# Formative Practices: Intent, Structure, and Content

## Joretta Marshall

A new class of students enrolls in the seminary. The group includes: Mary, a thirty-four-year-old Asian student, who came to the United States to study theology and to work on a doctorate; Jeff, a forty-eight-year-old Euro-American, who recently was laid off from a lucrative job as an accountant and discovered a call to ministry in the church and denomination he has been attending for eighteen months; Jennifer, a twenty-four-year-old Euro-American, who just graduated from a church-related college and has been a life-long member of her denomination; Eric, a thirty-three-year-old African-American, who is already pastor of a church and is in seminary at the urging of his bishop; and Michelle, a twenty-eight-year-old non-denominational student, headed toward military chaplaincy. Each student comes with expectations and life experiences, as well as various levels of connections to denominations and local churches. Increasingly, the personal identity of women and men in their mid twenties to early thirties is more fluid than in previous generations. As they enter ministry, therefore, they

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are expected to assume a pastoral role while their personal identity is still being formed. How does an educational institution partner with a denomination and others in providing a formative experience for these students? How might processes of formation attend constructively to the diverse histories, fluid identities, and individual needs that students bring today to education for ministry?

CURRENT CHALLENGES TO FORMATION PRACTICES

With great passion judicatory leaders, seminary faculty and administrators, students, and congregations debate whether theological education is providing the right kind of formative training for leaders of the church. On the one hand, there is an assumption that seminaries ought to be shaping and forming leaders who can serve the needs of a technologically sophisticated church, as well as leaders able to serve a small congregation caught in the despair of recession and downsizing or a nonprofit outreach program designed to transform communities. On the other hand, theological schools and programs in formation must determine how to attend to fewer but increasingly diverse students with less financial resources to take on the difficult task of forming leaders. In the middle of these well-intended struggles rests a central question about the purpose and meaning of formation and its connection to theological education. Precisely what are we forming religious leaders to be and do in the context of increasingly diverse theological communities?[1]

The concept of formation has a rich history in the church. The word has often been narrowly associated with a structured way of shaping clergy to be spiritual and professional leaders. While Roman Catholics have long focused on formation for religious women and men, Protestants have witnessed a resurgence of attention to formation in its theological curriculum. This latter fact is evident in the formal educational standards to which most seminaries lay claim.[2] Across denominational structures, formation has captured the imagination of those who are engaged in nurturing leadership for the church along multiple paths of education.[3] The shift from training to formation is reflected in the name-change of this journal from *The Journal of Supervision and Training in Ministry* to *Reflective Practice: Formation and Supervision in Ministry*.

In a far-reaching project sponsored by the Carnegie Foundation, Charles R. Foster, Lisa E. Dahill, Lawrence A. Golemon, and Barbara Wang Tolentino engaged in a study on the formal education of clergy in the United States. While the focus of this particular project, titled *Educating Clergy*, was on graduate education through seminaries and divinity schools, their work has deep implications for diverse forms of ministerial education. According to these researchers, pedagogical practices related to formation, interpretation, contextualization, and performance work together to create an integrated educational program.[4]

While each of these pedagogies is important, the focus in this article is on discerning what is meant by "pedagogical practices of formation." In *Educating Clergy*, Foster and his colleagues suggest that such teaching and learning strategies "focus on forming in students the knowledge, skills, dispositions, and habits needed for such activities as 'gathering the community in prayer and worship,' and 'facilitating discussion and expression of feelings.'"[5] How does an academic institution, denomination, local church, or a committee on ministry understand the purpose, structure, and content of formation? What does it mean to participate in the formation of religious leaders across differences? Are there limits to honoring diversity in formative practices?

Before responding to these questions, it is important to acknowledge that not everyone is convinced about the central role of formation or its place in theological education. As Foster and his colleagues note, there are three overall categories of objections to notions of formation:

1. An implication that students are "passive and more or less infinitely malleable, plastic to the will or power of some superior shaping force"

2. A concern about "spiritual formation" and who is responsible for this in seminary education including questions of hierarchy, potential abuses of power, competency and training

3. An assumption that a "preordained pattern or 'form' exists to which the most diverse human sensibilities and vocations and personalities must somehow be 'conformed.'"[6]

These concerns resonate with many of us who are involved in theological education and in the life of the church, including myself. I am hesitant, for example, to place too much emphasis on formation as a goal, to suggest that either theological seminaries or the church is most respon-

sible in forming religious leaders. Nor does it seem prudent to create one model to be used by various denominations and schools in theological education. The aim of this article is to provide an alternative vision of formation that takes account of the objections named above.

