BEARINGS

for the Life of Faith

Autumn 2014

A Publication of the Collegeville Institute for Ecumenical and Cultural Research

Editors' Note

Johannes Gutenberg's fifteenth-century invention of movable type printing is widely regarded as one of the key events of the modern period. Marking the beginning of the printing revolution, Gutenberg's printing press in many ways made possible the Reformation, the Enlightenment, and the Scientific Revolution. It played a key role in the democratization of literacy and learning, and it set the stage for today's knowledge-based economy.

Even so, the significance of Gutenberg's invention will likely pale in comparison to the revolutionary impact of the Internet. And it seems safe to articulate such a claim even though the Internet is only in its infancy. In two short decades, it has completely refashioned human communication around the world, in both developed and developing countries. People read online, socialize online, work online, play online. And for some people, the digital realm is the primary location for at least one, and sometimes all, of these activities. The Internet has fundamentally changed human interaction in relation to space and time. Its instantaneousness shrinks the distance between us. But it also removes us from the smell and touch, and sometimes the sight and sound, of other humans. It collapses time by the speed at which messages are delivered, but in all the ways it demands, or seduces, our attention, it steals time from other endeavors.

Clearly digital communication brings its upsides and downsides. Some things the Internet does well; some things it can't do at all. Digital social media can enrich and expand face-to-face human relationships, and it can help forge connections between people that would not otherwise be possible. On the Internet marginalized voices can find an audience, and democratic processes flourish more than they do among most of the world's governments. But digital social media can also distance us from our bodies, engender meanness, and multiply ignorance. On the Internet, hate groups thrive alongside philanthropic organizations, and terrorists find a place to exchange information alongside hobbyists.

Whatever we make of our era's communication revolution, the digital world is real, and it is not going away. It comes as a relief, then, to note that even though digital communication significantly alters how we relate to each other, it is largely continuous with life offline. The Internet and the physical world play off of each other, ever connected. Though the digital social media landscape differs from historic forms of communication, its most salient characteristic is that it is social. The Internet does not replace flesh and bones with plastic and metal. The Internet is a theater for human relationships.

In this issue of *Bearings*, we wrestle with the relationship between digital communication and religious life. We consider the perspectives of digital optimists, digital pessimists, and digital realists on this score. We learn from Elizabeth Drescher about practicing church in the digital reformation, and we hear from Verity Jones about Christian formation in the context of digital social media. Jarrod Longbons reviews Danah Boyd's new book on the lives of networked teens, and Janel Kragt Bakker and Jenell Paris explore the contours of religious community online.

Christianity is an incarnational religion; people of Christian faith celebrate the mystery of God coming to live among us. In an age of digital communication, the incarnation still applies. Some of the authors in this volume would go so far as to say that the reality of the incarnation only heightens our call to engagement online. We may not be able to interact with people on the Internet by serving bread and wine, baptizing in water, or anointing with oil. But we can listen compassionately, dialogue winsomely, seek justice boldly, and offer hospitality lavishly. In a world turned upside-down by the digital revolution, faith, hope, and love remain.

PHOTO BY CARLA DURAND

BEARINGS

AUTUMN 2014 VOLUME IV, NUMBER 2

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Photography – Cover image by Laryn Kragt Bakker. Other photos by Carla Durand, Pete Duval, and Rosemary Washington.

Production – Carla Durand, Jan Schmitz , Elisa Schneider

Bearings is published twice each year by Collegeville Institute for Ecumenical and Cultural Research.

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An interview with Elizabeth Drescher

Digital Media— It's All About Relationships

Elizabeth Drescher is a lecturer in religious studies and pastoral theology at Santa Clara University and a religion journalist. Her work has appeared in the San Francisco Chronicle*, the* Washington Post*,* Religion Dispatches*,* Salon*,* OnFaith*, and other national publications. With co-editor Keith Anderson she is in the process of launching a new magazine,* The Narthex*, which will cover the changing contours of American Christianity. An expert on the relationship between the church and digital media, Dr. Drescher has written two books on the topic,* Tweet If You ♥ Jesus: Practicing Church in the Digital Reformation *(Morehouse, 2011) and, with Keith Anderson,* Click 2 Save: The Digital Ministry Bible *(Morehouse, 2012). Dr. Drescher's current book project,* Choosing Our Religion: The Spiritual Lives of America's Nones *(forthcoming from Oxford University Press), explores how the religiously unaffiliated make meaning, find fulfillment, relate to transcendence, and navigate ethics. We spoke to Dr. Drescher this summer while she co-facilitated* A Broader Public: Writing on Religion for a Secular Audience*, a writing workshop at the Collegeville Institute.*

