

Resources for clergy peer groups

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There are many resources available to those who wish to create or sustain clergy peer learning groups, a subject I [wrote about](#) for the current issue of the *Century*. Many can be found at [Pastoral Excellence](#), which, along with describing strategies for initiating or supporting peer groups, offers articles, resource lists and examples of peer learning.

These seven books offer further help in thinking about the structure and content of peer groups:

God's Potters: Pastoral Leadership and the Shaping of Congregations, by

Jackson W. Carroll. Carroll draws on data to examine the state of Protestant and Catholic

clergy at the beginning of the 21st century. He addresses the changing roles of clergy and laypeople, the future of women in ministry and the shifting supply of clergy; and he offers strategies for cultivating excellence in ministry.

Know Your Story and Lead with It: The Power of Narrative in Clergy

Leadership, by Richard L. Heste and Kelli Walker-Jones. The authors help clergy explore and articulate their stories and then use these stories as a resource for leadership. The book grows out of

the authors' work with clergy peer groups in the Lilly-funded Sustaining Pastoral Excellence project.

Pursuing Pastoral Excellence: Pathways to

Fruitful Leadership, By Paul E Hopkins. Hopkins explores the stories of seven pastors to show pathways to leadership--and to illustrate practices that lead to clergy burnout.

Resurrecting Excellence: Shaping Faithful

Christian Ministry, by Gregory L. Jones and Kevin R. Armstrong. This book provides the theological basis for exploring pastoral excellence. The authors focus on the practices of living as faithful disciples and the ministries of pastors, lay leaders and congregations that embody "a more excellent way."

The Art of Convening: Authentic

Engagement in Meetings, Gatherings, and Conversations, by Craig and Patricia Neal. This

book describes a system of convening that includes nine principles and practices for conversation. These aspects provide a model facilitators might use to assess the life of a peer learning group.

A Hidden Wholeness: The Journey Toward an

Undivided Life, by Parker J. Palmer. Palmer describes the ways in which "circles of trust" support peer group commitments. He provides a helpful framework, along with poetry, exercises and stories for thinking about group dynamics.

Sabbath in the City:

Sustaining Urban Pastoral Excellence, by Bryan P Stone and Claire E. Wolfteich.

The authors identify challenges that face urban pastors and practices that foster excellence in urban ministry, including cultivating holy friendships.