

**VOLUME 45 (2025)**  
**Educational Cornerstones and Adaptation in**  
**Changing Landscapes of Practice**

***Editor's Introduction***

“The more things change, the more they remain the same.” This timeless adage captures the central tension explored in this issue of *Reflective Practice*. As theological educators and spiritual care providers navigate rapidly evolving landscapes—technological, cultural, and institutional—they continually balance innovation with fidelity to foundational principles. Our contributors explore how the cornerstones of action-reflection-action can remain constant while their implementation adapts to meet contemporary challenges.

The practice of ministry and its supervision has undergone significant transformation in recent years. The COVID-19 pandemic accelerated changes already underway, compelling educators to reimagine delivery methods, assessment approaches, and even fundamental conceptions of formation. How do we preserve the essential elements of theological education while embracing necessary adaptations? What remains constant amid change? These questions guide our exploration.

This issue presents eleven articles addressing various dimensions of adaptation and continuity in supervised ministry and theological field education. Together, they illuminate how educators are reimagining their approaches while remaining anchored to essential cornerstones of theological reflection, integration, and formation.

In “Jesus and the Paradigms of Loneliness,” Tom Head examines how Jesus’ experiences of loneliness provide chaplains with a theological framework for addressing isolation among care recipients. By identifying patterns of emotional and social isolation in Jesus’ life, Head offers a model that validates the experience of loneliness without stigmatizing it. This theological grounding enables chaplains to counter harmful narratives that interpret loneliness as spiritual weakness.

Darren Kleinberg’s “The Importance of Safety for the Practice of Spiritual Care” introduces the concept of ontological safety as essential for effective spiritual care. Drawing on diverse thinkers including Maslow, Rogers, and Porges, Kleinberg demonstrates how chaplains must feel safe themselves to create healing environments. His framework for “reauthoring personal mythologies” represents an innovative approach to formation that integrates psychological insights with spiritual development.

In “The Miseducation of the Negro: Decolonizing Identity Formation in Clinical Pastoral Education,” Rickey Randall challenges educational practices that perpetuate colonial patterns. His reclamation, conciliation, and emancipation framework offers a

path that honors the distinct identity formation needs of Black students while maintaining CPE's reflective practice core. Randall's work exemplifies how adaptation can advance justice without compromising educational integrity.

Jan Reeve's "Ahead of the Wave" chronicles the Uniting Church in Australia's pioneering implementation of professional supervision requirements. This historical perspective demonstrates how maintaining boundaries and quality of care through structured reflection has proven valuable over time. As other denominations adopt similar practices, Reeve's case study illustrates how adaptation can become standard practice.

In his article "Paying God's Love Forward: A Hospital Chaplain's Perspective," William P. Selig connects the concept in Catherine Ryan Hydes novel *Pay It Forward* to spiritual formation and chaplaincy work. Selig describes his journey from decades in the Unification Church to becoming a hospital chaplain following what he perceived as divine guidance. He defines spiritual formation as attuning to one's divine purpose while serving others, drawing on theologians M. Robert Mulholland Jr. and Dallas Willard who emphasize transformation "for the sake of others." Through his chaplaincy experiences, Selig illustrates how paying love forward occurs practically—from acknowledging overlooked hospital staff to helping patients find meaning during illness. He emphasizes that chaplains must set aside personal agendas and religious biases to serve people of all faiths or none. Selig highlights the importance of embracing religious diversity while recognizing our shared humanity. He concludes that spiritual formation is a collective journey that creates a ripple effect of compassion.

In "I felt like I was being pushed into a box I have escaped," Maja Whitaker explores adapting spiritual formation practices for students with ADHD. By reconceptualizing the "rule of life" to accommodate neurodiversity, Whitaker demonstrates how educators can preserve the essence of traditional practices while developing more inclusive approaches. Her research highlights the importance of flexibility, fluidity, and responsiveness in spiritual practices.

Graeme Flett's "Thinking Metaphorically within One's Supervision/Coaching Practice" demonstrates how metaphor functions as both a cornerstone and an adaptive tool in supervision. By attending to metaphorical language, supervisors can access deeper dimensions of ministerial experience. Flett illustrates how a client's "dinner table" metaphor unlocked fresh ministerial possibilities, bridging abstract theological concepts with embodied pastoral practice.

Sean Gilbert challenges established paradigms in "Learning to Sing in a Strange Land': Practicing a Pedagogy of Conscious Relinquishment." By critiquing dominant Western educational approaches, Gilbert invites educators to examine how power structures shape teaching methods. His call to embrace incompleteness and "think the limit" suggests that meaningful adaptation may require fundamental shifts in how we conceptualize theological education itself.

Dorothee Tripodi's "Going Deeper" provides practical wisdom for field educators navigating post-COVID realities. Rather than merely adjusting to technological changes, Tripodi advocates for deeper spiritual grounding through practices that transcend educational platforms. Her emphasis on theological reflection and integration as unchanging cornerstones offers a hopeful vision for maintaining formational depth amid rapid contextual shifts.

Richard Trist documents significant transformation in "The Changing Face of Reflective Practice in the Church Today." His overview of instrumental, critical, imaginal, and ontological approaches demonstrates how reflective practice has evolved while remaining central to ministerial formation. Trist's analysis of systemic changes illustrates how external pressures can catalyze positive developments in reflective practice.

Finally, Christina Zaker's "Adapting Assessment Tools" provides a concrete example of adaptation serving enduring educational values. Her shift from "evaluation" to "assessment" reflects a fundamental reorientation toward growth rather than judgment. Zaker's collaborative process demonstrates how educators can honor both institutional needs and student development, creating instruments that better serve theological field education's formational goals.

Collectively, these contributions affirm that while adaptations in educational methods, technological interfaces, and assessment tools are essential responses to our changing world, they must ultimately serve the unchanging purpose of forming reflective practitioners who integrate theological understanding with pastoral presence. The articles remind us that true adaptation is not merely reactive but intentional—not abandoning cornerstones but reimagining how they might be expressed in new contexts.

As editors, we invite you to consider your own experience. How are you maintaining the action-reflection-action cycle amidst changing landscapes? What adaptations have strengthened your educational cornerstones, and which have challenged them? What firm ground has enabled your pivots? Perhaps most importantly, how might the insights from these contributors inform your own practice as we collectively navigate the changing landscapes of theological education and supervised ministry?

The reflections gathered in this issue demonstrate that even as methods and contexts evolve, our fundamental commitment remains constant: forming ministers and spiritual care providers who can thoughtfully integrate theological understanding with compassionate presence in a world that desperately needs both.

John E. Senior  
Editor