

We Belong to Big Church: Caribbean Soundings and Stories in Anglicania

Kortright Davis. *We Belong to Big Church: Caribbean Soundings and Stories in Anglicania*. Tellwell Talent, 2021. 216pp. \$8.98. Paperback. 9780228851141.

In *We Belong to Big Church*, Kortright Davis provides rare insight into the cross-cultural dynamics of Afro-Anglicanism in the Caribbean and North America. As the subtitle suggests, this book draws specifically on individual ecclesial experiences of Caribbean Anglicans and the disquisitions given by the author in the Caribbean and North America. Davis attempts to shed light on what it means to be Black, Anglican, and West Indian while simultaneously trying to amalgamate the diverse textures within the global Anglican Communion. “Big Church” is not only the large Antiguan edifice on the book’s cover but symbolizes the unity of affiliation to the *Bigger Church*.

The first two sections are historic fictional religious narratives that give a voice to the ecclesial and cultural adjustments of the Anglican Caribbean Diaspora in America. The stories emphasize that religious practices have been as important to identity and culture for centuries as the music and food of the immigrated British Caribbean people. Davis uses this backdrop as an illustrative and metaphoric platform to highlight the prospective contextual realities and cultural modifications that members of the global Anglican Communion must make. The first section describes the challenges that most immigrants face in maintaining their Caribbean charismatic church culture after moving to the more reserved culture of the Episcopal Church. The second section is an illuminating and informative pilgrimage through the Afro-Anglican congregations and churches in the Episcopal Church. The following two sections are a composition of Davis’ theological and pastoral contributions in the form of sermons, addresses, and lectures he delivered throughout the Anglican Dioceses of the Caribbean and the Anglican Church of Canada. Davis engages issues of multiculturalism, inclusion, and racism to stimulate further conversations on a proposed way forward in the *Ecclesia Anglicana*.

Davis consistently portrays Caribbean Anglicanism as a rich tapestry of mutually beneficial interactions between the Afro-Anglican and the church abroad. What stands out in *We Belong to Big Church* is how Davis provides his readers with a wide-ranging collection of anecdotes and thoughts that depict certain intercultural, multicultural, and pluralistic issues faced by people of color at home and abroad. Some readers may be skeptical of the book’s representation through the use of general statements that the author utilizes to imply a homogenous and unvaried worship style in the churches of the Anglican Caribbean, juxtaposed to those of the Episcopal Church. As an Antiguan, Davis spent his formative years under the wings of the ancient St. John’s Anglican Cathedral. This book is the most recent work he has written as a professor of theology at Howard University’s School of Divinity. While reading *We Belong to Big Church*, immigrants of any faith might fondly recall their first experience attending a church in the United States and the struggle of alienation versus identity that arises from within, as noted by Davis. The book, however, resonates with the generations of Anglican immigrants who make persistent efforts to remain Anglican in America.

We Belong to Big Church is credible and relevant, and it is an important cultural and historical piece for all devout Anglicans across the Caribbean and North America. The book is creative and educative, filling a void in Afro-Anglican Caribbean literature. Davis not only inspires readers to have radical fellowship in church, but he also motivates the reader to assess the global multicultural society and see diversity as a symbol of God’s love. This book is flooded with amusing Caribbean maxims and expressions of cultural renditions of liturgy, which makes for a colorful and enjoyable

read. Davis, a master of metaphor, takes this literary approach to give a critical voice to some of the complications immigrants face in trying to make sense of their new circumstances and to address the need for social and spiritual reforms within the global Anglican Communion. Davis simultaneously provides readers with the solace of Transculturalism—unity in diversity—through his theological reconstruction. This book is highly recommended as a good starting place for navigating the conversations on cultural diversity and the challenges immigrants face within the church. Parish leaders, both clergy and lay, will find this compilation of work useful when considering the praxis of inclusion within the Anglican Communion.

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