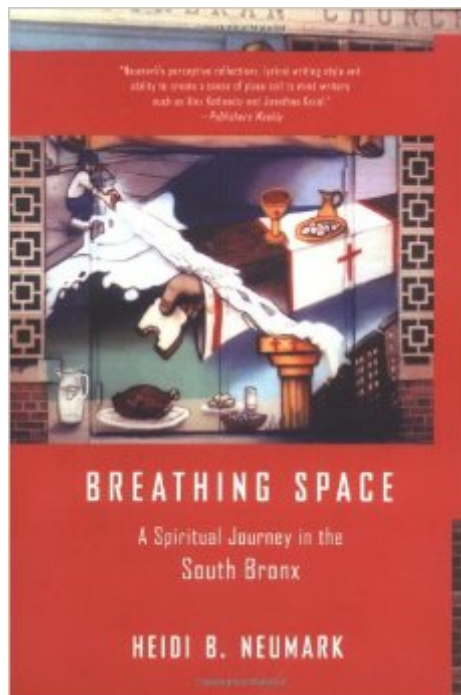


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Breathing Space: A Spiritual Journey In The South Bronx



Synopsis

Breathing Space is the story of Heidi Neumark and the Hispanic and African-American Lutheran church-Transfiguration-that took a chance calling on a pastor from a starkly different background. Despite living and working in a milieu of overwhelming poverty and violence, Neumark and the congregation encounter even more powerful forces of hope and renewal. This story of a community creating space for new life and breath is also the story of a young woman-working, raising her children, and struggling for spiritual breathing space. Through poignant, intimate stories, Neumark charts her journey alongside her parishioners as pastor, church, and community grow in wisdom and together experience transformation.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Heidi Neumark was pastor for many years at the Transfiguration Lutheran Church, in the south Bronx area of New York City. Her congregation was fairly typical of what any lower-income inner-city parish might be -- Hispanic, African-American, people in need, people experienced in poverty and violence. The title comes physically from the idea that, in the midst of one of the wealthier cities on earth, the children have the highest incidence of asthma in the nation. However, beyond this physical description, the daily stress and strain of inner-city living, with gunshots, drugs, crime, poverty and oppression continually surrounding, makes breathing easy a difficult task. Neumark recalls some of her difficulties with her own spiritual practices. Drawing on the advice of spiritual masters of the past to incorporate distractions rather than attempting to block them out,

she would try to add the stress to her prayer life as a working component -- however, when weapons fire seemed to ricochet every time she went to pray, it became difficult if not impossible. In the face of all the difficulties, there was hope and renewal at Transfiguration. Neumark shares the stories of many parishioners, as well as her own internal struggles and personal experiences, that show the way the spirit of God is alive and active even in the worst of conditions. Neumark highlights the irony of the situation at times -- in the South Bronx, there is plenty of money for state-of-the-art prisons, and keeping juveniles in the system is big business, but the money for education and real plans for improvement is non-existent. This kind of societal choice in the face of residents can be demoralising, to say the least.

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