***Bearings*: How do you envision digital media, and why in particular should Christians pay attention to it?**

Elizabeth Drescher: The conventional way to think of digital media is as new technology—complete with gadgets, wires, boxes, and the mystery of the Internet—which is incredibly dehumanizing. By contrast, I concentrate on the human dimension of social media, in which living beings nurture relationships with one another. Mary Hess, a professor at Luther Seminary, describes digital media as a culture in which to grow meaning. I love Mary's metaphor because of its focus on living beings. When I write about digital media in relation to spirituality and religion, I'm really writing about how people enter into new media spaces as growing places for spiritual relationships and practices. What matters to me is not so

much how we use Twitter or Facebook, though as with any other landscape, we need some directions on how to enter the space. More important is what we think is happening when we use social media. The social media landscape is a landscape of networks. As relationships grow in that media they become incarnational. They move into embodied spaces. In my writing and thinking, the incarnational dimension is the important part of social media.

***B*: With this incarnational approach to digital media in mind, you've mentioned that church leaders go wrong when they see digital media primarily as a marketing technique or a platform for advertising their churches. What are some best practices for church leaders in the world of digital media?**

"If you come to social media spaces from a place of faith and compassion, the message is in *you*."

ED: In *Tweet If You ♥ Jesus* I developed what I call the LACE model of engagement in social media: listening, attending, connecting, and engaging. When you think of new media as a platform for marketing, you're concerned about how you can best craft your message. That concern is at the center of the broadcast model of communication—a model that is outmoded in the digital age. In the broadcast model people are objects rather than subjects. You're not in relationship with the receivers of your message. Actually, you're not even a person; you're just a message bearer. The message is what matters. When you flip this equation and start with *listening*—really listening—to the voices and images on Twitter or Pinterest or some other platform, your intention is to be in relationship with people. Just as you might do when you walk into a party hoping to get to know people, you come to a social media space as a person of goodwill, and you look around to see who is there and what they are saying. When you listen in an appreciative way you are paying attention to who people are and what they are saying without judging them. That's the first step.

The next step is *attending*, which is a deeper kind of listening. It's listening with a mind to serve. If you're attending to people on Twitter or Instagram, you're now focusing on someone specific. You may notice that she's really interested in Thomas Merton, for example. The next piece, *connecting*, comes from the kind of service that results from really having listened and attended. So, you might write to the person who's interested in Merton, "Here is my favorite Merton quote. What's yours?" Or, "Have you read this article about Merton? What do you think?" Or, "I don't know anything about Thomas Merton. Why do you like him so much?" Those types of exchanges build deeper *engagement*.

When I work with ministry leaders I encourage them to set their message aside. If you come to social media spaces from a place of faith and compassion, the message is in *you*. That's sort of the point of Christianity. You don't *get* Jesus just by reading the Sermon on the Mount. Christ is an embodied message.

***B*: How do you conceive of the interplay between face-to-face relationships and digital communication?**

ED: Research shows that people are most actively connected in digital spaces with people they know from face-to-face contexts. We have an exaggerated sense of digital spaces and practices as interfering with face-to-face relationships, but in fact it is more often the case that digital

participation enhances face-to-face relationships among people who already know each other.

In church communities people used to see each other just on Sundays, for the most part, and periodically in times of crises. Now, social media extends those relationships, so that when I see someone at church I might know that they just got back from vacation, or that they had a challenging time getting tires for their car this week. So a conversation has already happened in the context of our relationship since the last time we saw each other at church.

