

Recruiting and nurturing new pastors
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What kind of preparation is needed by pastoral leaders and others who will be able to shape communities prepared to “accompany them with singing?”

We cannot live life abundant with impoverished Christian practices. We cannot re-imagine robust, theologically sound Christian practices and the diverse ways of enacting these practices using the same kind of thinking that has created some of our practices today.

Congregational practices arise from how Christians think, interact and reflect on what we do together in a communal life of faith.

To live a life abundantly and faithful unto God through Christ, we must work together differently than we have in the past. To work differently requires that we think differently and develop the following capacities:

- Renewing Ritual Imagination: Reclaiming and re-creating robust ritual practices
- Re-imagining Leadership/Discipleship: Collaboration and shared leadership among God’s people
- Metanoia: Shift in Seeing and Thinking

These capacities are necessary for shifting our thinking in order to create more robust theological narratives for storying our lives together in Jesus’ promise of life lived more abundantly in God.

1. Metanoia: Shift in Seeing and Thinking

Theory and theatre come from the same root word, which means to see. To develop as a pastor and to be a pastor are inseparable from what you see. Seeing is about the seer as well as what is seen. It is not an abstraction, but is really about seeing (Peter Senge, Power of Presence Audio Book, Chapter 3)

Quality of Awareness is Dependent on the Depth of their Perception

- A. *Choices*: Seeing one’s choices behind one’s choices; the mental models, assumptions, beliefs or theological convictions that operate just below the surface of awareness. They are key motivating drivers behind how pastors understand themselves, their identity and leadership in congregations.
- B. *Quality of One’s Inner Life*: Interior leadership formation—whole-sensory awareness. The quality of a pastor’s leadership is dependent on the quality of his or her inner life.
- C. *Discernment of Vocation*: What are my gifts? What is my work in the world? What is my next most faithful step? Vocation is not static but dynamically unfolding toward an abundant life in God.

What Pastors Need

- A peer community of practice
- An action/reflection praxis or model of learning
- Slow down
- Reprioritize their time
- Focused commitment

2. Re-imagining Leadership/Discipleship: Collaboration among God's People

- How do you support young pastors in an alternative way of being when the culture and their institutions advance a different way of living in the world?
- What are the strategies for helping new pastors get started well in their ministries, and for enhancing and expanding the opportunities working pastors have for the kinds of personal, professional and spiritual renewal that will enable them to grow in their capacity to sustain vital ministries over time? (Life Abundant, pg. 9.)
 1. Develop pastors' capacity to establish an ecclesial community of practice that mirrors their peer community of practice
 - a. Help a congregation envision itself as a community of discourse and practice that is attuned to the kind of networking and decision-making that uses all available resources to respond to the crisis at hand. It requires the identification and training of a new generation of leaders who are able to look, listen and learn together for the sake of collaborative leadership. (Walter Fluker, Ethical Leadership, pg. 10.)
 - b. Help congregations see ecclesial leadership not as the providence of one leader, rather the interaction between a pastor and the congregation where the community also plays a role in forming leaders and specifically a leadership community.
 2. Develop pastors' capacity to convene people; ask provocative questions; listen deeply to create a God inspired future that encompasses the congregation's gifts and generosity; share congregation-wide accountability and connectedness; and evoke wisdom, capacities and ownership among the people of God
 - Congregational life as a community offers the promise of belonging and calls for us to acknowledge our interdependence. To belong is to act as an investor, owner and creator of this space. To be welcome, even if we are strangers. As if we came to the right place and are affirmed for that choice. (Peter Block, Community: The Structure of Belonging, pg. 3.)
 - To feel a sense of belonging is important because it will lead us from conversations about safety and comfort to other conversations such as relatedness and willingness to provide hospitality and generosity. (Peter Block, Community: The Structure of Belonging, pg. 3.)
 3. Build pastors' capacity to form and develop ecclesial assets—discipleship, vocational formation and theological reflection.

What Pastors Need

- Interpersonal & Relationship Building Skills
 - The Christian life cannot be lived in isolation, for God's promise of abundant life is received and realized in and through relationships with others. (Life Abundant, pg. 357.)
- Facilitation Skills
- Professional Coaching
- Therapist
- Skills in Conflict Transformation

3. Ritual Imagination and Intelligence

- Having a deep sense of what we do and why we do what we do is grounded in the wider wisdom of Christian practices across the century (Note from Craig Dykstra's opening comments during the consultation on Tom Long's book: *Accompanying Them with Singing*.)
- Having the freedom to innovate the ritual traditions in which we and our congregations are located
- The church's ecclesial imagination is the essential condition for fostering and shaping the pastoral imagination. At the same time, pastoral imagination is an essential condition for continual fostering and shaping of the church's ecclesial imagination (Life Abundant, pg. 43)

What Pastors Need

- Foster a congregational culture that embraces failure primarily as a means for learning and succeeding
- Take risk
- Prototype; start something small, evaluate it and scale it over time

What are the implications for theological teaching in the settings where you work?

- Congregations are important, if not primary, sites for theological teaching and reflection
- Practical theology and teaching must be informed by and take seriously the epistemological status of the community of the baptized (pg. 206.)
- Theological language for the nonprofessional clergy person is that of story (pg. 207.)
- Rituals practices and the theological convictions behind them are shaped by and shape a congregation's:
 - a. Pretext: the experience members bring to community
 - b. Text: scripture, members' life story (2 Cor. 3:2&3) and "wisdom from Christians across centuries." (Note from Craig Dykstra's opening comments during the consultation on Tom Long's book: *Accompanying Them with Singing*.)
 - c. Context: social location of the congregation (pg. 204)

(Robert O'Gorman, *Latin American Theology and Education*, ed. Jack Seymour and Donald Miller, *Theological Approaches to Christian Education*, pg. 206.)