

Geoffrey Stevenson (Ed)
Pulpit Journeys
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This book will be interesting to preachers, because it is good preachers writing about preaching. Most of the seventeen contributors are white, male, Protestant evangelicals, but each of the two female and two black preachers writes excitingly about discovering their own distinctive voice as a preacher. It is an inconsistent book. Some write about their particular call to preach and preachers who have inspired them; others write about how they preach and prepare to preach. Some write about evangelistic preaching to people outside church life; others write about preaching within the Christian community.

One of the major criticisms today of preaching as part of regular church worship is that it disables church members. Leading worship, talk about God, theological thinking and even praying are left to the preacher, and the better the preacher does these things the less likely are other church members to do them or to feel able to do them. That problem is addressed only by Steve Chalke (in whose congregation each sermon is followed by "The Sunday Debate" or "Grill the Preacher" - a discussion which lasts for as long as the preacher has spoken) and Anthony Reddie, who describes his inter-active, participatory method, inspired by the books of Thomas Groome.

The essays of Susan Durber and Anthony Reddie suggest books that could help preachers; James D.G. Dunn describes how he prepares for worship as he leads as a Local Preacher in the Methodist Church. Rob Frost writes passionately in defence of evangelistic performance preaching, comparing the enthusiastic reception of eighteenth century preachers like Whitfield and the Wesleys with the huge audiences of today's stand-up comedians and/or speakers like Charles Handy and John Gray.

Any preacher will get something from this book - inspiration, hints, new directions to follow, different techniques to use, renewed confidence to do things differently.

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