While not wanting to make prescriptive directives intended to fit all persons and contexts, I suggest that instead of dismissing the concept because it is too problematic, we find other ways to clarify precisely what is intended by our use of the word formation. A more self-critical approach to formation recognizes that whether it is intentional or not, formation occurs inside and outside of formal education. For those engaged in co-creating the structures that provide formative experiences for religious leaders, it is important to think critically and reflectively about the intent, structure, and content of what we know as formation.

In examining the work of Foster and others, three dimensions of formation begin to emerge that deserve our attention. First, an attempt to define the intention or telos of formation provides a way of framing what is hoped for as persons engage in religious leadership. Second, attending to processes and structures highlights the need for diverse formative practices and avenues throughout one's ministry. Third, the content of formation names those areas important to attend to in the development of religious leaders. Each of these dimensions is informed by explicit or implicit theological understandings of the nature of humans, of ministry and leadership, and of context and diversity. Likewise, each dimension of formation is intimately connected to the other two. These are not isolated aspects of formation; they are deeply interconnected. My goal in looking briefly at each dimension is to provide greater awareness about the intention, structure, and content of formative practices in order to participate in a collaborative model of theological education with those committed to religious leadership.

### THE INTENTION OF FORMATIVE PRACTICES FOR RELIGIOUS LEADERSHIP

Whether one adopts postmodernity as a primary worldview or not, it is almost impossible not to imagine how language shapes our experience and perception of reality, at least to some extent. Normally, we talk about "formation," privileging its definition as a noun and as a goal to be achieved. Ordination ceremonies often include specific expectations regarding how a

religious leader should act or virtues the leader should embody. The implication is that there is a static, fixed end-product or goal that can be defined. In turn, one is tempted to imagine that there might be a "right process" or structure that creates formed religious leaders. Theological anthropology and developmental theory both remind us, however, that humans are not creatures who simply move toward some specified objective that becomes the goal of life; rather, there is a fluidness to our life and to the multiple identities that we embody in ministry, as Pamela Cooper-White has articulated in another essay in this issue.[7]

Similarly, to focus on formation as exclusively part of an educational endeavor overlooks how segments of our life journey are deeply connected one to another. What is true is that students who end up in seminary arrive already having been formed by a variety of life experiences. Likewise, when they leave those institutions, they will have other experiences that will continue to have an impact on their formation. Our intent ought to be not only the crafting of formative experiences in theological education but also the development of life-long formative practices that acknowledge the ever-unfolding process of formation. Because language carries meaning, it seems helpful to move away from a focus on formation as a product and embrace language that recognizes the vitality and aliveness of formation in multiple ways. Hence, I use the language of formative practices in this article.

A focus on practices has seen a renewal in the church thanks to the work of Dorothy Bass and others. Practices are defined by Bass as "constituent elements within a way of life that is responsive to and illuminated by God's active presence for the life of the world."[8] As Bass notes, developing formative practices for all persons of faith (lay and ordained) is part of the call of communities of faith. Formative practices with an eye on religious leadership, however, differ in that they provide a specific focus on the intention, process, and content of those "constituent elements." This shift to the language of formative practices leads us to a question: What formative practices can persons, communities, and institutions engage in intentionally that deepen understandings of vocational identity, open persons to the ongoing experiences of God's activity in the world, and develop the commensurate skills necessary for religious leadership?

