



Pillars of Faith: American Congregations and Their Partners

Nancy Ammerman

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At the close of the twentieth century the United States was, by all accounts, among the most religious of modern Western nations. *Pillars of Faith* describes the diversity of tradition and the commonality of organizational strategy that characterize the more than 300,000 congregations in the United States, arguing that they provide the social bonds, spiritual traditions, and community connections that are vital to an increasingly diverse society.

Nancy Tatom Ammerman follows several traditions—Mainline Protestant, Conservative Protestant, African American Protestant, Catholic and Orthodox, Jewish, Sectarian, and other religions—as they establish discernible patterns of congregational life that fit their own history, tradition, and relationship to American society. Her methodologically sophisticated study balances survey research with interviews conducted with people from ninety-one different religious traditions and ethnographic observations that yield new information on many dimensions of American congregational life. Her book is the first to depict the complex resource base supporting American congregations, the enormous web of partners with whom congregations work, and the range of institutional patterns they exhibit.

Contrary to many gloomy forecasts, *Pillars of Faith: American Congregations and Their Partners* argues that organized religion in the United States is robust and vigorous—and that it can handle the increasing demands of escalating diversity and mobility the future is sure to bring.

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