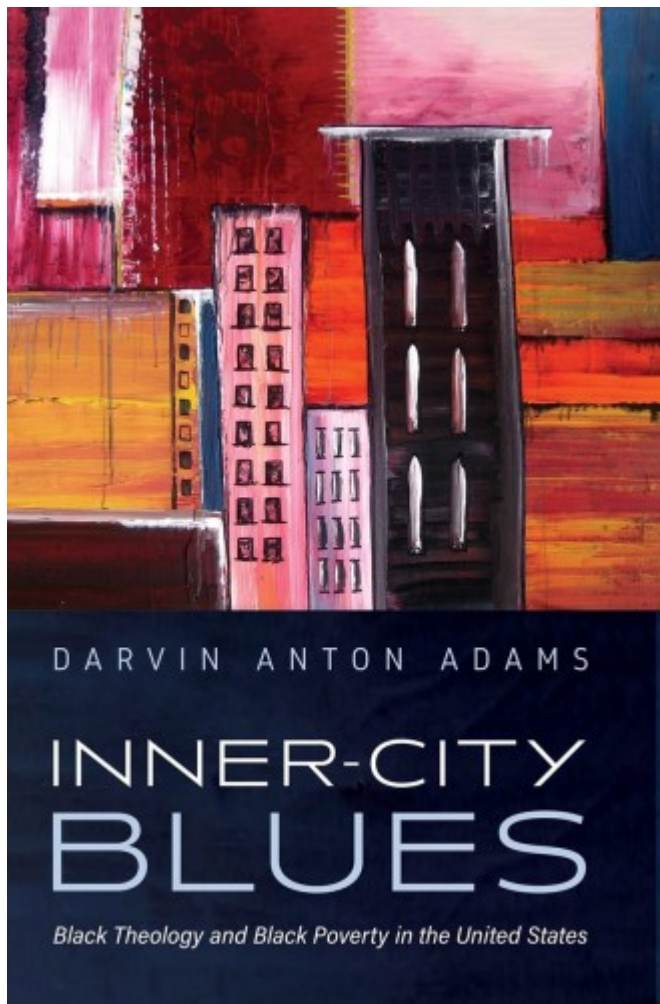


Take & Read: Practical theology

New books in practical theology

by [Susan Willhauck](#) in the [October 2023](#) issue

In Review



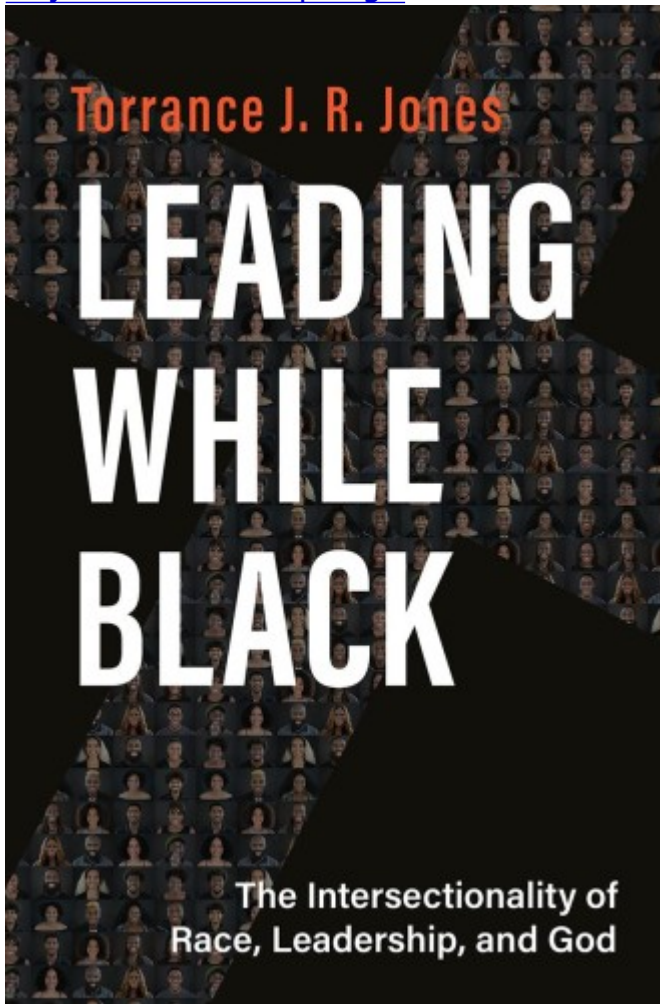
Inner-City Blues

Black Theology and Black Poverty in the United States

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Cascade