Shifting our examination to the multiple ways in which people experience God's activity or grow in the skills of religious leadership leads to a consideration of intent. Foster and his colleagues identified as pedagog-

ical strategies those that were "intended to lead the student to practice the presence of God, practice holiness, and practice religious leadership."[9] Additionally they noted that pedagogies of formation "foster the professional identity and integrity that functions as a lens or framework through which students view and appropriate the knowledge and skills associated with the work of the profession."[10] What this collaborative team of authors suggests is that the intention, or *telos*, of formative practices relates both to aspects of spirituality and holiness as well as to the profession of ministry. Ultimately, formative practices assist in the development of patterns of living and being that sustain and nurture a deepened capacity for faithful leadership throughout one's ministry.

Spirituality has often been an assumed part of formation for religious leadership. Theological educators, for example, often assume that persons have been shaped and formed in the context of a local church and have developed their spirituality before arriving at their doors. Many students enter theological education without having been formed by particular faith communities. Students sometimes assume that seminary will deepen their spiritual formation and are surprised (and sometimes disappointed) to discover that theological education is a spiritual endeavor unlike what they may have experienced earlier in their lives. Likewise, judicatory representatives and local churches assume that schools of theology teach religious leaders about spirituality in ways that deepen the faith of students. Such assumptions often result in disappointments for everyone engaged in the development of religious leaders. Spirituality is more than any one of these perspectives.

Practices of spirituality must be shaped by theological commitments, such as understandings of God, theological anthropology, and ecclesial interpretations of the nature of the church and its ministry. The particularity of denominational convictions, polities, and theologies ought to be reflected in the development of formative practices related to spirituality for religious leaders. For example, while the movement toward embracing a post-denominational world provides a corrective lens to some misguided convictions that some denominations are closer to the reign of God than others, it also overlooks the significance and gift of theological particularity. Formative practices that focus on spirituality in theological education and in the church need to be crafted and nurtured toward the development of religious leaders whose spiritual lives and practices include an articulation

of the theological intentions of those practices within the framework and
context of particular faith traditions.

The next area of intention identified by Foster and his colleagues re-
lates to the development of the "profession" of ministry. Again, this is a
concept that carries with it multiple possibilities and problems. Like many,
I both resist and honor the development of ministry as a "profession." The
understanding that ministry is something one "is" rather than what one
"does" is still important to my own self-identity and moves me beyond
profession to vocation. At the same time, I am deeply appreciative of the
many judicatory and denominational leaders who emphasize the ethical
expectations for those who are called to the profession of ministry.

In *God's Potters*, Jackson Carroll notes that ministry is an "occupation
in flux." By this he means to suggest that in contemporary culture diversity
is reflected in how one understands ministry as an occupation or a pro-
fession. He suggests there are three models: pastoral leadership as an office,
ordained ministry as a profession, and ministry as a calling (drawing in
particular upon some of H. Richard Niebuhr).[11] Here again, the particular-
ity of theological commitments needs to be reflected in the development of
formative practices. So, for example, a tradition that focuses more clearly
on pastoral leadership as an office might be invested in formative practices
that help persons intentionally reflect on what it means to be a professional
in this way, while another denomination that focuses on ministry as calling
might craft very different kinds of formative practices. Additionally, each
individual on the journey will discover places of tension and congruence
within their religious tradition, thus creating another layer of diversity
deserving attention.

Those engaged in crafting formative practices for religious leadership
need to invite students, religious leaders, parishioners, and others into the
reflective practice of pondering how theology informs their notions of
spirituality and professional identity. Moving too quickly over the theolog-
ical commitments of particular communities of faith and denominations
can result in missing some of the nuances and differences that make for a
richer vision of religious leadership. It is impossible to predict where the
Spirit of God will move in a particular human creature, in a ministry
context, or in the church at large. Since God is still speaking, formative
practices need to remain particular and open-ended. Formation cannot be
accomplished in either formal or informal theological education alone but

must be part of the broader landscape of practices that help craft a religious leader's sense of vocation, awareness of God, and theological conviction.

