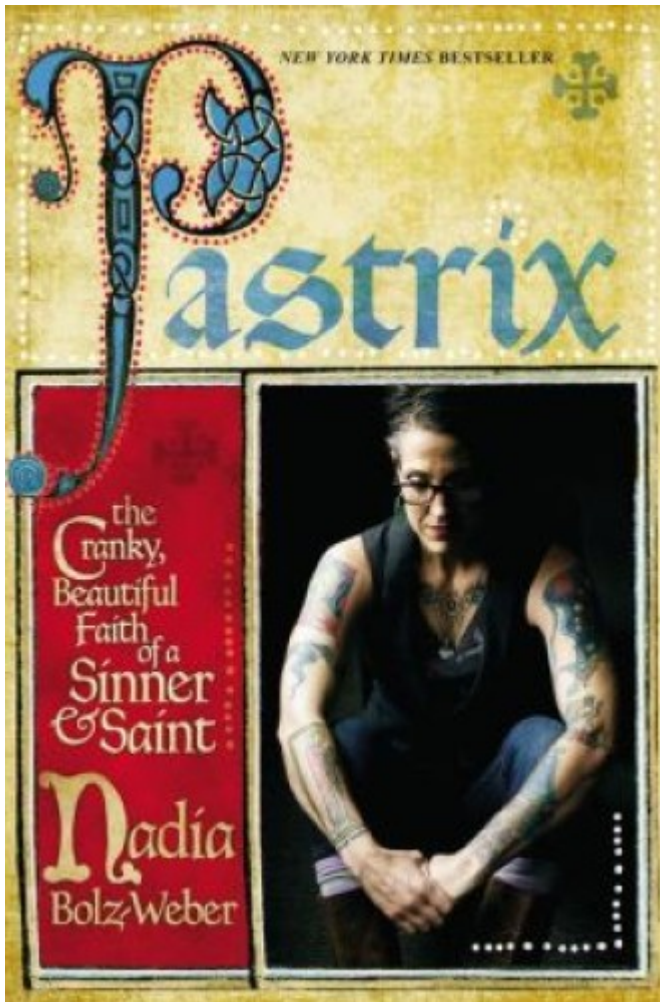


Ayanna Johnson Watkins's favorite books for ministry

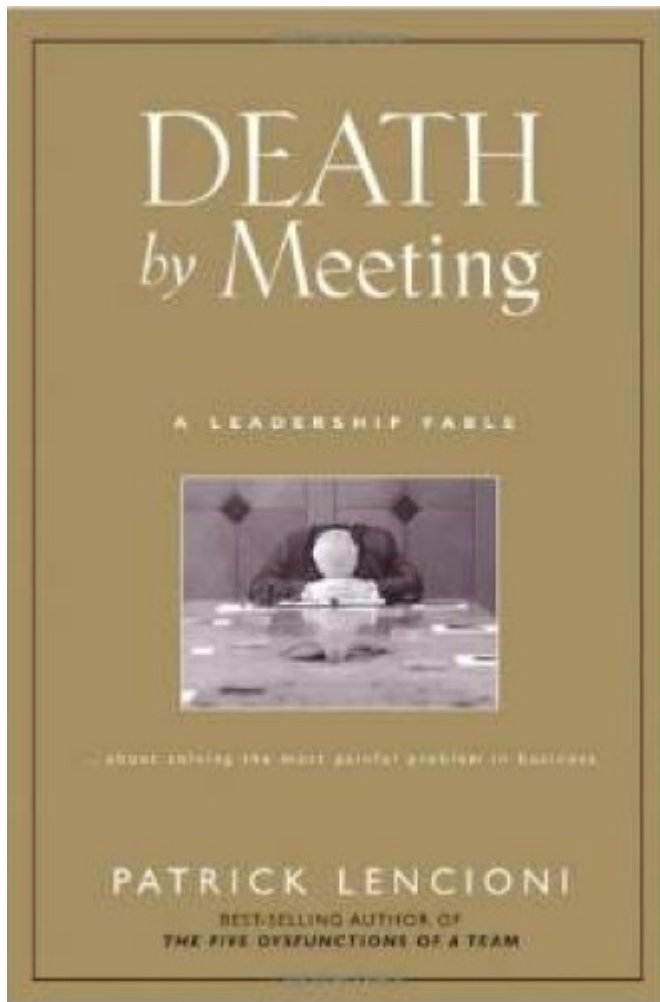
selected by [Ayanna Johnson Watkins](#) in the [October 15, 2014](#) issue

