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“Nadia is what you’d get if you mixed the DNA of Louis C.K., Joey Ramone, and St. Paul.” –A.J. Jacobs, author of *The Year of Living Biblically*

### **New Memoir Tells How a Cranky, Cursing, Tattooed Female Comic Became a Cranky, Cursing, Tattooed, Female Lutheran Pastor**

Nadia Bolz-Weber may be the world’s only 6 foot 1 inch tattooed female Lutheran pastor/former standup comic/recovering alcoholic. Now, she’s available in book form: *Pastrix: The Cranky, Beautiful Faith of a Sinner & Saint* (Jericho Books/Hachette Book Group, \$22.00 hardcover, September 10, 2013). Her new memoir reveals that she is also a candid, hilarious, and irreverent person who surprises even herself by how much she is into “this Jesus thing.”

Covered in tattoos, including a large portrait of Mary Magdalene on her forearm, Bolz-Weber admits she’s a lousy candidate for the priesthood: “There is nothing about me that says Lutheran pastor. I swear like a truck driver. I’m selfish. I’m misanthropic. I don’t really like emotionally needy people, and given the opportunity I will walk the other way if I see them coming.”

Yet the call to ministry came in a dank comedy club basement, presiding at a memorial service for a fellow comic, surrounded by her own community of “underside dwellers.” There Bolz-Weber saw “the life-changing reality that God is not far off, but here among the brokenness of our lives.” She knew then she was called to be a pastor to her people.

*Pastrix* is the story of an outrageous, unlikely life of faith. It is a wild ride, from Bolz-Weber’s childhood in a fundamentalist church, to her Ramones-obsessed teens, to life as a hard-drinking standup comic living in a slacker commune. Then came sobriety and seminary, ordination as a Lutheran pastor and the founding of her Denver church, The House for All Sinners and Saints.

Her take on the arc of her life is characteristically sardonic: “I was allowed not to die in exchange for working for God. I’d get a life back, a rich one I’d never have chosen out of a catalog, where I would marry a nice man, go to college, have a couple of babies, attend seminary, become ordained, and start a church. Eventually, though, I’d have to become God’s bitch.”

Through it all, Bolz-Weber portrays a seeker who is both flawed and faithful. Her unconventional appearance, honesty, humor, and compassion make her irresistible to a new generation of seekers, who much like Pastor Nadia herself, don’t want to have to check their personalities at the door of a church, and prefer a DIY approach to faith.

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Bolz-Weber's church, The House for All Sinners and Saints, is part of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) denomination. HFASS describes itself as "figuring out how to be a liturgical, Christo-centric, social justice-oriented, queer-inclusive...church with a progressive but deeply rooted theological imagination."

Sometimes Bolz-Weber's inner skeptic rears her head: "What are the odds that this story of Jesus is true? It's a fairy tale." Except that she's experienced it to be true: "I cannot pretend that I have not experienced the redeeming, destabilizing love of a surprising God."

"I have only my confession of my own real brokenness and of my own real faith to offer. The Christian faith, while wildly misrepresented in so much of American culture, is really about death and resurrection. It's about how God continues to reach into the graves we dig for ourselves and pull us out. It's a messy business, but it's my business and it's the most beautiful thing I could tell you about."

**NADIA BOLZ-WEBER** is the founding pastor of House for All Sinners and Saints, an ELCA mission church in Denver, Colorado. Bolz-Weber writes regularly for *Christian Century* and *Sojourners* magazines and blogs at Patheos.com. She is the author of *Salvation on the Small Screen: 24 Hours of Christian Television*. She's been featured on NPR, in *The Denver Post*, *Christian Century*, *Sojourners*, and many more. Visit her at [NadiaBolzWeber.com](http://NadiaBolzWeber.com).