

BOOK REVIEW**A LIFELONG CALL TO LEARN:****CONTINUING EDUCATION FOR RELIGIOUS LEADERS**

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HERNDON, VA: THE ALBAN INSTITUTE, 2010,

REVISED AND EXPANDED

397 PP. PAPERBACK

ISBN: 978-1-56699-399-9

Development of religious leaders is a challenge in the context of rapid social change. No longer is it possible to think of training as a one-time, pre-service experience that equips the person for a life-time of effective ministry. Simultaneously, continuing education programs are experiencing the challenges that come with economic down-turn; when churches, denominations, and individuals have limited resources, continuing education is one of the items that is often cut. In this context, how can educators and organizations engaged in the continuing education enterprise be effective in their mission to equip men and women for a lifetime of fruitful service? Written by and for practitioners of continuing education, particularly those with academic and judiciary affiliations in mainline denominational contexts, *A Lifelong Call to Learn* explores a variety of perspectives and issues related to programs of continuing theological education for church leaders.

Part One explores historical perspectives looking at continuing education in light of organizational, cultural, and professional trends in the past century. Rouch begins the conversation by discussing continuing education movements of the 1960's and 70's in the United States. Reber surveys issues in continuing education looking into the future with challenges such as lack of organizational commitment and focus on "quick fix" type content. Of particular value is Reber's attention to the subversive role of continuing education: to subvert our inaccurate or inadequate thinking. Cervero addresses continuing

education for professionals in the church—what it is for, who will provide it, and who will benefit. Cornett frames continuing education as engagement between the church and world, envisioning the purpose as to “provide a forum for the church’s ongoing engagement of these concerns as well as gather the scholars, community leaders, and political figures that have some say about how the decisions that will determine the future well being of much of the humanity will be made” (63).

Part Two focuses on theory and research in continuing education, looking at perspectives in adult education, considering basal literature, and examining one major continuing education research project. Roberts explores facilitating innovation in leadership by creating a community of truth as a context to motivate learning through the exploration of mental models, experimentation in ministry, and evaluation of that experimentation. Marler presents an analysis of survey data of pastoral peer groups looking at the impact of group leadership, member diversity, and group funding. Roberts then considers two factors involved in effective teaching with adults: shared control and support for development of critical thinking.

Part Three presents innovations in continuing education, focusing on various programs and institutions. While not particularly innovative in the broader field of education, these chapters explore modalities that are not yet common in the arena of continuing education programs. Chapters in this section address peer group learning, coaching, education for laity and professionals, multi-faith education and education for leadership in a multi-religious society, and online education. The editors’ high value for ecumenical and inter-faith dialog is particularly reflected in this section.

Part Four focuses on administrative issues, addressing implications for continuing education programs in a larger context, whether institutional or cultural. Guthrie and Cervero address learning to read the political system of an organization to know how to negotiate toward continuing education outcomes. Maykus

gives pithy and practical advice on basic program planning, design, and evaluation. Davis proposes a strategy for planning and marketing under the rubric of learning. Oehler suggests that a program that pays attention to the whole person will be more successful both in terms of results and attendance. Macholl overviews risk assessment and mitigation. Reber and Roberts conclude with seven key questions for the future of continuing education.

The title of this text, *A Lifelong Call to Learn*, suggests a broad agenda related to the challenges and possibilities of lifelong learning. The focus of the book, however, is on the educator and the continuing education programs he/she facilitates. Touched on, but not fully addressed, is the challenge of an educational culture that assumes “the experts know what needs to be taught, have a structured and systematic way to teach it, and have a way to document and measure its achievement” (327). To what extent does the specific cultural and theological perspective of the contributors and their commitment to programs of continuing educating hinder them—and those they represent—from considering the subject of lifelong learning for religious leaders more broadly and, potentially, more effectively? Nevertheless, this text offers a spectrum of ideas and useful conversation starters for the continuing education practitioner in mainline denominational and academic contexts.

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