

# TEXT GUIDES CHURCHES IN PROMOTING HEALTH

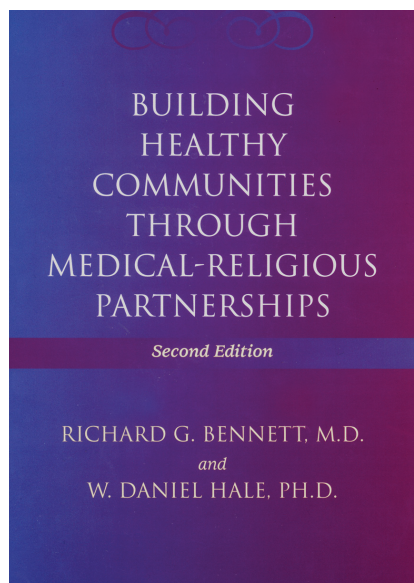
REVIEW BY EILEEN BARSÌ

Faith-sharing communities may well be an untapped natural resource in our nation's health improvement efforts. Churches reach all socio-economic groups, including persons without health insurance or access to social services. In the midst of the current crisis in health care and the reform debate yet to be settled, the timing for the second edition of *Building Healthy Communities through Medical-Religious Partnerships* is optimal.

*Building Healthy Communities through Medical-Religious Partnerships* is a comprehensive textbook on the subject. Co-authored by Richard Bennett, MD, a professor in geriatric medicine at the Johns Hopkins University School of Medicine, and by W. Daniel Hale, Ph.D., a professor of psychology at Stetson University, this book offers not only the rationale for pursuing partnerships between health care and religious congregations, but also provides the subject matter for relevant congregational health promotion programs, a plethora of resources and a variety of sample forms.

Drs. Bennett and Hale, assisted by a panel of distinguished medical experts from the Johns Hopkins Medical Institutions, have gifted readers with an outstanding resource on the most common diseases and treatments for them, as well as fundamental prevention strategies that can be offered in a congregational setting. As we well know, there is no template for a health ministry program; rather, each program is as unique as the faith community it serves. The authors have provided a resource that allows for multiple applications.

Though the book is intended for religious and medical leaders interested in developing partnerships between health systems or facilities and religious congregations, it has much to offer the congregation-based health minister. It is divided into four sections. The second section, devoted



## **BUILDING HEALTHY COMMUNITIES THROUGH MEDICAL-RELIGIOUS PARTNERSHIPS**

BY RICHARD C. BENNETT, MD AND W. DANIEL  
HALE, PH.D.

THE JOHNS HOPKINS UNIVERSITY PRESS,  
2nd EDITION, 2009  
248 pages, \$25

to suggested topics for congregational programs, includes factual information on coronary heart disease, hypertension, cancer, influenza and pneumonia, diabetes mellitus, depression, dementia and advance directives. The content is rich with current information and could be used to develop a curriculum for congregations. By topic, this section incorporates suggestions for congregational health programs, provides examples of an existing program or programs and offers informational resources that most often include website addresses.

In addition, the authors include a chapter on communicating with health care providers and discuss the obstacles patients frequently mention. In the subsequent "Making the Most of Your Medical Visit," the authors offer guidance to help prepare for the visit, propose ways to make the most of the time, recommend important considerations for follow-up care and explain the important role of a patient advocate. A bonus section reviews common risk factors and goes on to discuss how to modify them. The section ends with information about accidents and falls

and gives guidance on managing medications.

The authors round out the book with up-to-date information on five different model programs and resources that can be used by any individual or organization interested in developing medical-religious partnerships. While health professionals may be familiar with the services and resources of the community, we often forget that others may not be. The text provides a directory of services, explains what the programs are and how to access them. Not just the names of national organizations, but descriptions and contact information for additional health education materials are included.

Consider that throughout their lives, many people participate in a faith community that provides access to church-

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.

**EILEEN BARS** is a gerontologist and corporate director for community benefit at Catholic Healthcare West.

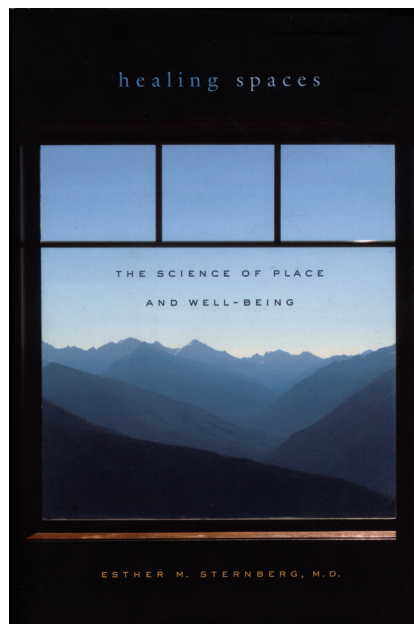
## DOCTOR SHOWS HOW PHYSIOLOGY, SPACE AND HEALTH CONNECT

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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