

Foreword

Jessicah Krey Duckworth

A job title has an incredible way of informing one's work. When I taught at Luther Seminary in St. Paul, Minnesota, my title was Assistant Professor of Congregational and Community Care Leadership, and the department in which I taught carried the same name. The title begged for explanation. Why congregational care? Because care is the responsibility of the whole congregation. Why community? Because the community members and organizations in which a congregation is located also carry the responsibility to provide care for the neighbors who call a community home. *How* a congregation interfaces with the community's care and vice versa is a question worth engaging. The twofold vision created by my job title provided an opportunity for me and the students in each classroom of learning to reimagine our inclinations and expectations about the field and practice of pastoral care.

How might the church's caring activities participate in God's vision for healing and redemption of the world? For whom ought the body of Christ to care? How does a missional perspective motivate a

congregation's commitment to care beyond the church and how does care motivate mission? These questions arose among the participants in the classes I taught at Luther. And these are the normative questions Rick Rouse invites congregations to explore throughout the pages of this book, *Beyond Church Walls*. Here he lays out a vision for congregations who would consider cultivating a culture of care in response to God's missional calling.

Though the capacity for a wider circle of care exists in every community, many congregations are not well informed to provide such care, theologically or practically. Most congregations have processes set up to care for established members. Rouse describes a missional perspective of pastoral care that extends the caregiving role beyond the pastor's or congregational leader's responsibility to the whole congregation, and further, extends the congregation's care beyond established members toward people and partners within the community beyond the walls of the church. Congregation and community care motivates congregations to attend to the needs of their surrounding community and seek to build partnerships with community organizations already providing good care. In this model, *where* care is happening is as important as *who* is caring. A missional perspective of pastoral care invites a congregation's leadership to nurture and support the caring relationships within the congregation and between the congregation and community. Care is hope made visible in the world God loves.

This perspective wells up from within Rouse's own experience as a pastor. In August 1992, his congregation's building was burned to the ground by a serial arsonist. In Christian love and care, Pastor Rouse and his congregation reached out to the family of the arsonist, and to the community surrounding the church. What was the result of this gracious outreach? A new church building designed as a community center to partner with and host the community in shared efforts to

care for one another in light of the good news of God's compassion and hope. In this book, Rouse blends his passion for discipleship and evangelism with his wisdom around building a missional, caring community. He writes about the convictions he lives.

The call of the missional church is to proclaim gospel as good news for the human condition, to confess hope in action as concretely as possible—a hope made visible in Jesus' ministry. As Jesus provided care and forgiveness to all he encountered, so too the church is called to seek the welfare of all of creation. As such, a missional church seeks to align its ministries of care with God's good news of compassion and hope for the whole world.

I imagine you picked up this book because like me, you love the church and yet, have a sense that the love and care shared within the church is needed in large measure beyond the church as well. In your hands you have a resource to inspire that hope into a reality.