructions and examples about how pastors should lead a congregation in worship to be rather disconnected from my experiences in the evangelical, "low church" world. But with these points of disconnect notwithstanding, I really appreciated Willimon's book. I feel freshly excited about entering the world of vocational, ordained ministry (without feeling like Willimon has offered anything other than a full-fledged commitment to the "priesthood of all believers"). I am reminded of the challenges that surely lie ahead in pastoral ministry. And I suspect that I'll refer back to this book at various points, as a helpful reference book to both theoretical and practical ("theology and practice") aspects of the pastorate. I'm happy to recommend the book to pastors, novice and experienced, for a solid grounding in what we do and how we might do it most effectively for God's glory.

Overview: This work is likely one of the best books that I have read by a pastor or theologian from the Methodist/Wesleyan tradition in quite some time. Willimon holds a very solid and historical understanding of the person and office of the ordained pastor. Throughout, Willimon attempts to yoke modern pastors to our ancestors and forbearers in the faith by connecting pastoral work to our ancient moorings. He does this especially through his use of the book of Acts and the early ministry of the apostles. Willimon seemingly is little impressed with modern evaluations of ministry by "success" and "growth," in deference to a higher view of ministry as the role of leading, guiding, and shepherding the baptized. Willimon's appreciation for the church as the called-out resistance and counter-cultural movement in a world of darkness was deeply moving at points. In particular, I appreciated the Bishop's use of quotations and historical anecdotes from the Early Fathers, and the Reformers. Critique: Although Willimon surprised me by quoting from several of the Reformers (Calvin and Luther) as well as even the Westminster Confession of faith, some of his more liberal United Methodism showed forth in his constant references and applications to female pastors. The Bishop went well out of his way to include female ministers and priests in most discussions, but did little to justify his view of gender and ordination. For this reason, Willimon might deserve some "push back" for not defending the controversial position of open ordination. This might be surprising, since

he so clearly labors to connect modern pastoral work with that of the ancients and Reformers. Application: Willimon opened my eyes to a broader understanding of baptism as a delineating mark upon the minister's role of leading the covenant people of God. Although he does not give a full-fledged theology of baptism as a sign and seal of faith (I'm not sure he would even use those terms), he did find occasion to draw baptism into almost every pastoral discussion on the love, labor, and responsibility of the ordained person to tend especially to those who have openly identified with Christ by the covenantal sign of water. I found his incessant references to baptism refreshing, and it reminded me to speak more often of baptism's ongoing significance for the Christian life. Best Quote: "The church itself forms a culture that is counter to the world's ways of doing things. The church does not simply reach out to and speak to the dominant culture, it seeks to disrupt that culture by rescuing some from it, then to inculcate people into the new culture called the church" (p. 209). -Matthew Everhard is the Senior Pastor of Faith Evangelical Presbyterian Church in Brooksville, Florida

For the first few chapters I found this book to be quite pedestrian. However, as Willimon got to discussing the work of the church and pastoral leadership, I found my self slowing down to catch every word and nuance. His work is quite thorough and accurate as a description of the ministry, it's demands and vicissitudes. I appreciated the author's grasp of history and frequent references to the church fathers. His ministerial experiences from a life full of pastoral service lend depth and authenticity to his writing. I recommend "Theology and Practice of Ordained Ministry" to seminarians and especially those preparing for or in their first pastoral assignment. Of course any minister, wherever they find them self along the vocational trail, will find inspirational as well as stimulating material.

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