

SECTION 4

PRACTITIONERS, PRACTICAL THEOLOGIANS and POETS

Editor's Introduction

Given the theme of Volume 44, we've invited practitioners and poets who reflect deeply as practical theologians on themes that take us to the margins.

Kate Reuer Welton leads the Lutheran Campus Ministry at the University of Minnesota—Twin Cities (LCM-TC) which has a student population of over 50,000.¹ The Institution may or may not be aware of its presence. Some of its leaders might be supportive, some skeptical, some wary. Nevertheless, from the periphery LCM-TC seeks to surround the whole with a loving, grace-filled, and winsome presence. Its developmentally appropriate witness invites the curious and the explorers. It meets them where their spirituality finds the need for expression in relationships and community, purpose and direction; on a journey aroused by that curiosity as you will learn in Welton's article.

From another campus, Baylor University, Nick DiMauro has undertaken a research project touching on a fundamental human challenge, as it is experienced in the lives of pastors—loneliness. He writes, "Pastors feel an ambient sense of loneliness tied to their involvement in ministry as they keep their most natural support group—the congregations they serve—at arm's length." DiMauro reached out to pastors to engage them in a practice intended to mitigate the experience of loneliness. A pastor might feel lonely for the reason cited above, then add the multiplier impact of COVID, and the sense of isolation only increases. DiMauro posited that the ancient spiritual practice of Centering Prayer could, in part, decrease their experience of loneliness. He shares the results of his research and imaginative readers will find themselves eager to engage with hit themselves and even adapt his work to other settings.

Spiritual direction has been incorporated into many ministerial formation programs at seminaries and divinity schools. Yet, there is still a good deal of wondering about the work of spiritual direction, how one becomes a spiritual director, and who is well served by spiritual direction. Mary Zabawa Taylor in the joyful spirit of testimony writes of spiritual direction's role and her own story of serving as a spiritual director. Taylor then discusses how persons on the margins of our community benefit from this ancient practice, encouraging the offering to those who otherwise would not have the opportunity. Enjoy this moving message from the margins.

We have a sense of what it means to "get stuck" as a human being. Carrol Aarkema, inspired to reflect on his pastoral psychotherapy experience by the lyrics of Jackson Browne's song "The Rebel Jesus," considers the birth narrative of Jesus as an archetype for engaging therapeutic relationships under challenging circumstances. His poem, "Most Remarkable Move" extends the theme.

Speaker, wilderness guide, dog musher, and poet, Chris Heeter provides moving and compassionate reality therapy in her poem "We are here" which will surely hearten you in the year 2024.

Similarly, "Good Morning," attributed to Elena Mikhalkova in a *Room of Ancient Keys*, a *Russian* novel, likewise will encourage those of us feeling like we are working at the margins and our voice is marginal. Savor these poems. Post them next to your computer. Be encouraged. Your work matters.

Matthew Floding, Editor

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¹ https://idr.umn.edu/reports-by-topic-enrollment/enrollments?utm_medium=browser&utm_id=oir_redirect&utm_source=0IYd6 accessed 11/25/2023.