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Book Review of Family Ministry: A Comprehensive Guide, 2nd ed., by Diana Garland, 2012.

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present to those he companions—accepting their fragility, reactivity, and woundedness, and opening a hospitable space which bids all of the parts of the person to come and find rest” (p. 124). ❖

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Family Ministry: A Comprehensive Guide (2nd Ed).

Garland, D. (2012). Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic.

This extensive work builds on the first edition published some thirteen years earlier. To say that it is a “comprehensive guide” to family ministry is not an overstatement. Diana Garland has done a masterful job of updating this important work targeting Christians involved in family ministry whether they are professionally trained or not. Garland describes this book as “a guide for those who give vision to and lead family ministry” (p. 14). This edition has been completely reorganized, particularly in the area of integration of social science with biblical content and theological insights with practical application. Garland’s excellent historical survey of the family has been improved by adding implications of that history for families today. Finally, a chapter entitled *Working Together* has been added, reflecting current thinking on the importance of families integrating service into the fabric of their life together. The book is organized into four sections which are briefly summarized below.

Section A: The Context of Family Ministry begins with a challenge to examine the contexts in which we each as readers interpret Scripture and family life. As she aptly states, “There is no way to stand above or beyond one’s culture and community to interpret Scripture free of these filters, nor would it be somehow better if we could” (p. 23). The section includes an historical overview of the American Family followed by a chapter on the American family today. She clearly articulates how the purpose of family has evolved over time. From an extended system including parents, children, other family members, servants and sometimes even animals whose common purpose was to contribute to society by their common labor, the family unit now functions as a consumer-based system to provide emotional care and support for one another. In this context, Garland offers the following definition: “family is composed of those who choose to be followers of Jesus Christ and who are caregivers of one another. (Mark 3:31-35)” (p. 15). This integration of biblical and socio-behavioral-historical concepts makes this work especially valuable to Christian family life ministers.

Section B: Family Formation focuses not only how families are formed from a family systems perspective, but particularly how Christian families develop a faith identity. Faith communities sometimes struggle to support families in their faith development particularly when those families are different in structure or nontraditional. Garland asserts that the traditional nuclear family consisting of parents and children has been the norm for less than 5% of the past millennium. Therefore, looking with openness and grace at single parent families, blended families, adoptive families and extended families to name a few should be the goal of Christian family ministry. Garland next turns to an overview of theories of family development and posits that family development is best captured by looking at phases of relationships between family members.

Section C: Family Dynamics does an excellent job of looking at integrating the internal workings of family life with biblical teaching. This informs the way Christians are called to live their lives continually regardless of the challenges and stresses of life in this fallen world. This section does a wonderful job of looking at the “guts” of healthy families by discussing communication, conflict, forgiveness, parenting and a host of other essential topics, but perhaps the most exciting part of this section is the final chapter which discusses how family ministry can support families to work beyond themselves by serving in the community or abroad.

The final section, Leading Family Ministry, is a treasure trove of practical ideas about how to implement family ministry activities in a church context. Planning, leading and evaluating family ministry are all discussed, beginning with an honest look at how churches can help or hinder how the church family approaches family life. Garland challenges us to understand that congregations “are *communities* in a social world where neighborhoods are no longer communities” and that “it is helpful to consider family ministry a *perspective* we take on how we live congregational life together; it is not just a *program* or even a set of programs designed with families as the object of our focus” (p. 449).

This outstanding book should be considered as a textbook for students in theological seminaries as a part of their preparation for pastoral family ministry. Social work practitioners employed in Christian elementary or secondary schools or colleges and universities will find this book helpful in their work with students and families. Social work undergraduate or graduate programs would find this book a rich resource for their professors and students in courses teaching family content. Also, congregational social workers should use this book in designing church programs and recommend it to their clergy and church staff as they vision cast for family ministry in their churches. Social workers who volunteer as family ministry coordinators will find in this book resources to equip all members of the church family to care for one another well and to create safe places for members of the community to experience the love and embrace that they

so desperately need. Finally, this book will be a treasured resource for any person, lay or professional, who has a passion for ministry to families. ❖

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Announcing a New Book Review Editor for *Social Work & Christianity*



NACSW is pleased to announce that James R. Vanderwoerd, Ph.D., assumed the responsibilities of Book Review Editor for *Social Work & Christianity* on July 1, 2014. Jim is Professor of Social Work and Director of Faculty Mentoring at Redeemer University College, Ancaster, Ontario, Canada.

We want to express our deep appreciation and thanks to Terry Wolfer, Ph.D., for his 15 years of outstanding service and Book Review Editor. Terry is Professor of Social Work at the College of Social Work, University of South Carolina, Columbia, SC. Terry was the successor of Alan Keith-Lucas in this role. We have been richly blessed by Terry's thoughtful, careful work and look forward to the strong leadership James will bring.

If you are interested in reviewing books or receiving books to be reviewed, contact Jim Vanderwoerd at jwoerd@redeemer.ca.

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(See the last page of the journal for submission guidelines.)