Another way digital practices enhance face-to-face relationships is by putting people in contact with people they have not met. Online dating is a good example. Unlike Internet pornography, online dating makes relationships more incarnate. As a holdover from the broadcast age, we're used to seeing people on screens as actors. But the crafters of Match.com and other online dating sites have learned that successful online dating depends on people developing meaningful relationships in which they present themselves in fully human ways. Instead of putting up fake photos of themselves or lying about who they are, people make better connections when they present genuine images of themselves. Meaningful conversations online often lead to meaningful face-to-face connections. On a personal note, I met Keith Anderson, my coauthor for *Click 2 Save*, online. Keith emailed me after he had read an article I had written for *Religion Dispatches*. In turn, I visited his blog and saw that we had similar sensibilities. Eventually, we decided to write a book together. I'm an academic, and Keith is a pastor. We have different but complimentary expertise and experience. For almost a year we wrote the book together through Skype and Google+. When we finally met each other at the end of the writing process, we were both nervous. But that incarnational moment when I picked Keith up at the airport was wonderful. And the time we spent together over a long weekend enriched our writing and our relationship.

You hear these kinds of stories all the time. I know lots of people in churches who have connected with people in their communities not because they advertised their churches but because they were in relationships with people in digital spaces and grew those relationships. I've never been an advocate for online churches. I don't think that's the point. If people are sick and can't leave their homes, people in local churches should visit them, perhaps using digital spaces to augment that connection. Digital communication enhances and expands face-to-face connections; it doesn't replace them.

"Digital communication enhances and expands face-to-face connections; it doesn't replace them."

B: **The audience for your books about the church and digital media is primarily mainline Christians. You suggest that, unlike evangelicals, mainline Christians may be better poised for positive engagement with others in the digital age than they were in the broadcast age. Why do you think this?**

ED: Catholic and Orthodox Churches are rooted in the pre-modern period, and mainline Protestant churches in the early Reformation period. Many evangelical groups, on the other hand, came of age after the Enlightenment. Catholic, Orthodox, and mainline Christians' way of being the church is relational. Communication happens in multiple

dimensions through multiple media. There were no pews in the medieval cathedrals. People walked around, looking at art, saying prayers. The medieval church had all sorts of problems, but part of what worked in it was worship as a time when people in the community were with each other, making sense of their spirituality together. Learning and knowing and engaging spirituality together is a great model. But when pre- or early-modern liturgical churches such as mainline Protestants entered the broadcast age, they weren't equipped for it. Our DNA is to chat and hang out and swap stories, and that makes for very bad broadcast messaging. Our way of connecting isn't shiny or monolithic.

Think of the *Canterbury Tales* routine, where the characters constantly interrupt each other while they're telling and listening to tales. That's what we do as mainline Protestants and Catholics. And that's what happens on Facebook and Twitter. Somebody posts something, somebody else responds, and someone else—maybe someone you don't even know—jumps in. Pre-modern communication is like that. And pre-modern communication is built into the ecclesiology, liturgy, and theology of pre-modern and early-modern churches.

Mass communication, by contrast, has completely different norms. Early in United States history there was a movement to use middlebrow, mass-market publishing for spiritual purposes. Evangelical traditions were developing during this movement, learning how to be churches while this mode of communication came to the fore. So it's not a surprise to me that the first big religious celebrities on the radio and T.V. were evangelicals.

B: **You describe yourself as a digital optimist and a digital realist. Explain this optimism and realism.**

ED: I think that greater connectedness and greater distribution of authority are good things. Connectedness and diffuse authority have a lot of power for bringing lived religion to the forefront of church life. Churches have a lot to account for in not valuing and taking seriously people's everyday spirituality. We have alienated a lot of people. The media landscape—both online and offline—is changing religious culture in such a way that the churches that are going to continue to thrive are those that understand the democratic and connected nature of lived religion. The hierarchical structures of churches are being flattened.

There are also risks. In the medieval church those who predicted mayhem should people be given the Bible to read for themselves were right. People with self-appointed religious authority can take ideas to dangerous places. Like all communication media, the digital environment can be toxic and polluted. I don't have any naiveté about that. But I think that we Christians should be a part of the conversation online, having our voices heard and our influence felt. It is scary and challenging, but it is also exciting.

B: **How do you respond to critics who say that social media fosters little more than "chatter" or that nothing worth saying can be said in 140 characters?**

ED: The shortest verse in the Bible is "Jesus wept," right? You can say a lot of really powerful things with few words. For most of its history the biblical tradition has been communicated orally, in small nuggets. You know, the choice of 140 characters isn't arbitrary. It's about the size of a phrase the human mind can process, hold, and remember. In fact, if you break down most psalms into their natural breaks, those lines are about 140 characters each.