In Review



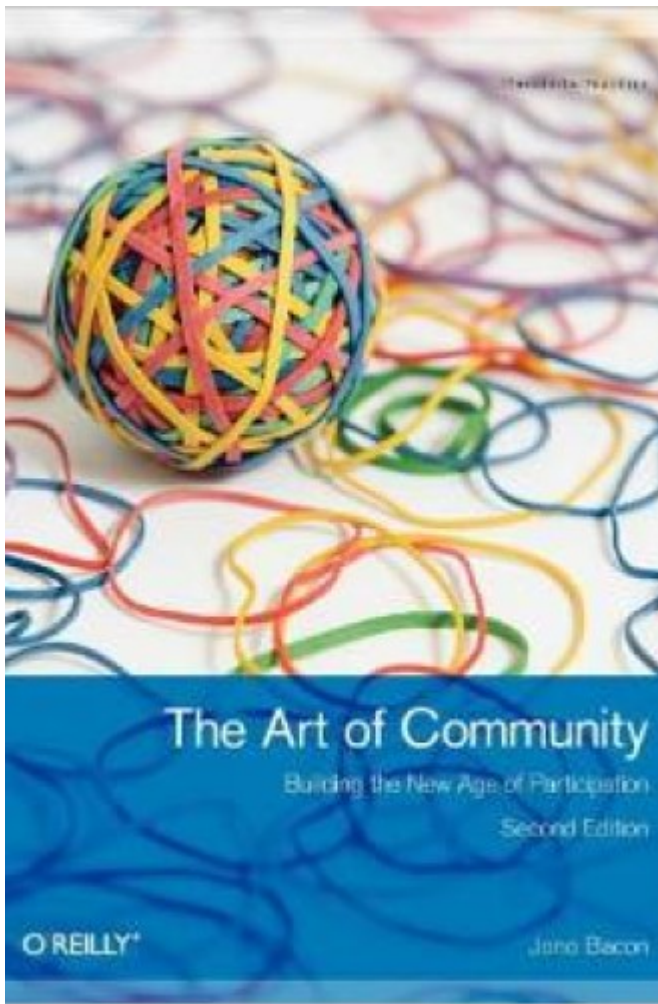
Pastrix

By Nadia Bolz-Weber
Jericho



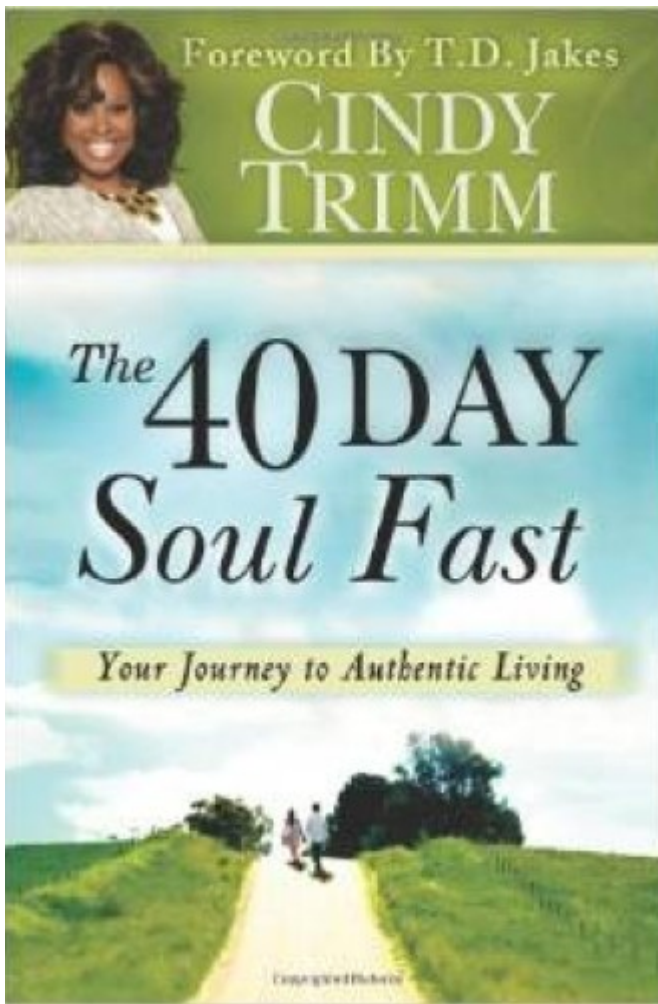
Death by Meeting

by Patrick Lencioni
Jossey-Bass



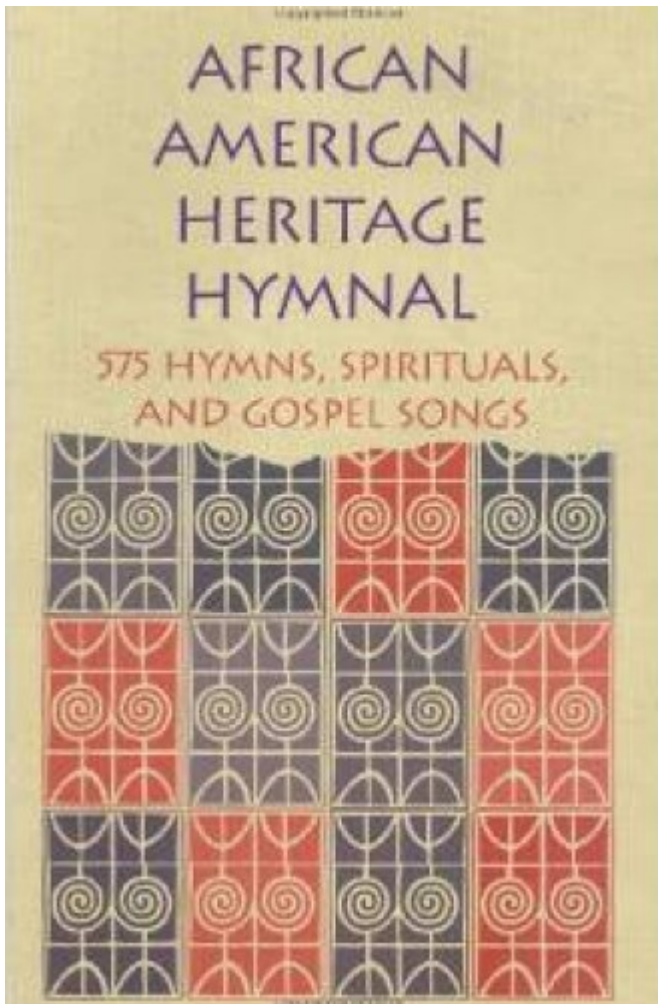
The Art of Community

by Jono Bacon
O'Reilly Media



The 40 Day Soul Fast

by Cindy Trimm
Destiny Image



African American Heritage Hymnal

by Delores Carpenter and Nolan E. Williams Jr.
GIA Publications

What are the best books for ministry written in the 21st century? We [asked seven pastors](#) to pick their favorites. — Ed.

Nadia Bolz-Weber deftly weaves together scripture with the text of her own life and the lives around her in a way that is disarmingly authentic and full of the grace I long for daily in my own experience of ministry. *Pastrix: The Cranky, Beautiful Faith of a Sinner and Saint* (Jericho) bears witness to the presence of God in the middle of mess after tragic, hilarious mess.

While meetings can be founts of creativity, productivity, and brilliant communication, they can also be plodding, demoralizing, and organizationally fatal. *Death by Meeting: A Leadership Fable about Solving the Most Painful Problem in*

Business, by Patrick Lencioni (Jossey-Bass), argues in story form that it is possible to consistently have the former kind. Lencioni's fable is set in a fictitious corporate environment, but its principles carry over easily into ministry settings.

In *The Art of Community: Building the New Age of Participation* (O'Reilly Media), Jono Bacon acknowledges the fragmentation of community in general and describes how he accidentally created a totally unexpected and highly functional community made up entirely of open-source software creators online. He discusses what is at the heart of community and how to foster, nurture, and protect it. This is as much a book on leadership as it is on the making of community.

During Lent I read *The 40 Day Soul Fast: Your Journey to Authentic Living*, by Cindy Trimm (Destiny Image), with a group of women from my church—clergy and lay, at various places in our lives and faith. I was expecting something didactic and prescriptive, but Trimm's insights and her gentle, nonjudgmental style provided my group with the tools and courage we needed to challenge ourselves to be more ourselves.

Delores Carpenter and Nolan E. Williams Jr. have put together a hymnal that gathers the rich musical resources of the African-American church and honors the tradition's oral roots and its complex contemporary shifts. *African American Heritage Hymnal* (GIA Publications) includes so many widely familiar songs that it creates common space in a way few other hymnals do. Regardless of your cultural tradition, this hymnal should be added to your musical ministry toolbox.