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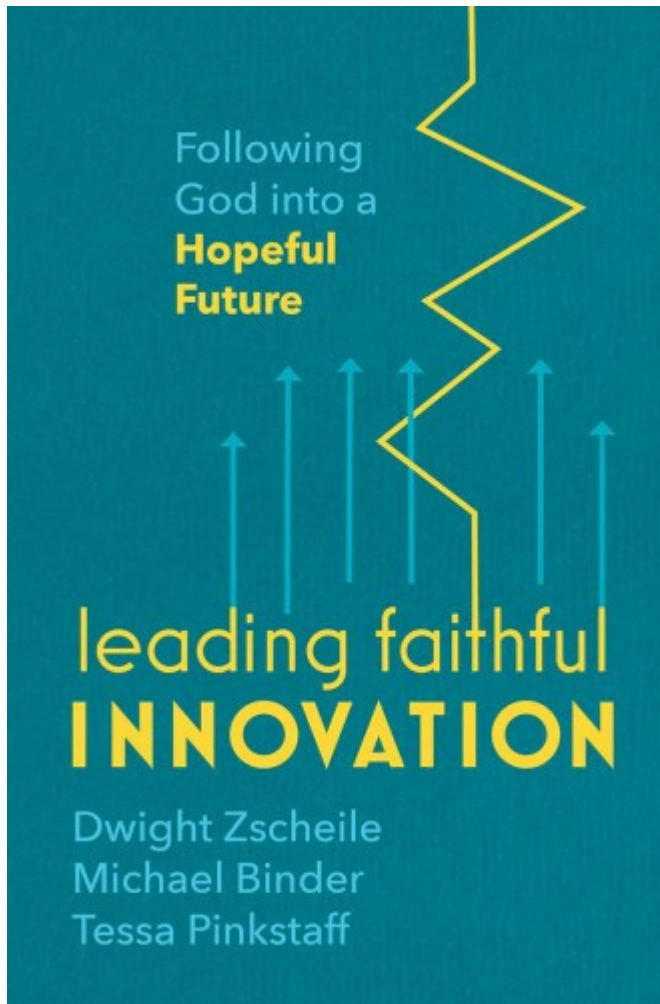
Leading While Black

The Intersectionality of Race, Leadership, and God

By Torrance J. R. Jones

Fortress

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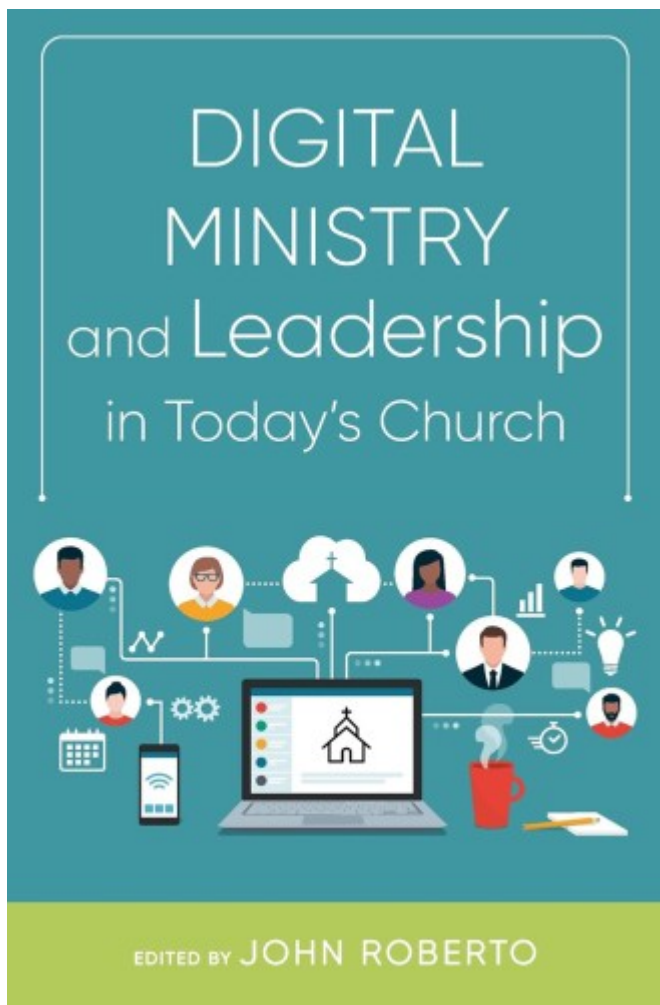


