
INTRODUCTION

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During the 2012 Annual Conference of the Academy of Religious Leadership, members discussed ideas for upcoming conference topics. The intersection of spirituality with religious leadership soon emerged as the most popular topic. After discussing the multiple aspects this topic covered, the officer group in collaboration with the Journal editor asked for proposals. Over fifteen people or groups submitted proposals to research, speak, and/or write about spirituality and leadership. We accepted seven for presentation at the 2013 annual conference in Chicago, and these seven and one additional piece are featured in this issue of the Journal.

Spirituality embraces multiple expressions and includes hundreds of definitions. My favorite is from a book by Gerald Broccolo, *Vital Spiritualities*, and simply states: “Spirituality is how one copes with life.” Ron Rolheiser, author and President of Oblate School of Theology, writes that none of us has a choice, everyone has to have a spirituality.¹ Even people writing leadership books and articles related to business cite a deep connection between good leadership and something they call spirituality. The academy has not addressed this subject, yet Senge writes about *metanoia* and *discipline* (disciple), Kouzes and Posner speak about living from a place of deep integrity and “walking the talk,” authors speak about spirit, spirituality, soul and servant leadership so much that over 2,600 titles surface on an Amazon.com search. In my own work, I’ve studied the “competence” of religious leadership and discovered that respondents looking to religious leadership value a leader’s spiritual depth above every other competence they identify.

This issue of the Journal, then, offers eight investigations into varieties of spiritualities and their impact on religious leadership. Each of the authors

¹ Ronald Rollheiser, *The Holy Longing: The Search for a Christian Spirituality* (New York, NY: Doubleday, 1999), 6.

names a specific Christian context in their orientation and investigation. Together they provide thought-provoking stories, research in a variety of contexts, and connections that include cultural, differently-abled, theologically diverse perspectives. The collection invites readers to ponder the breadth of our Christian heritage and its deepest sources for sustaining pastoral leadership.

First, Lisa Hess speaks about how interreligious celebrations of word and symbol have invited her and her students to consider again the power of worship and liturgy in forming and sustaining leaders. She clearly states the dilemma of the notion of “spirituality” situating it in the “populist speculation and self-help literature” that sometimes constitutes immediate understanding of the word. Intrepid soul, she moves forward toward a more methodological understanding based in the work of Sandra Schneiders and roots her definition in the “basic human capacity for transcendence.” Hess then roots spirituality in the relationship with Christ and lived in Christian faith. She builds on insights from Maggie Ross and links her notion of the indwelling, kenotic God to eucharistic, incarnational embodiment that moves worshipping leaders to a hospitality of inclusion. Her article, “Liturgical Hospitality within Deeply Rooted Leadership,” considers her own experience in interreligious dialogue and relates it to the deep spiritual connection with one God of both Jewish and Christian ancestors.

Shelley Trebesch draws upon her understanding of neuroscience and its potential impact in creating opportunities for spiritual formation. In her article, “Ecology of the Learning Environment: Creating the Context for Spiritual Formation,” Trebesch speaks as a teacher interested in preparing ministers to be effective leaders with spiritual depth. She integrates her understanding of the ecology of the learning environment with her experience in spiritual formation and her passion for offering a transformative learning environment. Trebesch challenges pastoral leaders to consider their own stories of conversion, growth, and leadership

toward assisting them in developing similar types of processes for people in their congregations. Her findings suggest that “self-awareness, self-reflection, and responsiveness to the Spirit facilitate transformation.” She further asserts that if a leader is transparent in this transformative process, the leader invites others’ pursuit of similar transformation.

In “*Umunthu* and the Spirituality of Leadership: Leadership Lessons from Malawi,” Harvey C. Kwiyani focuses on the impact of African tribal understanding and its relationship to Christian pastoral leadership. First, he clarifies that *Umunthu* translates as *Ubuntu*, the popular African philosophy articulated in South Africa by Archbishop Desmond Tutu and further amplified by Michael Battle, President and CEO of the PeaceBattle Institute. Kwiyani develops the meaning further and relates it to spiritualities found in Malawi. Based on this African context, he notes that spirituality moves from personal piety to communal spiritual phenomenon. Kwiyani offers the global church insights into the interdependence between personal spirituality, leadership, and communal response.