Also, it's funny to me how some people seem to believe that before the Internet everything we said to one another was substantive, interesting, and complete. Actually, face-to-face conversations usually begin with small talk. When you show up at a coffee hour after church, people are talking about the latest movie they've seen, the last football game they've watched, or what hap-

pened on their favorite T.V. show. Nobody ever opens a coffee hour conversation by saying she has just read a great book on Bonhoeffer. But, in time, the conversation may reach that topic. I think we forget these patterns when we're in social media. It's not the *media*, it's the *social* that's important. We're used to envisioning media as completed projects, but we're actually walking into the social as things are developing. It's in the aggregate of our social media experience that we come to substance.

B: **Amid handwringing about the shrinking size and growing marginality of mainline churches, you argue that being small and outside of the limelight can be an asset in the digital landscape. What do you mean?**

ED: In broadcast terms, success is measured in numbers. If you have a big audience, you are doing well. That ethos transferred to churches. A bigger church was seen as inherently a better church. But we know that average church attendance rates historically have been about 20 percent of the population. During the colonial period in the U.S., church attendance rates were actually more like three to five percent. For a moment during the Eisenhower administration, for a lot of complicated reasons, the number shot up. And because we were at the height of the broadcast era, we got fixated on those numbers. But that period was a blip in Christian history. We know now that super-sized churches have a lot of pathologies that make it hard for them to attend effectively to the spiritual needs of their congregants.

I remember once walking up a hill from the harbor in Norwich, England. It is a huge hill, with a cathedral at the top. As you wind up the street on the way to the cathedral, you pass about eight churches. Somebody might look at them and say, "We don't need that many churches." But those churches represent real communities. It wasn't that parishes were at war with one another, but each parish cared for everyone within the bounds of its little community. I think that the smallness and the intimacy of that model is meaningful. Smallness and intimacy are very much in the DNA of pre-Enlightenment churches, and I think it's a real advantage.

In the digital sphere, clusters consist of about 20 people. People want to engage with other people. When you're good at engaging a handful of people, that engagement is the measure of success.

B: **You are currently working on a new project on the religiously unaffiliated. What is the relationship between that project and your work on the church and digital media?**

ED: I started thinking about my current project while I was writing *Tweet If You ♥ Jesus*. Young adults are more likely than older adults to be religiously unaffiliated, and it seemed to me that this correlation had something to do with the extent to which they have been steeped in digital culture. They are digital natives in the sense that they belong to a networked, relational culture that is disconnected from the way the 1950s churches operated. For the last two years I've been interviewing the unaffiliated, and a surprising number of them are really "Jesus-y." They're just not really "church-y." Churches don't work socially for them because the church's social model is a broadcast model. It's not a relational model, generally speaking. And the churches that are most successful at staying in relationship with people who would otherwise see themselves as unaffiliated have a strong sense of relationality.

There's no program or singular movement that is going to be "the thing" to attract people to the church or keep them involved. Paying attention to context is key. Successful ministry is about looking at your network, listening to it, and really attending to it. It's saying, "Where do we connect so that we can have deep engagement?" If churches do not pursue meaningful efforts to connect people, any programmatic approach is going to struggle. □

PHOTO BY CARLA DURAND

The Seven Cs of Social Media

Verity A. Jones

I started the New Media Project in 2010 to help religious leaders think theologically about social media and digital communication. I was a magazine editor who had just lost her print publication, *DisciplesWorld*, to the perfect storm of the recession, the rapidly rising cost of print, and the eroding base of subscribers in our declining denomination. It was 2009, and we could not continue to publish. We had, however, made some remarkable headway in understanding what was happening as digital communication platforms became prominent. I was eager to continue the study.

The questions on my mind were larger than how churches might most effectively use Facebook, Twitter, and other social media platforms. I hoped to explore how their use was challenging the broader thought and practice of faith communities. I wanted to think about social media theologically.

People asked me then, and still ask me now, why we should bother to interpret social media from a theological perspective. Aren't these just tools, and don't tools and trends come and go? My answer is, because of community. The body of Christ is the community of followers of Jesus that bears the Word of God into the world. Social forces that impact the ways in which Christian communities are shaped and function therefore are interesting and ripe for theological reflection and interpretation.

