

## Discussion Guide for *The Weight of Mercy*

How did Deb's dreams illuminate what was happening in her life? Did the bookended dreams in the prologue and epilogue provide insight into her state of mind?

How might you have handled Triune's early personnel issues differently?

Was there a time in your life when you felt as inadequate and overwhelmed as Deb did in her early months at Triune? How did you react? How would you have reacted if you'd been hired as pastor at Triune?

How did the glimpses into Deb's family let you see what allowed her to persevere?

Deb says that she stayed the first year because, as a Baptist clergywoman in the South, she had nowhere else to go. Was that all there was to it?

Deb contends that the core identity of Triune is a place where housed and homeless, rich, middle class and poor, come together in worship and honest relationship. What's so good about that?

Were you disturbed by the instances of people taking advantage of the church? How do you think Christians should respond?

A homeless man once said to Deb, "Pastor, do you know the worst thing about being homeless? It isn't being cold or wet or hungry. The worst thing about being homeless is being looked right through." How does Triune address that concern? How do you?

Triune does not allow panhandling. Why do you think that is? How do you react when a person who appears to be homeless asks you for money?

What is the difference between enabling and empowering? Does the Bible differentiate? Should we?

What steps did Triune Mercy take to move from enabling to empowering people? Has it gone far enough in that direction?

In chapter 18, Deb talks about love as behavior and quotes John 13:35: "By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another." Is that your understanding of love – behavior that can be seen?

In chapter 28, Deb says it was her parenting – more than her journalism or theology training – that best prepared her for Triune. Is that true in your life?

What do you think about Deb's philosophy that behavior rises with the beauty of one's surroundings? Does that work when a criminal element is present?

Deb uses two stories about interacting with her dad – one in chapter one, one in the epilogue – to illustrate something about her personality. Did these stories give you insight into her thinking?

How does Triune's use of art, music, gardening and improvisational theater reach people in poverty? Is there value in doing things that don't directly impact income and housing?

David Gay and Triune's mental health worker estimate that 80 to 90 percent of the church's homeless parishioners have been sexually abused and/or show symptoms of mental illness. Why are these people on our streets?