## DIVERSE PROCESSES REFLECTIVE OF CONTEXTS AND SEASONS

Crafting environments where formative practices takes shape acknowledges the continual, unfolding, and ever-evolving nature of not only the human beings involved, but the very nature of the church and religious leadership. This more dynamic understanding (rather than a linear developmental model of pastoral formation) avoids some of the temptation to think that one process or one educational endeavor is appropriate for all. Formative practices recognize that the complexity of the human condition invites us to continue to examine who we are called to be at any moment in time.[12]

Foster and his colleagues note that there are multiple models of "formation" in theological education. Some are highly structured, with formal experiences and curriculum that shape a particular kind of pastoral leader from the beginning of one's seminary life until the conclusion. Other institutions are wary of their role as "formative agents" in the life of students (outside of the life of the mind and the intellect) and assume that the church ought to be responsible for crafting formative practices for religious leaders, particularly in areas of spirituality and profession. In the middle, of course, are many institutions that recognize the importance of formation and may have ways to create space for formative practices through formal and informal venues, without over-structuring it into the curriculum.

Two points are clear. First, formative practices must include multiple paths and diverse ways of imagining how to support and nurture the qualities and characteristics important in religious leadership. Attention to context is essential and critical to the development of formative practices and ought to play a prominent role in the crafting of these experiences. Additionally, in many communities of faith there is an honest attempt to move from simply being aware of diversity to actually embracing multiplicity in ways that call us into a future that honors and values God's diverse activity in the world. Hence, formative experiences must include multiple approaches and be congruent with contextual realities.

The social location of the individual and the community in which ministry is engaged (geography, economics, race, ethnicity, education, gender, sexual orientation, age, and so forth) informs the development of con-

crete formative practices. Nurturing spirituality and professional identity for a Euro-American chaplain whose congregation includes military women and men in combat from all walks of life might be quite different from formative practices important for an African-American theological educator in a seminary related to the United Church of Christ or for a pastoral leader in a Hispanic evangelical congregation in rural Iowa. The content of formative practices (addressed in the next section) ought to hold together across contextual differences while, at the same time, recognizing that particularity and context create the need for flexibility and imagination as concrete practices emerge.

Second, formative practices must include attention to life-long ministry and the seasons through which religious leaders move. These practices are not limited to seminary or preparation for ordination. In fact, if there is one place that theological education misses the mark, it is in its lack of emphasis on the importance of life-long practices that assist in shaping and creating pastoral leaders through various seasons of ministry. For example, Rick Thompson is a young pastoral leader from a suburban church in the East now serving a small rural community in South Dakota. He is grateful for the spiritual disciplines developed in seminary that allow him to reflect on what it means to live professionally in a different social location from which one grew up. Marcia Smith, on the other hand, is now pastoral leader in a prophetic and justice-oriented context for which she is ill-prepared. She needs to develop new formative practices that will reshape her approach to ministry in a new context. Formative practices need to be crafted and re-crafted throughout one's life in religious leadership.

INTEGRATIVE CONTENT FOR FORMATIVE PRACTICES

Building on the intent and structure of formative practices, it is possible to begin to name some of the content of formation that seems important in forming religious leaders in and for diverse contexts. The authors of *Educating Clergy* suggest that many "Roman Catholic schools use the term [formation] to encompass the entire program of priestly development. Thus they speak of academic, pastoral, spiritual, and human formation as the four key elements of their programs."[13] Some non-Catholic seminaries may approach theological education this way as well, but are generally more likely to speak of "pastoral formation" as a way of talking about vocational

identity, distinguishing it at times from "spiritual formation."[14] In some situations, a false dichotomy is created that suggests that pastoral formation relates to the academic and professional disciplines needed for religious leadership while the nurturing of spiritual formation ought to be left to the individual or to church structures (local, regional, or denominational). What is clear is that the content of formative practices must be multi-layered and must provide ways to integrate the multiple aspects of one's identity as a religious leader.

Again, postmodernity may be helpful here as we imagine the multiple identities that persons embody in their lives and, in particular, in religious leadership. Religious leaders are not only preachers or teachers or prophets of the Gospel. Instead, they are human beings who bring with them their own narratives and life stories, including multiple strengths and vulnerabilities. Religious leaders are called, at one moment, to be teaching preacher; in the next moment, to act out a word of justice on behalf of a silenced minority in a particular community; and, in the very next breath, to utter a prayer of thanksgiving and grief for a new birth that brings complications. In each situation, the religious leader needs to bring an integrity that is consistent and clear and open to a lifelong integrative journey of growth. Three claims shape this integrative understanding of formative practices enhancing wholeness.

