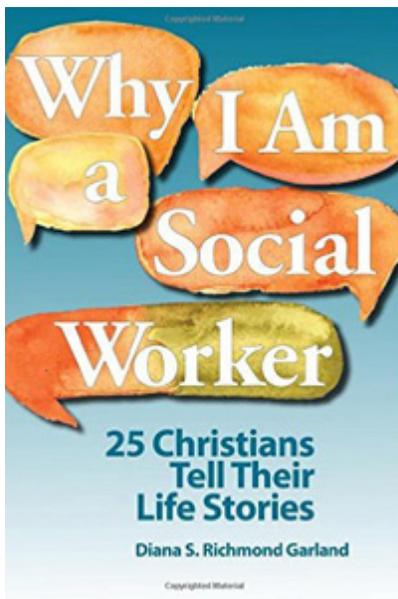


Book Reviews: Why I am a Social Worker

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[*Why I am a Social Worker: 25 Christians Tell Their Life Stories*](#) by Diana Richmond Garland (North American Association of Christians in Social Work)



Diana Garland's latest book is a rare commodity in publishing: It is designed and intended primarily as a textbook for social work classes. But it should be read and quoted by all kinds of Christians who believe in ministry and in serving others in Jesus' name.

Garland, the founding dean of Baylor University's school of social work that now bears her name, conducted extensive interviews with social workers in a breadth of specialties. This book tells their stories, and they are at once inspiring and gospel-living insightful.

This book would be worth buying and reading if Garland had published only her introduction. The title is "Social Work as a Christian Calling," but it's a passionate articulation of the sacramental nature of work as well as God's calling upon all Christians to minister.

"When the work fits our gifts and abilities, we can keep at the work

because we are well-suited to the task,” she writes. “Because we enjoy our work—most days—does not mean that our motivation is self-fulfillment, however. Rather, we feel meaning and purpose because we catch glimpses that God is using us for God’s purposes.

“We are tools of God’s ongoing creation. The gifts and abilities that God created in us and define who we are fit with the needs of others—and we experience that ‘fit’ as confirmation that our feet are on the right path. ...

“Christian calling, then, is our work, but at the same time it is more than our work. Because God loves the world, our calling is always about our contribution to that world—all the ways we live in a physical place and a human community.”

Beyond this, the 25 chapters that comprise *Why I am a Social Worker* provide a treasure trove of inspiration. Pastors will find in them a fount of sermon illustrations. Church staff will see wisdom and best practices. Laity will receive motivation for living a full and meaningful Christian life, more aware of how they can be the presence of Christ in a hurting world.