Leading Faithful Innovation

Following God into a Hopeful Future

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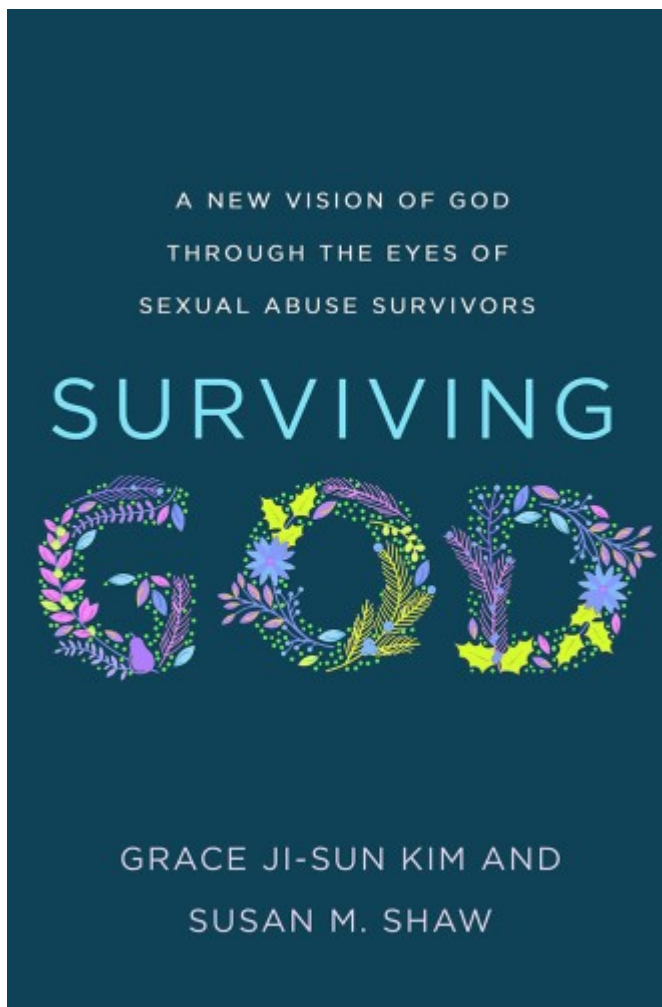