First, formative practices need to engage the whole person of the religious leader and not simply isolating the spiritual or intellectual or professional aspects of one's life. To focus only on the nurturing of intellect neglects the intersection of passion, justice, and spirituality. Likewise, to help people become better professional leaders at the expense of their souls misses the impact of the Spirit on religious leadership. My hope is that persons craft practices that engage the fullness of being religious leaders rather than limit formative practices to one aspect of ministerial identity or split practices between the spirit, the body, and the mind. For this reason, what follows invites a consideration of integrative content focused on personal, spiritual, and professional formative practices.

Second, I draw upon words like *integration* and *wholeness* to talk about the integrative capacities I think essential for religious leaders. While these words reflect my own theological commitments, they also offer a valuable over-arching intention for formative practices without foreclosing the possibilities of various paths toward integration. Integrative practices en-

courage religious leaders to be self-critical and transparent to self and others about the theological commitments, personal qualities, and spiritual integrity that they carry into their ministry.[15]

Third, it seems helpful to move toward imaginative questions that assist in developing intentional formative practices rather than focusing prematurely on specific plans or activities. These kinds of questions can help at two levels. They provide a way of assessing strengths and vulnerabilities without passing judgment on an individual's journey. The questions also assist in the development of an intentional plan for sustaining and crafting life-long formative practices that are periodically reviewed, revised, and renewed. In what follows, personal, spiritual, and professional aspects of ministerial formation will be examined in the interest of developing a vision that integrates the three aspects into wholeness for ministry.

## PERSONAL FORMATIVE PRACTICES

Too often, attention to personal formative practices is placed at the end of conversations about ministerial education, or personal practices are given over to processes within denominations geared toward "psychological testing." By placing them first, I am not suggesting that they are more important; the placement is only an indication of my understanding that human beings are called into ministry and that they bring with them a personhood that has already been engaged in formative practices. It is important to note that I am less concerned here with psychological understandings of the pastoral leader and more interested in asking questions that open up conversations about how one experiences one's history and narrative or one's sense of self and agency. As some suggest, "Who you are" is more important than "what you do."[16] How does someone grow in self-awareness about the personal qualities, gifts, and vulnerabilities they bring into religious leadership? Three general areas of questions begin to invite reflection on how personal journeys have an impact on religious leadership.

The first question is one of wondering how an individual experiences agency in self, others, and God: Does the individual have a sense that things happen to her, that she makes things happen, that God makes things happen, or some variation of these notions? Thoughtful questioning of human agency is important for religious leaders in a world blessed with di-

versity. Concretely reflecting on what practices assist a person in growing self-awareness about agency allows the person to also recognize and value the way in which others from diverse perspectives experience the agency of God differently.[17]

Second, the emphasis on wholeness leads me to ask questions about how people being formed for ministry experience God in their physical and relational lives. Practices that encourage personal self-examination and that encourage honest confrontation and affirmation through support groups, family relationships, pastoral counselors or therapists foster self-understanding. What experiences encourage religious leaders to attend self, soul, body, relationships, and intellect?[18]

Third, individuals will have different comfort levels moving outside of their own social locations. What practices of hospitality or risk invite individuals in formation to be self-reflective about how their social location has an impact on theological perspectives for themselves and others?[19] What practices and experiences enhance multicultural and intercultural perspectives and understandings of the world and, thus, invite persons to be willing to risk engaging difference?

## SPIRITUAL FORMATIVE PRACTICES

An intentional focus on formative practices that deepen and enhance one's spirituality in diverse ways is essential in religious leadership. Spiritual practices are distinct, yet interrelated, to practices that enhance one's personal sense of well-being. In an integrative model, it is important to avoid any suggestion that the life of the spirit is antithetical to the life of the mind or the life of the body. Formative practices ought to work toward deeper integration rather than dichotomous thinking. In the area of spirituality, it is critical to explore with religious leaders how they discern God's active presence in their lives and in the lives of others.

In developing a plan for spiritual formative practices, several questions can guide thinking about how best to proceed:

- What habits of faith support and challenge this person's spiritual resilience?

