

## Editor’s Introduction on the Special Section “Spirituality in Adolescents: The Hub of Mental Health and Positive Development”

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We are pleased to have Dr. Lisa Miller, Professor of Psychology and Education at Teacher’s College, Columbia University, to be our Guest Editor for a Special Section of this issue of the *Journal* whose title is *Spirituality in Adolescents: The Hub of Mental Health and Positive Development*. Dr. Miller’s *Guest Editorial* will describe the subject matter covered in her and her colleagues’ work. We are honored to bring all of them to the attention of our readership. The breadth and depth of the articles to follow speak for themselves.

Dr. Miller along with her professorship at Columbia is the Founder and Executive Director of the Spirituality Mind Body Institute there. She is Editor of *Handbook of Psychology and Spirituality* published by Oxford University Press and author of *The Spiritual Child: The New Science of Parenting for Health and Lifelong Thriving* published this spring (2015) by St. Martin’s Press. These are works deserving the close attention of those concerned with human flourishing particularly as it relates to adolescents and younger children: educators, clinicians, researchers, and all those engaged in exploring the complex relationship among faith, health, and human development. And it will certainly bolster and inform the efforts of congregational clergy who deal with life cycle events and family crises on a routine basis.

When Dr. Miller first got in contact with me regarding a potential collaboration, I was intrigued by the opportunity. The reason for my response arose from my reading an article in *The New York Times* in 2012 that outlined the work of the Spirituality Mind Body Institute. “At last,” I thought. Someone and some group had begun to ground what those of us who are pastoral care and counseling specialists and congregational clergy have believed for a very long time: that religious or spiritual growth and nurturing could be monitored and shown through the medium of sophisticated and rigorous social science research to have beneficial effects including impact on the brain. Furthermore, those doing

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the work at the Institute apparently had no theoretical axes to grind or points to score. Thus, this *Special Section* comes as a real gift to our readers. And it is just that—a gift.

My hope is that the articles in this *Special Section* will spur others on to offer their own responses to the issues raised here. We need everyone concerned with the well-being of children and adolescents to share their knowledge and perspectives. It is my view that Lisa Miller and her colleagues have given to us in our contemporary scene resources that will encourage and sustain us in our journeys forward.