

## SECTION 1 HOW DO ADULTS LEARN?



### *Editor's Introduction*

Most of us who regularly read *Reflective Practice* are involved in teaching. In fact, two of the supporting professional organizations of this journal have “education” in their names. Supervision is a form of teaching. Formation is a form of teaching. Mentoring is a form of teaching. Even academic teaching is a form of teaching. Yet, we teach on multiple levels and have various goals. We teach concepts. We teach skills. We teach how to think critically. We teach attitudes. We teach what Kathleen Cahalan calls “practical wisdom.” We even teach spirituality. We might say that we teach to the whole person. But how do we teach on such multiple levels? What have we learned from this kind of teaching about how adults learn? What have we learned about what it takes to prepare women and men for ministry in the twenty-first century? Is it time not only to acknowledge our unique kind of teaching and learning but also to study it, market it, and promote it as the wave of the future in professional education for religious leadership? For this volume of *Reflective Practice*, the Editorial Board invited you, the innovators in adult learning, to submit essays that reflect the wisdom of what you do, the creative ways you do it, and the joys and challenges of what you do.

This issue (volume 36) of *Reflective Practice* begins with an essay by Kathleen Cahalan, professor of practical theology at St. John’s Theological Seminary in Minneapolis. In her essay, which was part of a series of lectures at the Biennial Conference of the Association of Theological Field Educators held in January 2015, she raises the question, How do ministers learn practical wisdom, the wisdom that makes them effective, mature, and sensitive to emotional and social contexts? She answers that question in part by delineating the various stages of learning practical wisdom. In this essay, she boldly states that theological education in the twenty-first century needs to focus not on learning critical thinking skills, a focus that is a residue of the Enlightenment, but on the teaching of practical wisdom. We look forward to Cahalan’s forthcoming book *Minding the Gaps: Integrating Work in Theological Education* (Wipf and Stock, 2017), which she is editing along with Edward Foley and Gordon S. Mikoski.

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Diane Tickton Schuster, Visiting Fellow at the Hebrew School in Los Angeles and trustee of the Claremont School of Theology, helps build a theological foundation for a theory of adult learning by looking at adult learning through the lens of Jewish mysticism. She unpacks the concept of *tzimtzum*, translated as “contraction,” and explains why it is relevant to the work of religious leaders of all faiths. She suggests that embedded in *tzimtzum* is a principle of effective adult learning. She expands upon the implications of this principle by recounting an interview with Rabbi David Nelson, an interview that is rich, far-reaching, and well worth a read. Schuster concludes that *tzimtzum* leads us inevitably to learner-centered education, or a teaching style that “makes room for the learner to grow.”

The concept of transformative learning has taken root in recent years, particularly in CPE circles. Transformative learning focuses on learning that changes perspectives, generates new insights, and empowers new behaviors. Transformative learning is the kind of learning that most readers of *Reflective Practice* would hope to be a part of, whether it be in the seminary, hospital, field education placement, or supervisor's office. The essay by Logan C. Jones, a CPE supervisor in North Carolina, summarizes the basic texts on transformative learning theory. This essay will be particularly helpful for readers who are not familiar with this theory and/or want to study some of the relevant texts. More than this, however, Jones also advances the theory by exploring the role of imagination in transformative learning. He argues that imagination thickens the clinical learning process and, in so doing, opens up the discussion on how we might teach or foster imagination as an integral part of the learning process.

Finally, in this section, Danielle Buhuro, a CPE Supervisor at Advocate South Suburban and Trinity Hospitals in Chicago, continues this focus on transformative learning. Buhuro, whose DMin project was on pastoral care and gang violence, invites readers to look at adult learning, particularly the learning process that occurs in CPE, through the lens of Black feminist and womanist theology. From that perspective, she argues that CPE learning at its best should be understood as “liberative learning,” learning that liberates the person. Supporting this perspective, she presents the work of three womanist theologians and then supports her argument with clinical examples and case studies from her work as a CPE supervisor.

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