Digital Ministry and Leadership in Today's Church

Edited by John Roberto

Liturgical Press

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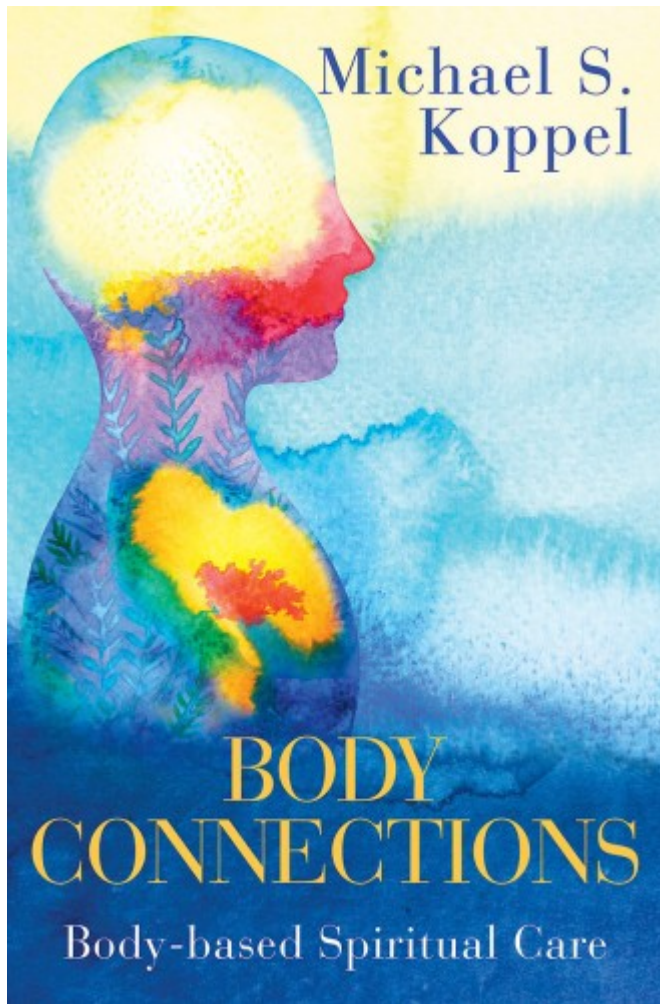
Surviving God

A New Vision of God through the Eyes of Sexual Abuse Survivors

By Grace Ji-Sun Kim and Susan M. Shaw

Broadleaf Books

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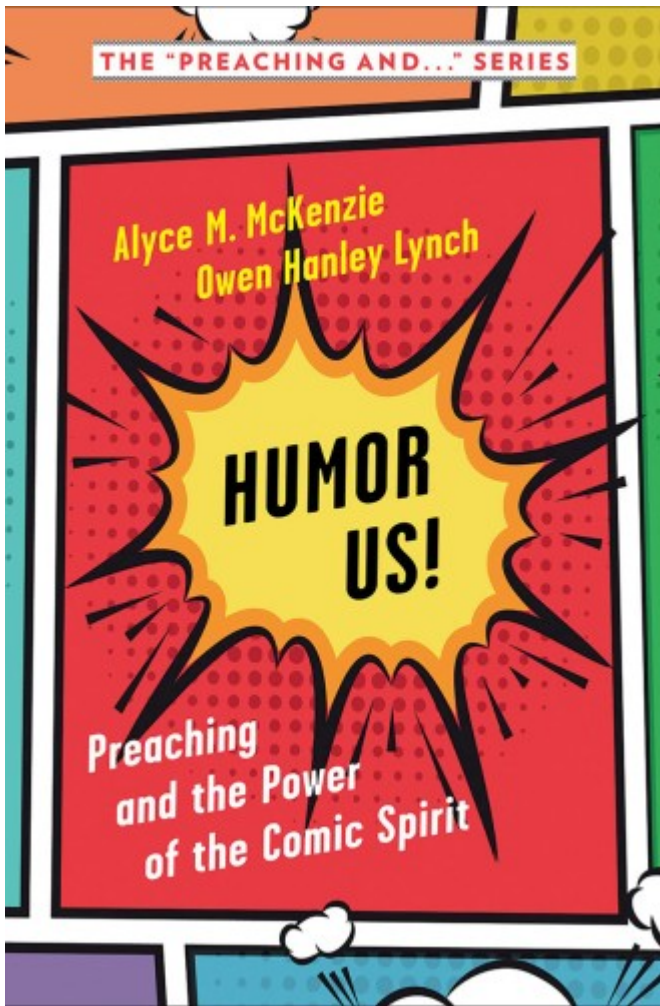
Body Connections

