

John Senior and Matthew Floding, eds., vol. 2, Explorations in Theological Field Education, Empower: A Guide for Supervisor-Mentors in Theological Field Education (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2020), 209 pp.

Reading this resource from cover to cover, one will discover that it is wisely named *Empower*. Editors John Senior and Matthew Floding are empowering others by thoughtfully amassing a complete roster of authors who are uniquely qualified to pour collective wisdom into the art and practice of supervising students in ministry contexts. In doing so, they provide a ministry formation resource like none other. Through their own obedience to this work over time—including the many variables and nuances of mentor-mentee relationships—the authors provide practical resources that empower others for personal development and, equally important, public ministry.

The table of contents lays out an impressive array of topics and is broken into three robust parts.

Part I: Mentoring for Ministry Essentials. This is an excellent section featuring the key foundational areas of mentoring students in ministry formation: vocational discernment, spiritual formation, boundaries, pastoral imagination, and resilience for ministry, to name a few. Chapter 7, “Mentoring for Resilience,” especially stands out as this review is being written in the midst of a global pandemic that is far from over. This chapter alone guides mentors into the deep waters of claiming their identity through “fostering deeper self-awareness, building an understanding of systems, and nurturing lifelong habits of spiritual formation and self-care” (p. 49).

Part II: Mentoring for Ministry in Context. This section takes the mentor into critical thinking and action with regard to the following topics: mentoring in systems, mentoring for relational conflict, mentoring LGBTQIA students, trauma-informed mentoring, mentoring for leadership in nonprofits, and mentoring for ministry in chaplaincy settings. And, have you ever thought of the congregation as having a mentoring influence on ministry students? Floding pens this chapter and stewards an important conversation that elevates the treasures found within collective

congregational life that stand in stark contrast to the individualistic tendencies of American society. This chapter helpfully reminds the supervisor that they are part of a much wider community of practice.

Part III: Mentoring for Leadership Formation. This section addresses mentoring the preacher, the administrator, and the pastoral caregiver. Perhaps most timely in this section are the chapters on courageous leadership and public leadership and social change. As theological graduate students navigate an increasingly divided public square, they are seeking mentors and leaders who are willing to ask insightful and reflective questions in these divisive times. Knowing that Christian ministry students answer the call of Jesus to be both prophet and priest in their communities and beyond, Melissa Browning helps supervisors gain helpful frameworks for the kinds of questions and storytelling that may lead others into meaningful public witness. She ends her chapter by reflecting on one of her mentors, Peter Block. She writes, “Advice, according to Block, is a way of controlling others. The more difficult and important work is to listen without fixing, always responding with questions that force us to do our own work” (p. 174).

I applaud this literary effort for the expansive reach of its catalogue alone. It will be an incredible companion and ready guide for those mentoring in the ministry trenches. The format for each chapter is helpful. Each chapter begins with a premise or intellectual grist for the mill, and then it often leads into a helpful practical tool or two. But, best of all, in keeping with Peter Block’s philosophy of the best kind of learning, each chapter ends with thoughtful questions for ministry supervisors to reflect upon. These questions unlock the door to numerous conversations that will undoubtedly impact individuals’ ministry formation for years to come. We may want to assume the student is the one who will be transformed through such questions and conversations, but my hunch is that it is also the supervisor who will be changed by the deep wells of wisdom that await them. As a theological field educator charged with training dozens of supervisors each year, I can assure you that this text will be an essential resource for years to come!

Timothy J. Coltvet
Luther Seminary Saint Paul
Minnesota