Not surprisingly, questions about community formation and health arose repeatedly in the New Media Project case studies conducted in 2011 and 2012. Do social media reduce the amount of face-to-face time people spend together? If so, is that a problem? What are the limits of worshiping online? What about church authority structures? Can social media "save" our communities?

I wanted to crack open these questions by asking specifically theologically-driven questions of social media in relation to some of our most basic activities as faith communities. I developed the following rubric to help evaluate social media practices. We call it the "seven Cs of social media:" How well do social media **Collect** people, **Connect** them, or **Convert** them? Do social media **Conspire** people—that is, join them together to act toward a common end? How well do social media **Cultivate** lives of faith? Communities of faith want to **Change** society: is that one of the purposes of social media?

And finally, do social media, like the great learning centers of the Christian tradition, help us **Curate** ideas and information?

*1) How well does our use of social media **collect** people face-to-face?*

Long before digital communication existed, people of faith used their social networks to assemble people. We invite, include, host, and gather people all the time. Jesus says, "For where two or three are gathered in my name, I am there among them"(Matt. 18:20). The people of God do not flourish in isolation.

Abilene Christian University, one of the six case studies conducted by the New Media Project, gives us one glimpse into how social media collects people. The school claims that social media helped increase the number of face-to-face gatherings by helping students find others with common interests. New Media Researcher Lerone A. Martin wrote that students who matriculated during the beginning of a Mobile Learning Initiative at the school reported an increase in group study sessions and meetings. From 2010 to 2011, 86 percent of them reported improved student-to-student and student-to-teacher collaborations after using the mobile devices given to them by the school for educational purposes.

But we also hear tales of young people wasting away in front of their screens, swimming in isolation. Social media can be harmful. When people feel trapped behind screens that may steer them down negative paths, then the practice ought to be avoided. However, social media practices are worth pursuing when they collect the people of God for the purpose of knowing each other and God.

*2) How well does our use of social media **connect** people?*

After the people of God are collected, what happens? Putting people together in a room (or in a Facebook group) does not a community make. Leaders are always evaluating how well a group gels or comes together. How it connects. We aren't just interested in the numbers. Do social media help or hinder this important connective activity for faith communities?

At the Collegeville Institute this summer we talked about the "narrative heat" that words carry. Well told stories are compelling because they help us identify with characters, scenes, and events. Stories help us connect. They help us feel like we belong.

Telling stories to foster community, to build connections among people, is particularly well-suited to social media. Eugene Cho of Seattle's Quest Church told New Media Researcher Jim Rice, "Theologically, one of the main things that I would see supporting the usage of new media is the ability to communicate story and narrative. . . . One of the ways that God created us uniquely as human beings is in our ability to process stories, to narrate stories, and to live a better story." Cho continues, "Certainly we Christians, let alone pastors, are part of a larger narrative that I consider to be the greatest story, the greatest narrative. . . .That probably would be the strongest theological reason why I engage in new media."

When social media practices connect the people of God, creating life-giving communities that can come to know, display, and share the good news

of God, then these practices are certainly worth pursuing.

When social media practices serve to divide people against each other, especially through destructive and violent acts such as cyberbullying, or in other ways that do not comport with the promise of love and grace announced by Jesus Christ, then they should be avoided and dismissed. Social media do not function in a vacuum. The content of the story and the quality of the relationships shared through social media become critically important to the practices' value in creating Christian community.

3) How well does our use of social media ***convert*** *people?*

The Great Commission is clear: "Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded you." (Matt. 28:19).

Sometimes the "evangelism" commanded in the Great Commission has been reduced to increasing numbers alone—numbers of conversions, baptisms, confessions, meals served, those attending. When numbers become the focus of Christian activity, a marketing mindset can take over.

Marketers were among the first to recognize the potential of social media to sell products, especially as they came to understand that social relationships drive consumer choices more than advertisements do. But a world altered by social media requires a different way of seeing that world. Some marketers continue their one-way communication strategies even as they attempt to use social media networks. They announce things and broadcast messages, an approach that is counter-intuitive to active social media users.

If Christian communities reduce evangelism to marketing for the purpose of increasing numbers, then they will misunderstand the power of social media and will likely annoy people online. If we think less about increasing numbers and more about transforming people's lives—and understand that relationships are crucial to transformation—then social media begins to make sense as a powerful tool. Social media practices based on an aim to convert people to the knowledge of God through transforming relationships are worth pursuing. However, if social media tools are used in ways that ignore the power of transforming relationships, and are used more like marketing, then they will likely fail.

