

BOOK REVIEW  
JANUARY 2023

12 TINY THINGS, Reviewed by Diane McGeoch, President, Christian Education Network of the ELCA

12 Tiny Things Simple Ways to Live a More Intentional Life, by Heidi Barr and Ellie Roscher  
(Broadleaf Books, 2021)

This book spoke to me in profound ways as I was recovering from foot surgery and living into new ways of self-care. Anytime you experience an illness or surgery it can raise questions about routine, schedule, involvements, and aspects of self-care that may need attention. My life slowed down dramatically for several weeks. I could not put weight on my right foot, was wearing a boot, and using a knee scooter to get around.

I was much more mindful of my movement during this time. I could not do anything quickly because of my foot, so I needed to pay attention to every part of my routine. Reaching for a book on a shelf, bending down to pet one of my cats, opening a kitchen cupboard all became very intentional, deliberate movements. This book invites us to live into an intentional life by taking simple actions that can be incorporated into our routines, rituals, and practices.

The 12 chapters each cover an area of intentional living and are structured in a way that allows for one practice for each month. The chapters are: Space, Work, Spirituality, Food, Style, Nature, Communication, Home, Sensuality, Creativity, Learning, and Community. These practices provide a lens to view one's life and continual invitations into intentionality. These invitations create questions like: How do I shape my days? Where do I create space? What brings life for me, and in what way?

I appreciated the flexible nature of the book. The authors are very affirming and permission giving. I could hear them saying: Be gentle with yourself. Be flexible, it will be okay. Take small steps. The title of 12 Tiny Things conveys their belief that simple basic steps can lead to fundamental change. This book is not about adding rituals or practices to an already overloaded schedule. It is about seeing one's life through a new lens and perspective. This lens is one of mindfulness, presence, and creativity.

I am in a book group of deacons that is meeting once a month for a year to reflect on each chapter. This is an excellent book to use in a group of ministry colleagues. The reflection questions at the end of each chapter allow individuals and groups to go deeper into the practices and discuss what is speaking to each person's life and ministry. Other Voices is a section in each chapter where a person shares from their experience with intentionality. The Tiny Thing feature in the chapters provides simple instructions about living into and experimenting with new ways of paying attention.

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