

Faith in Hospices: Spiritual Care and the End of Life, Derek Murray (SPCK 2002), 148 pp, £10.99 pbk

Perhaps the best books emerge slowly after many years of reflecting on our experience. In this reflection Murray offers the reader a comprehensive overview of the spiritual care of the dying within the context of the history of the hospice movement. *Murray* uses his experience honestly, sensitively and theologically. This is the fruit of over two decades of experience as chaplain of St Columba's Hospice in Edinburgh. The perceptiveness is perhaps born out of this minister's woundedness. The text begins with the story of his own wife's diagnosis, illness and death and the struggle of being the recipient of care rather than the care-giver.

Murray does not fall into the trap of idealizing the hospice movement - he questions the impression that hospice care inevitably and invariably delivers an easy death. He is honest in reminding us that death can be difficult, painful and bloody. Perhaps the most significant affirmation that can be said of this book is that a reader would be confident in the quality of pastoral care offered by this particular chaplain. There is real and profound wisdom here. Perhaps Murray might have developed some of the themes and questions? The relationship between spiritual and religious needs demands much more thought. How a chaplain maintains her identity in a healthcare environment needs further exploration. Above all, the most curious gap, which only Murray can answer, is how on earth any human being can stay fresh, engaged, vulnerable and open to pain and loss in ministry. All in training for lay or ordained ministry should be obliged to read this book.

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