

based programs for persons of all ages and developmental stages. Very frequently, congregations and church leaders know of members with unmet health care or other needs who are falling through the cracks in an increasingly restrictive and complex health care reimbursement system. More than likely, structures for adult education and counseling, volunteer programs and community outreach are already in place in church settings. With these foundations in place, the next step in the development of a medical-religious partnership is to plan and implement the program.

While the book does not delve into such implementation, it does refer readers to national organizations and resources that can provide that support. *Building Healthy Communities*

through Medical-Religious Partnerships can help to educate and inform the program planning process.

The faith-health partnership can be built upon mutual trust, with the common goal of bringing individuals to fullness of life. The examples and resources provided in the text can support this caring endeavor. And as the partnership strives to integrate body, mind and spirit, the effort may ultimately help congregation members achieve fullness of life, to become all God intended us to be.

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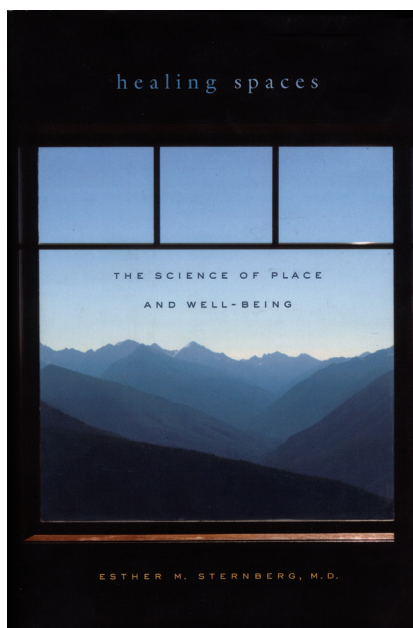
DOCTOR SHOWS HOW PHYSIOLOGY, SPACE AND HEALTH CONNECT

REVIEW BY LAURA RICHTER

Can physical space help heal us? In the search for an answer, Esther Sternberg, MD, leads readers in a wonderful exploration of a very promising field of work.

The opening chapter introduces the reader to research exploring the connections between environment and healing. The chapters then move into physiological descriptions of the senses, describing how a sense works and interacts with other systems in the body. The chapters on sight, sound, touch and smell are solidly built, blending scientific explanation with specific studies illustrating how senses influence well-being. Though people have long linked pleasing environments with healing, it wasn't until recent advances in neuroscience and immunology that scientists could finally establish associations between the brain and the immune system. Now armed with scientific data, there is new evidence that healing spaces, as well as positive experiences, can indeed improve health.

Next, the book explores how space affects emotions and well-being. Sens-



HEALING SPACES: THE SCIENCE OF PLACE AND WELL-BEING

BY ESTHER M. STERNBERG, MD
HARVARD UNIVERSITY PRESS, 2009
343 pages, \$27.95

es help develop perceptions of space, which in turn, produce emotions: One might feel anxious going through a maze, but incredibly calm walking along a labyrinth. Sternberg then goes on to show how particular places can be mood altering. From Main Street at Disney World to the healing grotto at Lourdes, busy city streets to brightly painted rooms, the place where we are not only evokes emotion but may also determine how quickly we heal. Thanks to Sternberg's writing, peppered with a nice blend of study and narrative, the reader is able to see how place, neurobiology and emotion are intricately connected.

Later chapters cover several topics including healing thought and prayer, the evolution of disease and infection control and hospitals and healing spaces. Sternberg's narrative continues to venture through history as she takes a scientific look at place and considers how stress, isolation, faith, meditation and behavior all play a role in healing. The last chapters continue the theme of the past influencing the present and

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suggest ways our actions can shape a healthier society in the future. She introduces the reader to other groups engaged in this work (like the Center for Health Design, based in Concord, Calif.), and offers thoughts regarding urban planning, furniture design, hospital architecture and the incorporation of healing elements into everyday life to encourage well-being and longevity.

With its combination of physiological processes with scientific studies, interesting history with unique examples of great design, this book could be a fine read for the scientist and architect as well as for the health care pro-

vider or layperson. Topics are woven together artfully, providing a thorough discussion of the connections between space, physiology and overall health.

Sternberg sums up her central thesis this way: "We need to bring the mind back into the equation of health and healing, and include the ways that emotions and the physical environment interact, for the benefit of patients with both physical and mental ailments." She demonstrates the ways in which research supports the creation of healing spaces. Although quick to acknowledge advances in the field, she also recognizes the work ahead, for data will be

required to persuade decision makers that healthy spaces are necessary, especially if such spaces are accompanied by higher price tags.

Sternberg introduces the reader to many important players and provides a thorough, 30-page bibliography for anyone wanting to delve further into the material. She closes with the observation that each of us has the capacity to create healing spaces in our lives.

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JOURNAL OF THE CATHOLIC HEALTH ASSOCIATION OF THE UNITED STATES

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HEALTH PROGRESS®

Reprinted from *Health Progress*, March - April 2010
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