Preface

Donald Capps • Nathan Carlin • Robert C. Dykstra

Published online: 12 January 2012
© Springer Science+Business Media, LLC 2012

The articles in this special issue of *Pastoral Psychology* were presented as working papers at the third annual conference of the Group for New Directions in Pastoral Theology, which took place at Union Presbyterian Seminary in Richmond, Virginia on October 12–14, 2011. The papers presented at the first and second annual conferences were published as articles in *Pastoral Psychology* (December 2010 and June 2011). We are deeply indebted to Lewis Rambo, editor of *Pastoral Psychology*, for enabling us to publish the articles as a group because the participants in the conference are asked to write papers on a common theme.

The theme for this year was “The Parables and Proverbial Sayings of Jesus: Their Significance for Pastoral Theology.” This theme evolved rather naturally from the theme of the 2010 conference—“Artistic Expressions in Pastoral Theology”—which was itself inspired by the fact that several papers presented at the 2009 conference made extensive use of novels, short stories, autobiographies, poetry, and music, or they referred to the imagination, parables, etc.

In the Preface to the June 2011 issue of *Pastoral Psychology*, we noted that the articles presented therein 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. Moreover, they reflect the fact that pastoral theology is a practice-oriented discipline by focusing on the arts of attending, contemplation, and mindfulness. We also noted that although this collection of articles breaks new ground, we also recognize—and celebrate the fact—that it locates pastoral theology on familiar soil. We added that faithful readers of *Pastoral Psychology* will, in fact, find direct connections between the articles presented in the June 2011 issue of the journal and articles previously published in the journal.

D. Capps (✉) • R. C. Dykstra
Princeton Theological Seminary, PO Box 821, Princeton, NJ 08542-0803, USA
e-mail: cappsdonald@aol.com

R. C. Dykstra
e-mail: Robert.Dykstra@ptsem.edu

N. Carlin
The University of Texas Medical School, Houston, TX 77030, USA
e-mail: Nathan.Carlin@uth.tmc.edu

Several of the articles presented here focus on Jesus' parables (the good soil, the hidden treasure, the pearl, the broken and empty jar, the tenants, and the laborers in the vineyard). Others focus on his sayings (the kingdom is within you, your sins are forgiven, your faith has made you well, and the speck in your neighbor's eye vs. the log in your own eye). But regardless of the parable or saying that may inform a specific article, the articles as a whole portray Jesus as one who endorsed the human desire to set out in "new directions," wherever these may take us.

We believe, therefore, that the Group for New Directions in Pastoral Theology is an expression, however modest, of the teachings and healing acts of Jesus. As we sat around the table at the Continuing Education Center at Union Presbyterian Seminary, it was, in fact, difficult *not* to notice that there were twelve of us who had gathered together, and the quality of our mutual sharing over the two days of discussion created a strong impression that he was present. Also, as the number of participants that the conference setting and format can accommodate is necessarily limited, the publication of these articles gives expression to our felt sense when we gather together that other colleagues in pastoral theology are present with us. That our search for "new directions" in pastoral theology is a non-exclusive venture is also a reflection of the fact that Jesus eschewed partisan claims, cliquish behaviors, and elitist pretenses. We hope, therefore, that these articles will serve as a stimulus to others to participate in the search for "new directions" in pastoral theology.