



Push off and let your ministries soar!

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It is indeed exciting to invite you into our first issue, taking in the new version of a classic resource for Christians in service and leadership. With this Summer issue, *Family Ministry* returns to Texas and comes home to Baylor University's Center for Family and Community Ministries in the School of Social Work. As you can see, we have expanded the scope, content and focus of the journal, as its new name suggests. We hope you continue to find the quality content of former days as well as a hopeful vision for a new era. As our cover and inside photos convey, we hope the *FCM Journal* will give your ministries a push and help them soar!

As the transition of the journal back to Baylor developed, we began to envision what its mission would be and drafted these phrases:

Family and Community Ministries: Empowering Through Faith is a journal for the heart, head and soul, committed to helping congregations and religiously affiliated organizations be the hands and feet of God. Through the journal, the CFCM seeks to provide resources for family and community that foster creativity, promote critical thinking and inspire contemplation.

As we began to circulate this mission statement, feedback from friends helped shape it further. Most people seemed to like the balance of faith and action, research and practice, the critical and the contemplative, and the emphasis on family and community; they liked our commitment to strengthening ministries as the hands and feet of God.

A few friends of the journal have been particularly interested in this phrase and how it reminds them of Teresa of Avila's poem that suggests God has no hands and feet but ours to love others. One friend shared the perspective of a Presbyterian minister in Chicago whom he knows: "If God has no hands and feet but ours, the gig is up!" He added, "We're simply hired hands. Knowing that, we can work hard during the day to feed the hungry, visit the sick, etc., and then we can take our rest, trusting in God's own hands to

*All his miracles become
the most natural thing
in the world if we make
them come about*

Dorothee Soelle
(1929-2003)

provide the rest.”

Another friend said our mission statement reminds him of my favorite theologian and mystic, Dorothee Soelle, who invites us to see with the eyes of God and speak with the voice of God. She writes that when we reach out with God’s hands, “cripples start out for his kingdom, the blind begin to see.”

Actually, any point along this spectrum of how we participate with God in ministry is a call to renewed faithfulness in our vocation. Conjuring the faith that God is active in some way in our work is no small feat. But, then again, I trust that we aren’t in this alone.

Through this journal, the Center for Family and Community Ministries hopes to walk alongside you in this ministry with each other and with God. As you seek to be faithful hands and feet in your ministries, we hope to join you in the journey in these ways:

- For the heart, we seek to foster creativity.
- For the head, we seek to promote critical thinking.
- For the soul, we seek to inspire contemplation.

In this first issue, we believe we are doing just that. Diana Garland and Jo Edmonds remind us in their article of the faithfulness of families in Baptist congregations. They present a picture of family life in 15 congregations using the Church Census family assessment tool Diana helped to create. They discuss family strengths and stressors, but also report on how the church can help and implications for ministry. The article shows us that families want church leaders to help them help others.

Jo Anne Schneider also helps us think about a vocation of service. Writing from the Faith and Organizations national research study, she looks at how Protestants work from a congregational model when implementing ministries that meet community needs. She goes further, however, in clarifying congregational and institutional models for organizing social supports, and the implications of these models for fundraising, developing collaborations, garnering volunteers and identifying populations for service.

T. Laine Scales, in her role as associate editor, coordinates the peer review and editing of the academic article submissions. Her experience and insight have been invaluable in every step of bringing this journal to fruition.

Also in this first issue, you will find reviews of books to inspire your studies in ministry, gathered for us by Amy Castello. She also is preparing reviews of teaching resources and curricula, collaborating with Shannon Daley Harris who will continue to keep us abreast of resources for children. In “Reflections,” personal essays by invited authors, Wendy Wright brings us a touching tribute to her mother – an example of her gifts of thoughtful expression. New to the journal is Vicki M. Kabat, who will bring her sense of humor and insight in a column

titled “This Too Shall Pass.”

Michael Kelly edits a new section titled “Faith in Action” – practical, first-person accounts of ministry that invite reflection and response. The essays in this issue focus on particular experiences of suffering, and how they provoke theological thought and pastoral care.

Interspersed among these essays and articles are resources for contemplation gathered by Michael Sciretti. From photography to poetry to ancient prayers, these creative expressions become the brilliant threads that weave this

new journal together to encourage a mindfulness in ministry that we hope will bless your work.

I also want to express my indebtedness to Diana Garland, one of the first editors of and a long-time contributor to *Family Ministry Journal*. Her initial vision for this publication guides us still. I am also grateful to Brad Wigger and Dale Andrews, the editors of *Family Ministry*, who have provided guidance and wisdom in this time of transition.

And thank you for your faithfulness to this work. You have picked up an important piece of what we are about in the Baylor School of Social Work and our Center for Family and Community Ministries. Now we hope you can’t put it down.



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