

Editorial

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In the following pages, you will find a variety of perspectives and views on personal and communal transformation in the light of God, mediated by Christ in the power of the Spirit. The articles included in this issue of *Vision* blend biblical and theological considerations with experiential and practical concerns for faith and ministry. Together with the diversity of viewpoints with which the authors treat specific topics, you will also find fundamental convergence and complementarity among the essays. In a nutshell, these are the highlights of the material we wish to share with you:

- The place to start is not the agenda of the church but discernment of and involvement in the activity of the triune God in the world and for the sake of the world. Art McPhee describes how participation in the *missio Dei* transforms us, our churches, and our church institutions.
- Scripture is indispensable if we are to understand authentic transformation and be inspired and guided in transforming ways. My article examines the gospel story of Jesus' encounter with a Canaanite woman as a paradigmatic illustration of the foundational place and role of the Bible.
- Molly Marshall constructs a theology of spiritual transformation and ongoing sanctification in terms of a "metamorphosis of glory" (2 Cor. 3:18). Rebecca Slough makes particular reference to the contributions of John and Charles Wesley, and uses Charles's hymn "Love divine, all loves excelling," to explicate the work of the Spirit in transforming believers' lives "from glory into glory."
- The experiences and the practices of worship play an essential role in the transformation of individuals and faith communities. Marlene Kropf addresses the special significance of praise

(recognizing and naming who God is) and confession (recognizing and naming who we are) for our ongoing conversion.

- June Alliman Yoder contends that authentic preaching persuades and is an agent of transforming change. Preachers should recognize and take into consideration the structures and patterns of the persuasion process in leading people to new faith understandings and commitments.

A loving partnership between the Holy Spirit and our spirit is at the heart of all transformations that really matter in the life of faith and in ministry. May we long for, embrace, enjoy, and share this priceless gift.

- Spiritual direction provides a unique setting to foster and experience personal transformation. Brenda Sawatzky Paetkau describes the triangular design of the conversation involving the directee and the director and the active presence of the Holy Spirit.

- By divine grace in the midst of suffering, the pain of the season of mourning holds the promise of new life against and beyond death. Rachel Nafziger Hartzler offers thoughts on her experience of the transforming power of grief as participation in an intense process of recognizing, reflecting, ritualizing, and reorienting.

- Leaders play a major role in the process of congregational transformation, and faith communities in turn contribute to the formation and transformation of congregational leaders. Erick Sawatzky reviews resources that enhance our understanding of the structure and dynamics of institutions and help congregations engage in meaningful interaction with culture.
- Keith Graber Miller argues that deep personal transformation is especially possible through cross-cultural encounters and experiential learning. For service alongside others as well as conversion of ourselves, God calls us to cross borders and boundaries in our own communities or countries, or overseas.

Transformation is God's will and business. It should not be trivialized. Indeed, the dynamics of genuine transformation often include risk, conflict, surprise, and disorientation, as well as new insight, the release of energy, and reorientation. As one writer notes, "transformation" is a trendy word in our culture; in the vast

majority of instances in which individuals and churches (!) use the word, human beings assume control of the process and anticipate the outcome. But transformation, like life and growth, is a divine gift granted in creative, liberating, healing, and empowering ways. At the same time, transformation in the light of God calls for human participation and collaboration. A loving partnership between the Holy Spirit and our spirit is at the heart of all transformations that really matter in the life of faith and in ministry. May we long for, embrace, enjoy, and share this priceless gift.