- How does this person intentionally attend to the content of spirituality and not just seek a "feeling" of spirituality?

- Are there indigenous practices that have shaped this person's spiritual life?

- How might those practices be supported and nurtured?

- How might they become part of a person's intentional and disciplined formative life journey?

- What parts of a previous journey might need to be grieved or let go?

- How does this person draw upon the wisdom of education in nurturing spiritual growth?[20]

Concrete formative practices must also encourage religious leaders to honor and experience spiritual diversity. Curiosities that imagine how to foster the practice of hospitality from a spiritual perspective can be important in developing concrete practices of faith. Exploring worship experiences that are different from one's previous experience, working with a spiritual director, or participating in a community of prayer or study can invite people into new paths of vital spirituality.[21]

## Professional Formative Practices

To be a "professional" in our culture suggests that a group of colleagues share a body of knowledge that they have studied, wrestled with, and engaged in over time. This does not make them better than laypersons, but it is one of the markers of being a religious leader. Similarly, professionals have codes of ethics developed in collaboration with colleagues and peers over time. Exploring the content of professional formative practices raises several aspects that seem important.

First, as we have said, most persons participate in formation toward religious leadership from particular contexts and faith traditions. Hence, I am curious about how individuals understand their connection to their denomination or originating context and its theological commitments.

- What previous experiences have been informative in discerning what it means to be a religious leader?

- How does the difference between someone who has entered a denomination later in life and someone who grew up in the denomination show up in formative practices?

- What practices assist one in living with the limitations of a tradition and being a prophetic voice or discerning when to leave a faith tradition?

Second, the ethics and norms of professional religious leadership are not simply something one adopts; rather they are standards with which one ought to continuously wrestle.

- How does the practice of appropriate confidentiality and vulnerability get nurtured in a religious leader in distinct and different contexts?

- How does the practice of developing healthy relationships with boundaries get discussed and explored within the context of one's ministry setting?

- What intentional practices engage other colleagues in ministry in reflecting on these issues?[22]

- How are persons practicing and cultivating the desire for lifelong learning?

- How does this person engender theological curiosity or how do they remain open to the surprise of God?

- What disciplined practices (educational, formal, and informal) encourage this person to ask theological questions?[23]

Third, professional religious leaders need to reflect on these questions not only about their own lives, but also around the lives of the communities they serve. Two sets of questions articulated by Jill Crainshaw seem helpful at this point:

- "Who are we called to be as persons and communities of faith?"

- "What are we to do with this call?"[24]

As Jackson Carroll notes in his study, pastoral leaders are shapers of the culture and the community around them. They have an obligation and responsibility to have an impact on the community in a particular way.[25] Hence, it is important to assist religious leaders in examining what practices help them understand community and help them grow in their sense of public theology. In a parallel way, what practices do they nurture in their congregations that invite others to continue to explore the constituent elements of their faith?

## PARTNERS AND ACCOUNTABILITY

Randy had worked in a mid-level corporate position for over 15 years. Downsizing led to a shift in his position from full-time to part-time. At the

same time, he became involved in his local congregation and began to feel a "call" to ministry. At 55, he feels he cannot afford to attend seminary or take on the debt load that would require. He is increasingly certain about his "call," but he is unclear whether he will move toward chaplaincy, social justice work, or leadership in a small congregation. He currently understands himself to be bi-vocational. He is eager to discover what is required if he is to move toward some form of professional ministry.

Because so many of the questions Randy is asking (or must ask) intersect and overlap, it is clear that the intent, structure, and content of formative practices are best attended to in collaboration with others involved in their education and ministry. Multiple partners are included on the journey of religious leadership: family, pastoral mentors, congregations, judicatory leaders, seminary professors and institutional representatives, and others. While individuals engaged as religious leaders may have ultimate responsibility for developing intentional concrete practices reflective of their own particularities, the best formative practices are co-created with others engaged in the work of the community. Formative practices are not individualistic or isolative practices, and they require the imagination and intent of many others. The development, review, and re-negotiation of concrete practices must rest within broader communities of connection.[26]

Fostering formative practices that are meaningful and reflective requires an appreciation of diverse theological perspectives, histories and narratives, and contexts for ministry. The intention, structure, and content of formative practices rests upon the imaginative capacity of all who are involved as they co-construct formative practices that deepen vocational identity and assist in developing patterns of living that can be sustained. In the process, we nurture religious leaders who carry the "knowledge, skills, dispositions, and habits" needed for effective religious leadership in a diverse world.