David Forney and Stuart Higginbotham reimagine pastoral leadership among people who profess spiritualities without aligning with religious traditions. In their article, “A Hermeneutic of Appreciation: Cultivating Encounters of Spiritual Experience within Congregational Ministry,” they rely on insights from Raimon Panikkar’s theological metaphor of “window” and Hans Georg Gadamer’s philosophical lens of a “fusion of horizons.” These authors argue for greater space in exploration of various spiritual impulses so as to encourage dialogue among widely differing viewpoints. After developing their theoretical underpinnings, these authors offer a case study—St. Benedict’s—and apply some of their insights to practical pastoral considerations.

Tone Stangeland Kaufman completed research in Norway and reports some of her findings in “A Spirituality of Everyday Life: An Unnoticed Spiritual Source for Clergy.” She identified three sources of

spiritual life for pastors in active ministry: everyday life, ministry, and intentional practices. Relying on her original research using in-depth interviews, she explores the kind of close connection that personal spirituality (of the pastors) offers these pastors in their community leadership. She concludes that pastors who identify these sources and celebrate their natural rhythm in life may also be able to sustain their leadership more effectively.

“Be Opened: Practicing Social Connectedness within the Deaf Community” offers author Nancy Delich’s deep insight into spiritual leadership within both the deaf and the hearing communities. Rooted in scripture stories re-interpreted by one who is a member of the deaf community, her article examines the history of exclusion within the Christian community and counters that history with a challenge. A social worker, leadership faculty, and spiritual director herself, Delich integrates understanding from these disciplines toward coaching the non-deaf community in increasing its capacity to minister to and to receive ministry from members of the deaf community. Delich relies on research she conducted using a variety of tools that allowed deaf participants to receive spiritual direction for action in life.

Eileen Campbell-Reed and Christian Scharen suggest that developing a pastoral imagination through spiritual practice offers pastors greater capacity for leadership in their article, “Ministry as Spiritual Practice: How Pastors Learn to See and Respond to the ‘More’ of a Situation.” They address what “more” means by inviting pastors to cultivate a capacity for perception of situations and God’s movements as a fundamental spiritual practice. To learn this practice, pastors need to have an accurate view of reality, to understand the theological stakes in any given situation, to respond well, and to respond contextually and faithfully. Campbell-Reed and Scharen are co-directors of the Learning Pastoral Imagination Project (Luther Seminary), and bring their expertise to the table from their research.

In “Decision-Making for Christian Leaders Facing Adaptive Challenges,” Paul Kaak, Gary Lemaster, and

Rob Muthiah consider how faith guides leaders and their communities in discerning God's will for the congregation. They carry this process through the implementation of decision-making by noting how the process sparks and sustains adaptive change. This team of interdisciplinary leadership faculty embraces both the notion of "waiting on God" as a spiritual practice and the insight of Ronald Heifetz concerning adaptive change. They identify some key assumptions related to pastors as collaborators and facilitators of communal activity. Together they draw from philosophical traditions about prudence rooted in Aristotle and Thomas Aquinas, models of decision-making, and finally Christian practices of discernment. They offer a case study called "Woodland Community Church" and assist the reader in applying collective and interdisciplinary expertise to the case study example. Finally, they appropriate Jesus language and deep biblical spirituality for pastoral leadership toward adaptive change.

We hope you find these articles as helpful in expanding the conversation around spirituality and pastoral leadership as did the members gathered at the annual conference in April 2013. Each author offers fresh insight into how personal call and conversion nurtured by prayer, discernment, biblical reflection, and action impact, motivate, and sustain pastoral leaders in their ministries, lives, and congregational work. The buffet of offerings encourages us to wish you in your reading: *Bon Appetit!*

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