



SECTION 4 CREATIVE ARTS AND SPIRITUAL CARE FORMATION

Editor's Introduction

“We have to write *a lot* for CPE.” I hear this often from CPE interns, and they usually aren’t offering a statement of gratitude. Students, particularly those who are entering into spiritual caregiving and leadership as a second or third career, often find all the prose writing in CPE to be a bit daunting and, at times, onerous. Certainly, the writing of essays, reflection pieces, and verbatims can offer some students plenty of room for creativity and, I hope, provides all of them valuable learning in their formation as reflective spiritual caregiving practitioners. Yet, as the authors who contributed to this section remind us, other creative means of expression can also offer students and educators new windows into our work. In this section we have examples of the ways colleagues sustain and expand their ministry through poetry, painting, and photography.

In “Poetics and Reflective Ministry Practice: A Vital Exercise of Imagination,” Sean Gilbert shares with us how he uses poetry to teach his class on the Trinity. Students arrive expecting to be taught how to correctly understand a core tenet of Christian theology and, instead, Gilbert offers them “theopoetic pedagogy,” education that cultivates learners’ pastoral imaginations. He trusts poetry to “take us to ‘aha moments’ whereby settled life stations or perspectives are punctured by living, existential truths, enabling us to return to deeper places of seeing and *feeling* again as if it were for the very first time.”

Gilbert offers us the words of the poet Jane Hirshfield who understands that “[e]ach instant of a good poem provides the enactment of an unfathomable transformation. From the silence preceding the title’s first word to that first word to the second, everything is changed. . . . A good poem makes self and world knowable in new ways, brings us into an existence opened, augmented, and altered.” Hirshfield’s words offer a lovely segue into poems by Christal Bell and Sandy MacDonald. Both women use

poetry as a means of exploring the challenges they face in ministry and the faith that grounds them.

Cathy Hasty's article invites us to move from the written word into the world of landscape painting. In "Painting Supervision: Thoughts on Visual Composition in Plein Air Landscape Painting," Hasty draws parallels between her work as a visual artist and her practice as an ACPE Certified Educator. She notices that supervision and landscape painting have a similar trajectory, including the "messy middle" when the artist and the educator must "search for a new version of the story and find whether that story is sustainable for the rest of the journey." Cathy illustrates her piece with photographs of her paintings, inviting us to notice how images may communicate in ways words alone cannot.

Julia Prinz further articulates the way the visual arts excite and inform the pastoral imagination. In her essay "'Give Me a Word': A Spiritual Director's Journey with Photography," she writes with honesty, vulnerability, and wisdom of a time when she could neither "give" a word nor hear any word being "given." It was then that she discovered that photography can communicate in an elemental, existential, and deeply spiritual way. The creative arts, then, are not simply a metaphor for understanding written and spoken language but, at times, offer a deeper and truer form of communication than our usual ways of speaking.

It is important for me to note here that all the writers in this section are Christian. I didn't intend this, but I also didn't catch it until right before we were scheduled to go to print. I am sorry that we don't have more religious and spiritual diversity (and more types of creative expression, for that matter) included in these pages. I hope future volumes of this journal can offer other voices and more examples of how the creative arts illuminate for us what we don't readily see.

Nancy Wood

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