Accountability for formative practices rests with the multiple partners who are involved in religious leadership. Such responsibility for formative practices requires more than a "reporting in" or "marking off from a checklist" of practices or disciplines; rather it requires a sustained and engaged conversation within the community about how best to enhance the formative practices of those in religious leadership. Co-creating formative practices is the gift of the community not only to the religious leader or to themselves. In mutual accountability, we offer the world another model of

thinking about what it means to be shaped and formed as human beings created in the image of God.

**NOTES**

1. The words religious, ministerial, and pastoral leadership are used interchangeably. These terms suggest the *telos* or direction of formative practices—those that help nurture persons called to leadership in the ministry of the church. The words pastoral and ministerial are not confined to ordained ministers who serve local congregations in leadership. Instead, the terms suggest the theological and communal nature of leadership that these persons provide in the context of church or community, whether they are lay or ordained. The words connote that pastoral leaders reflect theologically about their roles and functions in ministry and that their vocational identities are integrally linked to the traditions and faith communities in which they participate. See also Joretta L. Marshall, "Toward the Development of a Pastoral Soul: Reflections on Identity and Theological Education," *Pastoral Psychology* 43, no. 1 (September 1994): 11–28.

2. See Association of Theological Schools, Board of Commissioners, "General Institutional Standards, ATS," http://www.ats.edu/Accrediting/Documents/08GeneralStandards .pdf. These standards show that formation in multiple ways has taken a more prominent role. ATS Standard 4.2.1, for example, notes that ministerial degree programs should "provide opportunities for formational experiences through which students may grow in those personal qualities essential for the practice of ministry, namely, emotional maturity, personal faith, moral integrity, and social concern."

3. The initial encouragement for this article came as a result of conversations with Martha A. Baumer and others in the United Church of Christ who are working with the multiple paths into ministry. A special thanks to Marti for her intellect, insight, and passion. Likewise, Herb Anderson provided helpful feedback and insight as I moved this toward a contribution for this journal.

4. The qualitative research team "conducted a comprehensive review of literature on Jewish and Christian clergy education; created survey instruments and conducted a survey of faculty, students, and alumni and alumnae from a cross-section of eighteen Jewish and Christian seminaries; interviewed faculty, students, and administrators; observed classes; participated in the life of the community at ten of the eighteen seminaries; and contributed questions to a survey sent to half of all United States and Canadian seminary educators." Charles R. Foster and others, *Educating Clergy: Teaching Practices and Pastoral Imagination* (San Francisco, Calif.: Jossey Bass, 2006), 15.

5. Foster and others, *Educating Clergy*, 68.

6. Ibid., 126.

7. Pamela Cooper-White, "The 'Other' Within: Multiple Selves Making a World of Difference," *Reflective Practice* 29 (2009): 24–39.

8. Dorothy Bass, "Introduction," in *Practicing Theology: Beliefs and Practices in Christian Life*, ed. Miroslav Volf and Dorothy Bass (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 2002), 3.

9. Foster and others, *Educating Clergy*, 103ff.

10.   Foster and others, *Educating Clergy*, 101.

11.   Jackson W. Carroll, *God's Potters: Pastoral Leadership and the Shaping of Congregations* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 2006), 16ff.

12.   In a research study by McKenna, Yost, and Boyd, there is clear indication that the most significant leadership development for pastors occurs in the midst of ministry and not before. Focusing on the ongoing development of pastors is an essential component of formation. See, Robert McKenna, Paul Yost and Tanya Boyd, "Leadership Development and Clergy: Understanding the Events and Lessons that Shape Pastoral Leaders," *Journal of Psychology and Theology* 35, no. 3 (2007): 179–189.

