Editorial

As Erik Erikson saw, adolescent development normally involves intense sociality in which young people achieve a sense of identity and purpose in response to adult guarantors in the context of social and religious institutions. This sociality provides the crucible in which adolescent faith is forged. What happens when the world must interrupt this sociality, pressing “pause” in a pandemic for what must seem like an eternity for youth? Behind this thorny question lie more fundamental questions: How can we be the Church of an incarnate God in a socially distanced world? What does it mean to be Church amidst multiple pandemics—not only of Covid-19, but racism and political polarization? These questions now frame how we theorize adolescence and youth ministry practice. These questions were most likely not at the forefront of your graduate research agenda, but they have now been thrust into our awareness by recent events, constituting our explicit, implicit, or null curricula. As Paulo Freire reminds us, neutrality is not possible; these conditions will manifest in our research, even if by their absence. These concerns will remain with us for some time, even after we find a vaccine and normalcy is restored.

In the spring issue, the *Journal of Youth and Theology* will depart from our regular practice of publishing research articles by our member scholars. In the spring of 2021, the journal will host a series of essays on the topic of joy and youth ministry. For the past six years some of our members have participated in a Templeton grant project at Yale Divinity School guided by theologian Miroslav Volf in which over sixty scholars were convened to reflect on joy as a theological topic, particularly as it related to youth and ministry. Some of these materials from this project have been introduced at IASYM conferences by various scholars. A first volume from this study (*Joy: A Guide to Youth Ministry*, GBHEM, 2020) was published in the spring of 2020 and a second volume is in the works. Meanwhile, the executive committee, which serves as the editorial board for this journal, agreed that our constituents might benefit from a glimpse at some of the essays from this project. Why joy? Why now? As Yale theologian Willie Jennings suggests, joy need not be frivolous or self-absorbed;

“joy can be ‘oppositional,’ and therefore a form of struggle against suffering. When joy celebrates true life in the suffering-suffused false life, it enacts hope.” (vi) Perhaps these essays on joy will constitute a welcome resource in today’s “pandemonium.”

In this fall issue we are pleased to offer four scholarly articles. In the first article, *Chaplaincy as Reframing and Expansion of Youth Ministry—Initiating and Developing an Occupational Standards Ecumenical Project in the UK for Chaplaincy with Children, Young People and Young Adults*, Sally Ann and Paul Nash report on a recent effort to expand and enhance the Church’s ministry with young people by means of chaplains in UK school contexts. Since there is growing skepticism regarding the Church’s oversight of young people, chaplaincy represents a responsible middle way of representing the ministry of the Church in secular environments. This article provides an example of this working model of ministry, particularly the development of twelve professional standards, undergirded by a theology of *Missio Dei*.

In the second article, *Freire’s Christian Pedagogy in the Professional Narrative of UK Youth Work*, the author, Allen Clyne, provides an historical account of how youth work in the UK has interpreted and employed the pedagogical approaches of Brazilian educator, Paulo Freire. In years following the 1960’s, Freire’s approach was adapted for use by secular youth work. In the process of adopting Freire for use, his approach was often elided in ways that emphasized universal goods, for example, the therapeutic humanism of Carl Rogers and the economic-political theory of Karl Marx, while ignoring the religious context of his work. Clyne documents the various ways Freire was adapted for use by youth work within and beyond the Church. Especially helpful is Clyne’s documenting of Freire’s faith commitments that undergirded his work. Reclaiming these roots seems especially important considering youth ministry’s emphasis on practical theology adapted in part from Freire’s praxis.

In the third article, *Catholic Youth Ministry between 1896 and Today: from Clergy-led Piety to Self-Guided Youth Associations*, Patrik C. Hoering traces an emphasis on participation as a distinctive aspect of German Catholic youth ministry. Specifically, German youth work among Catholic parishes has tended to emphasize empowering young people by entrusting them with their own self-organization. Hoering sees this emphasis filtering into the culture of youth work as early as 19th century in the youth movement, *Jugendbewegung*. Catholic youth work was modeled loosely after this cultural movement, emphasizing freedom and authority toward a robust participation in their own destiny—and deemphasizing bourgeois coddling and indulgence. The author raises questions about current practices of participation in the face of, for example, leisure cultures.

The final article, *Calling but Not Foreclosing: Reworking our Approach to Faith Formation*, is certain to be provocative. In this thought piece, the author Chris D. Clements draws from Erikson's and Marcia's notion of identity "foreclosure" to name a problem intrinsic to contemporary churches in the throes of desperation—specifically, the temptation to bring power and influence to bear in exacting Christian commitment in young people, or at least church membership. The author takes a deep dive into Søren Kierkegaard's understanding of the anxiety of becoming a self, transparent to God. The biblical character Jonah is brought into evidence for a notion of selfhood attentive to God's call. This article is a fine example of the kind of theological reflection this journal hopes to feature.

It is my deepest hope that the questions these authors explore and the conclusions they reach will spark your imaginations about greater possibilities for youth ministry in your context and for God's inbreaking reign.

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