Body-Based Spiritual Care

By Michael S. Koppel

Abingdon

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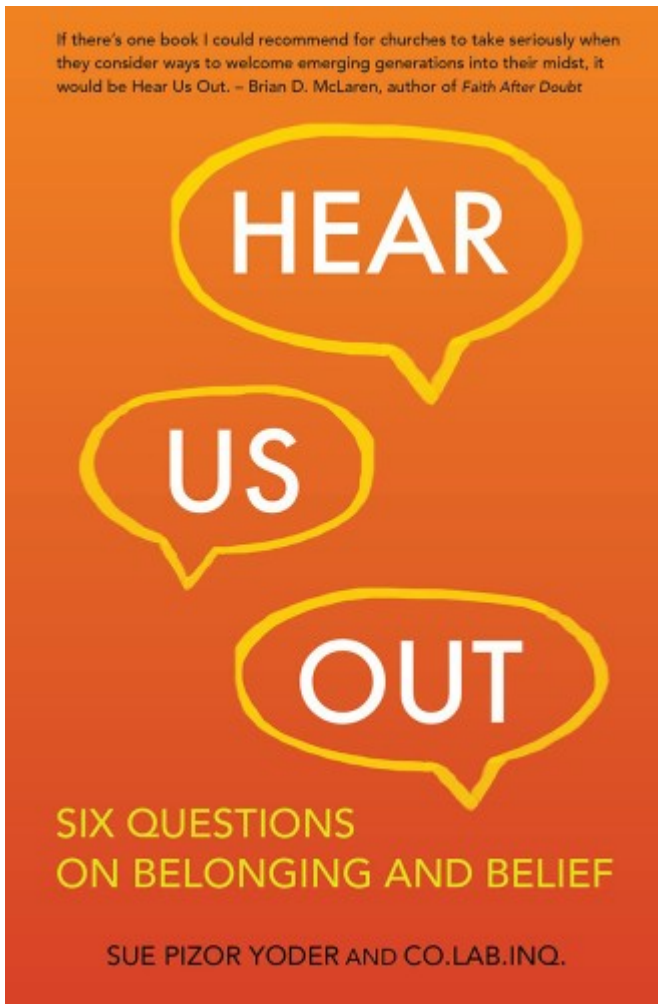
Humor Us!

Preaching and the Power of the Comic Spirit

By Alyce M. McKenzie and Owen Hanley Lynch

Westminster John Knox

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Hear Us Out

Six Questions on Belonging and Belief

By Sue Pizor Yoder et al.

Fortress

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Inner-City Blues: Black Theology and Black Poverty in the United States

By Darvin Anton Adams

Cascade

In this thorough study, Darvin Adams calls upon insights from Black liberation theology, scripture, blues music, literature, and social theory to expose the problem

of Black poverty in the United States. The economic oppression of Black people—including mass incarceration, poor living conditions, police brutality, and lack of jobs—is not caused by greed, Adams believes, but by idolatry. In the Bible, those who reject God to follow the idols of self and status also work to ensure that these idols will pass on to the next generation. Adams uses this view of idolatry to unpack the economic implications of institutional slavery and the effects of generational poverty. The desperate need for economic development in Black communities demands a theology devoted to economic empowerment through access to goods and services, development of Black business, a greater stake in policy solutions, and a more inclusive capitalist system.

Leading While Black: The Intersectionality of Race, Leadership, and God

By Torrance J. R. Jones
Fortress

How does being Black and a Christian influence leadership and public engagement? Without depicting a monolithic Black Christian leadership style, Torrance Jones describes the lived experiences of senior-level executives from several fields, including medicine, law, and education. His research demonstrates that Black leaders share experiences that differ significantly from other populations, giving them a distinctive message as leaders. Jones's interviewees described the isolation of being Black in majority-White institutions, the expectations of those who are happy to finally have a person of color in leadership, and the "consistent arrows" of coworkers' internalized biases. Jones traces the deep roots of Christianity in the Black community and identifies five strategies for leaders in today's polarized social climate, rooted in Jesus' leadership and public engagement.

Leading Faithful Innovation: Following God into a Hopeful Future

By Dwight Zscheile, Michael Binder, and Tessa Pinkstaff
Fortress

As congregations face the breakdown of established ways of being church, what does faithful innovation look like? Inspired by the story of Paul meeting Lydia on an unexpected trip to Macedonia, Dwight Zscheile, Michael Binder, and Tessa Pinkstaff argue that instead of fixing the church, we should look for people "outside the

gates” who seek spiritual purpose. Addressing those who find meaning in yoga, calm apps, TED Talks, and podcasts, the authors identify life-giving practices—such as dwelling in the word, spiritual journey conversations, and neighborhood prayer walks—to help people connect more deeply with God. The early pattern of discipleship was for Christians to go out and receive hospitality wherever they could proclaim the gospel. Now congregations are used to doing the hosting, expecting people to come to them. This book calls the church to seek out places where we can meet our Lydias.

