
INTRODUCTION

REV. DR. ROBERT K. MARTIN, EDITOR

This issue of *the Journal of Religious Leadership* is published a little over one year from the world-wide lockdown caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. During the intervening year, everything changed. The ways we work, the ways we gather, the ways we worship – all have been upended and reconfigured. Every family, community, and institution has been challenged to its core. Overnight, “Zoom” became a household word and an unavoidable means of teaching, working, playing, exercising, and keeping families together. Religious communities adapted their activities – even the most sacrosanct – into virtual modes of engagement. Even the most reticent, traditionalist of pastors and professors tried to reinvent themselves into telegenic communicators, hoping to make the best of a virtual necessity. All this tumultuous change has been intensified emotionally, sometimes to the breaking point, by highly-charged political warfare and devastating economic collapse for society’s most vulnerable and most marginalized.

The articles in this issue come at exactly the right time. Each in its own way addresses key aspects of adaptive, spiritually-attuned leadership in these contentious, uncharted times.

The first article, by **Dr. Scott Cormode**, reminds us of the fundamental core of leadership as a holy vocation. “Vocational Holiness and the Christian Practice of Governance” argues that ministerial leadership is not merely concerned with the “cure of souls” and personal piety (which is central to the more basic term “disciple”). More importantly, the primary calling of religious *leadership*, as such, is to orient all practices within faith communities as *missional*, as means of grace by which the Reign of God manifests more fully. No matter how lowly or mundane the activity, it should be practiced *theologically* as a reflection of Christian belief. During tumultuous times of change when people clamor for quick and easy solutions, Cormode’s admonition to ministers of religious communities is foundationally wise.

In their article, **Drs. Amy Drennan** and **Michelle Louis** draw upon their research in a particular subset of seminaries to propose a model by which adaptive change can be fostered effectively. “Attitudes and Behaviors that Enable Leaders in Evangelical Protestant Seminaries to Engage in Adaptive Work” focuses on three attributes that major change leaders exhibited as they led their schools to adapt to economic, political, racial, technological, and religious challenges. Although the authors’ model identified six attitudes and behaviors, this article focuses on the attributes of “sobered hope”, “tenacity”, and “personal humility”. Incorporating case studies and interview excerpts with perceptive analysis, the authors describe how these three attributes are essential to cultivating the organizational wherewithal for deep change. Although their model for adaptive leadership is contextualized within Evangelical seminaries, the need to lead deep, adaptive change is relevant to just about all organizations, including congregations and educational institutions of higher learning.

“Implicit, Intersubjective Practices: Attachment Theory as a Resource for Adaptive Leadership” continues the theme of adaptive change but reframes it in light of the psychological theory of “attachment.” **Jessica Handy Duisberg** investigates the distress that adaptive change can generate. People experience loss, fear, anxiety, and conflict when their world turns upside down. She points to the need to foster emotional resilience among persons in the organization by developing interpersonal capacity in leaders for emotional and relational engagement. Duisberg focuses on four practices: attuning to verbal *and* nonverbal levels of communication, building joy, recognizing when people are overwhelmed, and calming one’s self as well as a group. So often when faced with significant disturbances and monumental changes, we default to a task-orientation that is preoccupied with impersonal elements of community. This article is a welcome reorientation to more fundamental levels of the personal and interpersonal that constitutes our constantly fluctuating life together.

The past few years have been marked by social, cultural, and ideological conflict, intensified all the more by the pandemic.

Dr. Leanna Fuller acknowledges that conflict is a “basic feature” of human relationships, but she helps us recognize and live into the constructive potential of conflict in communities of faith. She writes that conflict, “if handled well, can serve as a catalyst for positive change.” Drawing upon the 2010 Faith Communities Today study, relevant literature, and her own qualitative research with a particular congregation, Fuller illumines the traumatic nature of congregational conflict. To foster healing in broken communities, she describes two specific practices that help communities work through resentment and disillusionment following a crisis to a greater sense of health and wellbeing.

Engaging the challenges of leadership from Jewish and Christian perspectives, **Russ Linden** and **David Forney** draw upon the Torah to provide insights for leading change. Their article poses the question: “Leading Change: Is the Who More Important than the What?” The argument is that while most of us focus primarily upon tasks to be accomplished or doctrines to uphold or policies to implement, the more important determinant of organizational health has to do with the people involved, or as Jim Collins has put it, “getting the right people on the bus”. Weaving scriptural midrash together with personal stories and insights from leadership literature, Linden and Forney help us see the integral relationship between *what* we need to do and *who* should be involved, with incisive practical recommendations to cultivate persons, their relationships, and their capacities for doing what needs to be done.

As a follow-up to her article in the Autumn 2020 issue, the **Rev. Dr. Kristina Lizardy-Hajbi** develops the theme of post/decolonial pastoral leaderships. While the previous article focused on definitions and characteristics of post/decolonial leadership by multiple people (thus, the “s” on the end of “leadership”), “Processes Toward Post/Decolonial Pastoral Leaderships,” explores myriad ways that “leaders and communities embrace and actualize undoing, subversion, resistance, and re-existencing ‘for the possibilities of an otherwise’.” With linguistic precision and creativity, Lizardy-Hajbi helps us to reimagine and rearticulate the colonial dynamics that suffuse our faith communities and provides for us constructive frameworks and practices for transforming

our communities through “liberating leadership” into counter-hegemonic, intersubjective, polyvocal and creative communities of collective flourishing.

The year 2021 will hopefully bring recovery and restoration. Many people yearn for restoring “the way it used to be,” that is, returning to a retroactive and conventional “normal.” But the articles in this issue call us to resist the gravitational pull of the past, to persist in the redemptive transformation of our life in God, and to envision a restoration to our original created purpose: to live into more liberative and inclusive Reign of God, especially with those who are said to be “least” in society. For as Matthew chapter 25 puts it, it is among those whom society has cast off, those who are most untouchable, and those from whom we are most alienated that we will meet God and experience our own salvation.

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