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## INTRODUCTION

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*Guest Co-Editors*

The Spring 2012 edition of the *JRL* is the first volume dedicated particularly to women's leadership. This volume offers narratives of women *in* leadership, women's perspectives *on* leadership, and women's responses *to* various leadership roles. Among myriad resources available in secular and sacred leadership studies, few offer women's lenses on the discipline of leadership itself. Those resources that do struggle to identify in a meaningful and significant way specific skills and perspectives that women of color and white women bring to the wider discourse. The particularity of women's voices at the leadership table serves to remind all leaders to attend to social location in the midst of theological and socioeconomic-based teaching and skillful, context-oriented praxis. To that end, the articles and four of the seven book reviews in this volume address the impact of women's leadership in ministry, higher education, the corporate world, and the public arena.

To begin, Ruth Anne Reese observes, "There is no context-free locality from which to reflect on the nature of leadership." Accordingly, she begins her article with examples from her ministry that lead her into the issue of women and leadership. She reflects on leadership as presence and argues that a person's character undergirds the faithful exercise of authority and power. She further examines the importance of support, trust, and interdependence for a leader's right practice.

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Isabel Docampo reminds readers of another essential practice for effective religious leadership: regular, self-reflective, rigorous theological reflection. Docampo understands that religious leadership is essentially a theological task; she calls leaders to engage in constructive theology that is grounded in faith and attentive to the voices of multiple communities and voices while remaining hermeneutically suspicious. Drawing from Latino/Latina theologies, she argues for less absolutism and more hybridity in our theologies and self-understandings.

Sandra Selby adds to Docampo's argument with her article about "Divinely-Centered Leadership." Selby is concerned that religious leaders too seldom engage the everyday life and challenges of the people whom they serve. She argues that church leaders need to engage everyday issues more deliberately and that reflection on meaning making is key to this process. Using her varied background as illustration, she further examines the issue of gender in the workplace as a significant component of meaning making.

Katharine Rhodes Henderson also argues that religious leaders need to be more engaged in the world, especially the public square. Her article identifies the qualities and capacities that public leadership requires in the twenty-first century. Henderson, the president of Auburn Seminary in New York City, anchors her article with personal and institutional history. She concludes with discussions of recent challenges Auburn has engaged and the leadership lessons she has drawn from them.

Diane Zemke focuses her article on an exploration of the presence, practices, and needs of tempered radicals in religious organizations—the faithful members or leaders who are loyal to their organization but whose values or goals are not in complete sync with those of the institution. Zemke attends to the challenges and costs of being a tempered radical. She also explores how churches and other institutions can support the presence of such people in their midst, an important task because it is precisely these tempered radicals who may be able to

ignite or lead organizational change. Zemke, who claims to being a tempered radical herself, uses data from interviews with other women who are tempered radicals to bolster her argument.

Sally Dyck concludes the volume with an article based on personal experience as a pastor and, more recently, a United Methodist bishop. She draws from a variety of resources to reflect on three requirements of religious leadership: courage, imagination, and humility. Her article calls for leaders to engage their work with energy, integrity, and faith.

The seven book reviews in this issue assess a variety of leadership materials, four of which specifically address issues of women in leadership. *God's Troublemakers* and *Women at the Top* profile women who have enjoyed significant professional success and provide insight into how women lead, negotiate challenges to their leadership, and provide models for others. *The Girlfriends' Clergy Companion* and *Dear Church* are autobiographical books that document the varied experiences of some women in religious leadership.

Women leaders featured here, few among many, bring life experience to bear on the study of leadership. Important lessons for women and men from women's hard-earned positions in a world still dominated by men introduce alternative ways of thinking about how and why we lead the way that we do. In particular, women of color remind us of the many lenses required for honest, authentic engagement as the discipline of religious leadership studies and praxis moves into the future

