

REFLECTIVE PRACTICE VOLUME 41



Editors' Introduction

A few months ago I (Wood) saw a post on Facebook that filled me with both delight and longing. It featured an ACPE friend and colleague wearing a tee-shirt that said, "I miss precedented times." I hadn't thought that it was grammatically possible to uncouple that particular adjective from the prefix "un." (A quick trip to the dictionary assured me that it was.) I hadn't thought about it because I'd never needed to know. When we live in precedented times, there is no need to name them as such.

The tee-shirt's message highlighted just how often the word "unprecedented" has been used to describe life in 2020. An unprecedented pandemic of a novel virus and all the unprecedented impacts to our schools, jobs, health care, houses of worship, life cycle events, extended families, and communities. Continuing systemic racism and police brutality followed by, finally, an unprecedented number of people taking to the streets in support of Black lives. An unprecedented presidential election in which the loser, the sitting President of the United States, continues to refuse to follow precedent and concede to the winner. How is it we aren't all wearing that tee-shirt all the time?

Yet we theological educators continue to find ways to do our work in the face of the grief and loss of this past year. Indeed, we incorporate that grief and loss we are experiencing into our curricula to further teach and model good spiritual care to and for our students. Via long sessions in front of computer screens or by wearing masks 8 hours a day and sitting 6 feet apart from one another, we carry on in the work of experiential theological education. We stay true to the work of building and challenging students as they learn the art of ministry.

Likely that would be enough in unprecedented times. But we have found a way to do more than push through each day. We have sustained a core discipline of our field: reflecting on our experience in consultation with our peers such that we gain new perspectives on our work and deepen our relationships with the people we serve.

If you need evidence of this, look no further than this volume of *Reflective Practice*. Leaders, thinkers, writers, practitioners, social scientists, spiritual care givers, poets, and protesters all lend their voices to an exploration of what it means to engage in ministerial formation in a time of crisis. Through a summer and autumn of adjustment and change and into a dark winter of loneliness and loss, we've been inspired by the wisdom, authenticity, and vulnerability in this collection. We hope you will be, too.

While by no means unprecedented and certainly not a crisis, the *Journal of Reflective Practice* experienced its share of change in 2020, too. After six years of service to the journal as editor, Scott Sullender, retired from the post. With the support of the Board, we initiated a co-editor structure. Neither of us can imagine doing this work alone. We are grateful for all the editors who came before us who, so ably, did just that. We offer thanks, too, to Carrie Buckner, Interim Board Chair, for her tenacious and gracious leadership; to Rod Seeger, Managing Editor, for all the small and large ways he keeps this journal going; to Landon Bogan for his work as Book Review Editor, and to all the *Reflective Practice* Board Members for their support, ideas, and hard work. Lastly and importantly, we thank Kathy McKay for her work as copy editor and Dennis Bolt for his contribution as page designer.

Nancy Wood and Matthew Floding
Co-Editors