
INTRODUCTION

CARSON E. REED AND STEPHEN V. SPRINKLE

As the Fall 2017 edition of the JRL comes to fruition we want to acknowledge the fine work of Bill Kondrath and Sharon Callahan who edited the journal for the past two years. As new editors we are acutely aware of the many dimensions that go into publishing a journal; Bill and Sharon served us well, and we thank them! In other transitions, we are grateful for the longtime work of Deborah Kapp as book review editor and welcome our colleague Scott Hagley into that role. We are also grateful to the members of our editorial board who have eagerly joined into the work producing this volume of articles.

With the large volume of papers presented in Chicago last April, we made the choice of selecting some essays for this fall and developing a special collection of others for next spring. The fall issue reflects the 2017 Academy of Religious Leadership Conference theme: “Leadership for Change.” Our authors adeptly explore multiple facets of change within communities of faith and the various intersections with globalization, shifting cultural realities, and the natural world.

David Carlson suggests that congregations are well suited for meaningful earth stewardship when leadership attends to the congregational faith practices and their connections to ecology. This sort of attention offers momentum to real change as stewardship becomes integral to the life and practices of the church.

Established congregations are often challenging environments for meaningful change; however, **Courtney Davis Olds** offers a case study that explores the shifting dynamics in religious communities and focuses on the ways in which leadership studies offer insight and vision to overcome the deep-seated resistance to change that is commonly present in congregations.

Some of the shifting dynamics in North America are explored with a look into the transnational contexts that emerge among immigrating people. **Jinna Sil Lo Jin** presents a thoughtful

inquiry into the ways that globalization and different cultures foster a distinctive environment for leadership. Her insights offer important ways to lead constructively in such a context.

How do you lead? In a word, *deliberately*. **Drew Poppleton** offers a reflective way of examining leadership as it focuses on praxis of the community. Following action-reflection methods, he also draws leaders themselves into the necessary process of newness and transformation.

Jean Halligan Vandergrift makes an evocative case for transformation and change that is rooted in a distinct theological turn. She argues that real ministry leads congregations away from navel-gazing toward witness to the reign of God. Based on her ethnographic work in three congregations she then offers a model of leadership that is comprised of three turns—discerning, integrating and bearing witness.

A missional turn in congregational leadership is explored within a particular tradition (United Methodist) in the essay by **David Werner**. Werner attends to cultural realities and then, based on his research, offers three critical trajectories for faith-forming small groups. Not unlike Vandergrift's work, Werner seeks to hold all three trajectories in a creative tension with the contexts of ministry.

So each of our authors presents evocative responses to the reality of change in our cultures, congregations, and the earth that we share. In so doing, they each point out a variety of leadership dimensions—each drawing from scholarly literature and advancing the conversation. We believe that these essays will be valuable to your work as pastors, educators, and to our ongoing query into what makes for good religious leadership.

Carson E. Reed is Frazer Chair for Church Enrichment in the Graduate School of Theology at Abilene Christian University.

Stephen V. Sprinkle is Professor of Practical Theology and Director of Field Education and Supervised Ministry at Brite Divinity School.