# Contents

Acknowledgments vii

## Introduction. Worship as Ritual: Understanding and Claiming Ethical Christian Ritual
- 1. What Is “Ritual”? 1
- 4. Four Attributes of Ritual Practice 4
- 9. Reasons to Create Caring Liturgies 9

1. Creative Rites: Assessing Pastoral Ritual Need 19
   - Joanie’s Story 22
   - The Problem of Resistance 24
   - Resistance as a Dilemma between Theology and Experience 27
   - Ritual Creativity: Solving Dilemmas through the Third Way 34
   - Resistance as Unrecognized Vulnerability and the Need for Empathy 36

2. Ritual Midwives: Planning and Leading Ritual 43
   - Engaging a Caring, Competent Community for Ritual Planning 43
   - Four Attributes Necessary for Ritual Planning 46
   - Roles Necessary to Planning a Ritual 51
   - Roles Necessary to Conducting a Ritual 53
   - Speaking or Acting “On Behalf Of” 59
3. Metaphors and Symbols: Linking a Person’s Story to the Christian Story 65
   Arriving at a “Defining Metaphor” 66
   How Metaphor Works 69
   Entering the World of the Metaphor 71
   From Metaphor to Symbol 75
   From Symbol to Sacrament: The Sacramental Principle 77
   Using Symbols Sacramentally 79
   People as Symbols 81
   Effective Symbols: Symbolic Rupture 84
   Using Symbols Ethically 86

4. Ritual Honesty: Holding Truthful Tension 89
   Five Aspects of Ritual Honesty 89
   1. A Ritual Sets a Dominant Feeling-Tone 91
   2. Accommodating a Wide Range of Feelings and Thoughts 93
   3. Ritual Symbols Must Be True 99
   4. Ritual Involves Everyone Present 101
   5. Allowing the Creative Tension of Opposites to Abide Together 103

5. Holy Sacrifice: Mediating the Labor Pains of Change 109
   A Brief Christian Midrash on Sacrifice 111
   Labor as an Expression and Integration of Holy Sacrifice 115

6. The Paschal Mystery: The Crux of Caring Ritual 123
   Centerpiece of Christian Living: The Paschal Mystery of Christ 124
   1. Paschal Mystery as Ritual Spirituality of Baptism 128
   2. Paschal Mystery as Lens Through Which to See Life 132
   3. Paschal Mystery as Both Call and Commitment of the Baptized 133
   4. Death to New Life as the Critical Criterion 135
   Conclusion 138

Notes 139
Index 147