Preface

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The December 2010 issue of *Pastoral Psychology* is comprised of articles by 13 participants in a conference at Union Presbyterian Seminary in Richmond, Virginia in October 2009. The name that we conceived for the participants was Group for New Directions in Pastoral Theology. This name was not intended to suggest that there is something problematic about current directions in pastoral theology but rather to reflect the fact that the discipline of pastoral theology has always been future-oriented and we wanted the conference to reflect this orientation.

A second conference took place at Union Theological Seminary in October 2010. Many of the persons at the 2009 conference were in attendance. There were also a few new participants. The theme of the 2010 conference was “Artistic Expressions in Pastoral Theology.” This theme reflected the fact that several of the papers presented at the 2009 conference made extensive use of novels, short stories, autobiographies, poetry and music or referred to the imagination, parables, etc. In the announcement of the theme, we noted that it was intended to serve as encouragement to write on these and other forms of artistic expression. We also noted that the case study, which played such an important role in the development of dynamic psychology (our 2009 theme) and has figured prominently in the field of pastoral theology, may also be viewed as an artistic expression.

The articles presented here make use of novels, poetry, fables, memoirs, music, and paintings to explore issues that are very much at the heart of pastoral theology and pastoral care. They also reflect the fact that pastoral theology is a practice-oriented discipline by focusing on the arts of attending, contemplation, and mindfulness. While we believe that this collection of articles breaks new ground, we also recognize—and celebrate the fact—that it locates pastoral theology on familiar soil. Faithful readers of *Pastoral Psychology* will, in fact, find direct connections between the articles presented here and articles previously published in the journal. Especially noteworthy in this regard is Carol J. Cook’s “Emily Dickinson: Poet as Pastoral Theologian,” as her article recalls Neil Scheurich’s (2007) “Suffering and Spirituality in the Poetry of Emily Dickinson.” His article on Emily Dickinson also enables us to recognize connections we may otherwise have missed between

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her article and those of Kirk A. Bingaman and John McDargh, with their emphasis on spiritual practices.

We greatly appreciate Lewis Rambo's willingness to publish these articles. The number of participants that Union Presbyterian Seminary can accommodate is necessarily limited. Thus, the publication of these articles gives expression to our felt sense when we gather at Paisley Hall (which houses The Center for Ministry and Leadership Development) that we are not alone, that many other colleagues are present with us.

In this regard, John Joon-Young Huh speaks for an international community of pastoral theologians when he suggests that we, individually and collectively, are like the bat in Aesop's fables: neither bird nor beast—and hence profoundly vulnerable but oddly invincible.¹

References

- Kenyon, J. (2005). *Jane Kenyon: collected poems*. Saint Paul: Graywolf.
- Scheurich, N. (2007). Suffering and spirituality in the poetry of Emily Dickinson. *Pastoral Psychology*, 56, 189–197.

¹ See also Jane Kenyon's (2005) poem "The Bat" (p. 114).