



## Offering ourselves in service

**Jon Singletary**  
Assistant Professor;  
Editor; Director,  
Center for Family and  
Community Ministries



*God has not called me  
to be successful. He has  
called me to be faithful.*

—Mother Teresa

Let me begin with a word of thanksgiving. Your response to the transition of *Family and Community Ministries* to Baylor University and to our first issue has been amazing. You have inspired us even though our hope is that this journal will inspire your ministry. The relationships we are continuing with our Presbyterian heritage through Louisville Presbyterian Theological Seminary and our Baptist heritage through the Baptist General Convention of Texas and Cooperative Baptist Fellowship are being strengthened, even as we seek to strengthen ministries in your communities. Through initial feedback, we are rediscovering voices of support from days gone by and developing ministries together with new partners. Thank you for your responses and please continue to give us feedback on the journal.

In this issue, we offer you a variety of resources from academic articles to poetry and from personal commentaries to congregational profiles. We believe this collection will be of value as you serve with families and in communities.

Rob Rogers, director of Baylor's Center for Literacy, makes the connection between family and community ministry through his presentation of a family literacy ministry. This model offers adult and childhood education, a focus on parenting education, and a time for parents and children together. It's a highly relevant approach for a congregational ministry designed to strengthen families. The model was developed collaboratively with the Center for Literacy, the Baylor School of Education, and a local middle school, and it is now being offered as a model for churches.

Likewise, Jack Holland offers research of a model for equipping lay caregivers to utilize solution-focused conversations as they come alongside people

in need. Holland conducted a focus group with five Paracletes, the name given to the trained volunteers in the program, to assess what was most helpful in preparing them for this caregiving ministry. His findings provide the practical guidance congregations may need as they seek new approaches to pastoral care.

Franci Rogers profiles a congregation where one of the many church partnerships with Buckner Children and Family Services comes alive. Buckner is committed to helping us understand the value of church social work staff positions, and this is evident in the work of Carol McEntyre at First Baptist Church of Knoxville.

There are many situations in ministry that clergy, helping professionals, and dedicated lay leaders share in common, from the joys of new life to the struggles of complicated mourning. While we share the experiences and perhaps offer similar responses, we have too few opportunities to discuss these situations. Faith in Action, our regular section edited by Michael Kelly, invites your response to some of these experiences in ministry. In this issue, Sam Oakley shares some of her personal struggle to offer not only benevolence but genuine compassion to a man living with AIDS. We hope her authentic expression leads you to share a heartfelt response with us and others in ministry.

Vicki M. Kabat conveys the power of a story as only she can and at the same time references a local ecumenical church that I know keeps her “believing in humanity one person at a time.” This church is rooted in the tradition of The Church of the Saviour, started by Gordon and Mary Cosby.

Several of us had lunch with Gordon in Washington, D.C., in late June, and a part of that conversation is presented in this issue. In reading Gordon’s comments, I hope you will begin to understand the value of the inward/outward journey that has guided their ministries. The conversation certainly affected the students who were there. Mallory Homeyer is a graduate student in social work and divinity at Baylor, and she shared this:

“Gordon is 90 years old and he has daily refused to surrender to our American temptations of success and power to live out the Christian life he believes in because of the Christ that he wants people to know. He expressed to us how essential it is to *be* and know who we *are* rather than to continue doing and doing. It reminded me of how essential it is to come together as a group... just so we remember who we *are* and who we are trying to *be*.”

Mallory is one of 10 students working on a project in the Center for Family and Community Ministries designed to strengthen congregational community ministries. Her words are invaluable to me because even in our work with churches, a financial bottom line driven by efficiency or an outcome-based bottom line driven by effectiveness too quickly becomes our focus. Too often these goals replace what Thom Jeavons, director of the multisector Association for Research on Nonprofit Organizations and Voluntary Action, knows to be true: that the bottom line for congregational and religiously affiliated ministries must be faithfulness.

I am convinced that faithfulness in outward service and leadership in ministry demands the inward journey of self-understanding. Wes

Granberg-Michaelson, in *Leadership from the Inside Out*, urges the development of knowledge of one’s self as God has made us to be. Our students learn this as professional self-awareness. This spiritual attentiveness to self knowledge provides a foundation centered in who God has made us to be and out of which we are able to minister. To love ourselves so that we might more authentically love God and our neighbors requires nothing less than this deep knowledge of ourselves as God’s beloved. From this, Granberg-Michaelson writes, we can engage in faithful ministry offering ourselves in service and leadership with others.

Our prayer in the CFCM is that we develop an understanding of who we are called to be, and that out of this “inward journey” our ministries of service and care, justice and love will become our “outward journey” of faithfulness.

**Jon\_Singletary@baylor.edu**

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