13.   For an extremely insightful examination of this model, see Victor J. Klimoski and others, *Educating Leaders for Ministry: Issues and Responses* (Collegeville, Minn.: Liturgical Press, 2005). Their insight into formation includes attention to the four aspects of theological education including, one's heritage (for example, racial and ethnic makeup, age, religion), socio-cultural background (for example, place of origin, economic status), educational background (for example, natural abilities, openness to learning, learning styles or problems, educational background), and ecclesial understanding (for example, deeply rooted or recently converted to faith, theological perspective).

14.   Foster and others, *Educating Clergy*, 125.

15.   This is similar to the notion of the undivided life developed by Parker Palmer, *Courage to Teach: Exploring the Inner Landscape of a Teacher's Life* (San Francisco, Calif.: Jossey Bass, 1998).

16.   See McKenna, Yost, and Boyd, "Leadership Development and Clergy," 185. In addition, it might be helpful to reflect on the material available in numerous places about the impact of family systems on religious leadership. See, for example, the work of Ron Richardson, *Becoming a Healthier Pastor: Family Systems Theory and the Pastor's Own Family* (Minneapolis, Minn.: Fortress Press, 2005).

17.   I find the work of Dorothy Bass and Craig Dykstra (along with others in this particular text) helpful as they raise questions about practices that are a "way of life shaped by a positive response to God," See Miroslav Volf and Dorothy Bass, eds., *Practicing Theology* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 2002), 15–16.

18.   Several articles in Dorothy Bass, ed., *Practicing Our Faith* (San Francisco, Calif.: Jossey-Bass Publishers, 1997) are helpful in this and the following sections. Around issues of personal formation see in *Practicing Our Faith*, for example, Stephanie Paulsell, "Honoring the Body," 13–28, and Dorothy Bass, "Keeping Sabbath," 75–90.

19.   Colleagues at McCormick Seminary offer a helpful focus on "multi-cultural" understandings of personhood that are insightful. See David V. Esterline and Ogbu U. Kalu, eds., *Shaping Beloved Community: Multicultural Theological Education* (Louisville, Ky.: Westminster John Knox, 2006).

20.   In *God's Potters*, Carroll's notes, in particular, that the lack of spiritual practices results in a negative impact on the effectiveness of religious leadership. Once again, see chapters in Bass, *Practicing our Faith*, such as Frank Rogers Jr., "Discernment," 105–118 and Don E. Saliers, "Singing our Lives," 179–194.

21.   In Bass, *Practicing our Faith*, see chapters such as Ana Maria Pineda, "Hospitality," 29–42.

22.   In particular, it is helpful to note the connections here with clergy who cross boundaries with parishioners in multiple ways, such as borrowing money from parishioners, inappropriate sexual contact, participating in gossip, and other activities harmful to the community of faith. For an illustration of articulating clear norms in ministerial practice see Klimoski and others, Educating Leaders for Ministry, 48ff.

23.   See Jill Crainshaw, *Keep the Call: Leading the Congregation without Losing your Soul* (Nashville, Tenn.: Abingdon Press, 2007), 67, 70.

24.   Ibid., for a helpful understanding of pastoral identity and authority.

25.   See Carroll, *God's Potters*.

26.   See Joanne Lindstrom, "The Formation of Ministerial Authority and Identity: Cross-Cultural Experiential Education," in *Shaping Beloved Community: Multicultural Theological Education*, ed. David Esterline and Ogbu U. Kalu (Louisville, Ky.: Westminster John Knox Press, 2006), 199–210.

> *"A common general theory of religious/spiritual belief is desirable to serve as a tool or frame of reference that will encourage a greater understanding of the common process of different religious/spiritual faiths. Further, any such paradigm could also assist in terms of how religion/spirituality (of whatever construction) intersects with health and wellbeing. It is one argument of this essay that Hans Mol's 'sacralization of identity' paradigm serves as a convincing general theory canvassing the common mechanisms across all religious/spiritual beliefs."*
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> Lindsay B. Carey, Ron Davoren, Jeffrey Cohen
> "The Sacralization of Identity: An Interfaith Spiritual
> Care Paradigm for Chaplaincy in a Multi-Faith Context"
>
> *—From Interfaith Spiritual Care: Understandings and Practices*