Clarion Review

Poetry

Faith, Family and Friends
Janice B. Holland, et al
Trafford Publishing
978-1-4251-5089-1
Four Stars (out of Five)

Faith, Family, and Friends is an anthology of poems chosen and arranged by Janice B. Holland. Divided into three sections, this poetry-potluck offers readers a variety of voices, perspectives, and poetic forms. All of the text was written by friends and relatives of Holland except for some faith-based passages from other sources she has included.

For example, Holland opens the "Faith" section with Hebrews 11:1: "Faith is the assurance of things we hope for, the / conviction of things not seen."

The collection's most memorable poems are those relating to specific situations. In "Sometimes God Sends a Child," a grandfather tells the story of a child doctors thought might not survive. The poem celebrates each breath and smile of the child and explains how "each day was a wonder." The poem's magic is in the details. The child sees a tree and understands that "the tree and I are both unique. / We might be small in stature / But we're more than our physique." The wisdom of the young is explained in a subtle and effective manner. The grandpa soon understands that "God doesn't always send angels" but instead, will send children "to do an angel's deed."

Holland does a great job varying the type of poems throughout the book. Multiple writers and perspectives keep the content fresh and engaging. There are poems with long lines and structures with solid and evenly built quatrains. Poems that play with indentation are reminiscent of the back-and-forth thought process that happens when people pray. Such diversity not only makes the book relatable to many readers, it also speaks to the universality of faith and friendship.

The broad-themed poems do not pack the same punch as others. Poems like "Precious Child" are more focused on preaching key lessons about following God's lead. Other pieces, such as "You Can't See My Pain," are charged with emotion but not easily comprehended by

the reader because the writer has not fully conveyed the backstory.

All of the poets take a stab at honoring the gifts of God: the beauty in staying humble and being thankful for life, and belief in God's ultimate plan.

The revolving door of this book's voices makes the reader feel as if friend after friend and family member after family member has come to testify and give thanks.

Lisa Bower