

PREFACE

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The December 2009 issue of *Pastoral Psychology* is comprised of articles by sixteen participants in a conference at Austin Presbyterian Theological Seminary in Austin, Texas, which was held in October 2008 in honor of Donald Capps, who was retiring from full-time teaching at Princeton Theological Seminary the following June. Allan Hugh Cole Jr., who teaches at Austin Seminary, hosted the conference. Many of the participants said that they appreciated this opportunity to discuss original papers in a collegial, small group environment. Shortly thereafter, we (Donald Capps and Robert Dykstra) discussed these appreciative comments over lunch.

From this discussion, we decide to explore the possibility of having another conference modeled on the first. Being aware of the excellent conference facilities at Union Theological Seminary in Richmond, Virginia, and of the fact that one of the participants in the Austin conference, Carol Schweitzer, teaches there, we inquired into the availability of its facilities in October 2009 and of her interest in assisting with local arrangements. Affirmative responses were forthcoming, so we booked the facilities and invitations were sent out. We felt that the conference should reflect the spirit of self-reliance that we had embraced as a result of reading the essays of Ralph Waldo Emerson, so we did not seek funding from foundations to subsidize the conference. Instead, participants were invited on the basis that they would be expected to pay their own expenses. We were fortunate, however, to have approached Union Theological Seminary because, through its president, Brian Blount, who personally values the writings of pastoral theologians, we were accorded special consideration. All invitations were accepted, an indication of the desire of pastoral theologians for the opportunity to discuss their work in a small group setting.

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 anything 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. We are especially grateful to Lewis Rambo for making

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the pages of *Pastoral Psychology* available for the publication of the papers presented at the conference. The very prospect of publication in a highly respected journal in the field was an obvious stimulus to the conference participants.

With regard to the papers, the authors are identified by their institutional affiliation and not their professional status because we wanted to maintain in publication form the egalitarian spirit of the conference itself. As the authors' names and topics attest, the conference participants are representative of a racial, ethnic, gender, and generational diversity. The fact that all participants are located in the United States, and that a preponderance are located on the eastern sector of the country, is largely because the conference was self-funded and we had reason to believe that travel expenses would be an important factor in individuals' acceptance of the invitation to participate.