Digital Ministry and Leadership in Today’s Church

Edited by John Roberto

Liturgical Press

If the adage “whoever tells the stories defines the culture” is true, Christian communities need to tell and live the story of Jesus Christ in every possible way. John Roberto describes the church’s digital transformation, its acceleration due to the COVID pandemic, and what that means for ministry. Online spaces and groups using social media can build robust relationships, engage in faith formation, and extend congregational care, he argues. While creating “digitally integrated ministry” and curating digital media collaboratively is a vital skill, there are ethical considerations. Roberto advises taking a critical approach and following protocols while being open to innovation. This practical book will galvanize readers to extend into online spaces. Digital ministry is today’s version of the Word made flesh, and there is still hope that we can make the gospel go viral.

Surviving God: A New Vision of God through the Eyes of Sexual Abuse Survivors

By Grace Ji-Sun Kim and Susan M. Shaw

Broadleaf Books

Grace Ji-Sun Kim and Susan Shaw tell how they survived the God they met in their childhood churches. This was a God who allowed, and perhaps condoned, sexual abuse. By preaching patriarchal beliefs such as “trust and obey” and mandating

unquestioned forgiveness, churches protect perpetrators and traumatize survivors, leaving them with shame and guilt. A theology that views God as controlling a divine plan that may include abuse—"the God of bad ideas"—is untenable for survivors. Kim and Shaw dismantle the image of a violent God who keeps abusive people in power, and they offer alternative notions of a God who suffers and survives with us. Considering the intersections of gender, race, sexual identity, and class, they position Jesus as a survivor of sexual violence. This readable and helpful resource facilitates journeys toward healing.

Body Connections: Body-Based Spiritual Care

By Michael S. Koppel

Abingdon

Michael Koppel delves into the ways we associate the human body with faith—and the implications for spiritual care. Utilizing Judith Herman's body-oriented therapies, he offers a model for caregiving that involves listening with the body and creating a safe holding environment. Instead of shaming the body, the goal is to become conscious of it in a way that reduces negative thoughts. Difficult people or situations can be navigated by practices of staying with the body, rather than pushing the experience away. Koppel advocates for permeable care which engages God's protection without building walls. Grace as transference of well-being is a bodily experience that reveals God to us. In Koppel's model of caregiving, bodies are resources for discovery rather than judgment.

Humor Us! Preaching and the Power of the Comic Spirit

By Alyce M. McKenzie and Owen

Hanley Lynch

Westminster John Knox

In this critical study, homiletician Alyce McKenzie and communications scholar Owen Lynch offer a theological rationale for the use of humor in preaching. Many scholarly works on preaching discourage the use of humor because it is often used to "warm up the crowd" without having anything to do with the message, and it can unintentionally hurt someone. But research in psychology cites the benefits of using

humor to promote empathy, catharsis, and coping. Humor, the authors show, is an integral part of God's character and an essential characteristic of humanity. Even preachers who regularly use humor will benefit from this volume's practical wisdom, which includes looking at life with "soft eyes" and avoiding "backing over the spikes" (returning to the bad news after delivering the good). This useful work serves well to remind us that preachers are called to joy.

Hear Us Out: Six Questions on Belonging and Belief

By Sue Pizer Yoder et al.

Fortress

Most people who believe in God do not belong to a faith community, says pastor and researcher Sue Yoder. This fascinating book reports on ways that people age 18 to 35 who do not affiliate with any religious tradition create meaning in community. Yoder's team of researchers conducted 225 interviews and found that emerging generations are looking for safe places to explore, question, doubt, and wonder about what they believe. The interviewees see denominations and church hierarchies as authoritarian, outdated, and homophobic. Yet they yearn to experience inspiration from communities and mentors, and they value expressions of faith that involve the senses, creativity, and the arts. The authors stay away from being prescriptive, but they note the power of responsible storytelling for healing. This is not another conversation about how to get "those people" into our churches; it is a dynamic invitation to join in friendship with emerging generations.