4) How well does our use of social media ***conspire*** *people or nurture community?*

It may be that "conspire" is pushing the alliteration of this list a bit too far! But the definition of the word *does* mean more than just a nefarious plot to take over something. It also means to act in harmony toward a common end.

Through our work, I've heard dozens of stories of pastors conducting pastoral care online, including this example from a blog post by Sister Julie Vieira:

> When *A Nun's Life's* online community gathers for prayer every Monday, I am profoundly aware of how something as "small" as a chat room can have the potential for making whole. During live broadcasts, we use chat for people to share prayer requests. . . . We also spend time in the chat room after the podcast to socialize. . . . Sometimes it is the prayer time itself that is balm for the weary soul. Sometimes it is in the chatting with one another after prayer that a needed LOL or word of encouragement or surprising insight gives us just enough to make us feel more fully ourselves.

Do social media help us care for people? If so, then those practices would be worth pursuing.

5) How well does our use of social media create space to ***cultivate*** *faith?*

Martin Luther famously theologized about a priest-

hood of all believers in which all the followers of Christ are called to ministry, not just the ordained clergy. He was looking for, or perhaps creating space for, Christians to reflect on their faith, learn from scripture, and reach conclusions that might differ from those taught by clergy.

Social media is sometimes accused of flattening the playing field of social arrangements by creating space for broad access to information, which then can threaten hierarchies of power. Who needs an expert—perhaps a scholar, theologian, or pastor—to tell you what to think when you can study the subject for yourself or ask a friend? But what if we thought of the space created by social media as a space well suited to the cultivation and formation of faith? This digital space can be open, creative, imaginative, and educational. If social media practices create space for cultivation of the people of God, then perhaps they are worth pursuing. If the space becomes formless, devoid of content, open to whatever suits a fancy, then it may devolve into something that may not convey God's grace, and perhaps should be avoided.

*6) How well does our use of social media **change** societies?*

Hashtag (#) activism has become a new phenomenon in our world. From the Georgetown Law School student who protested the school's refusal to cover birth control in its health plan, to the pressure brought on universities to abide by Title IX and combat the growing incidences of rape on their campuses. From the protests around the killing of Michael Brown in Ferguson, Missouri, to concerns about despotism in the Middle East, people are mobilizing and organizing for positive social change, using social media to increase the volume.

When social media practices function to change societies in ways that are liberating, just, and empowering so that all might live abundantly, then they are worth pursuing. When social media is used to fan the flames of despotism, which it certainly may do, since there is no reason why the forces of oppression can't use this tool to influence opinion and action, then it is no longer a good.

"If we aren't sharing the knowledge we've gained, then we are missing much of the power of social media, as well as a significant opportunity to exercise leadership in our communities."

*7) How well does our use of social media help us **curate** ideas and information for our communities?*

How well are we using social media to curate and share or spread the words of others? Medieval monastic libraries collected manuscripts, copied them, and passed the copies on: we should do at least as much through social media. If we aren't sharing the knowledge we've gained, then we are missing much of the power of social media, as well as a significant opportunity to exercise leadership in our communities.

The seven Cs of social media may not offer instruction about how to create a Facebook or Twitter profile. But perhaps they will sharpen our theological tools for considering how communities of faith are engaging social media today. □

Verity A. Jones is the director of the New Media Project, which is part of the Center for Pastoral Excellence at Christian Theological Seminary in Indianapolis, Indiana. This article develops themes from an essay she wrote for the project website. Verity has facilitated two Collegeville Institute writing workshops entitled 'Posts, Tweets, Blogs and Faith: Writing for the Digital Public Square.'

PHOTO BY PETE DUVAL

Extreme Unction

I press my index finger on the computer screen,
foreheads ripe and open like summer apricots,
and I anoint them with the only oil that seeps
up from my skin, raw human;

I see the scroll of the dead, the faces, the open,
hopeful fruit of photos taken when the calculation
of this moment was impossible,

the broken-open, smiling, floating, determined-in-holy-wonder
what the next photo might show. next time. next someday. next click.

I cloak in black the space between my chest and the glowing screen-
a hallowed space for rosaries and
LCDs in memoriam, and I say to them all,
all those left there floating in pixel-mausoleum,

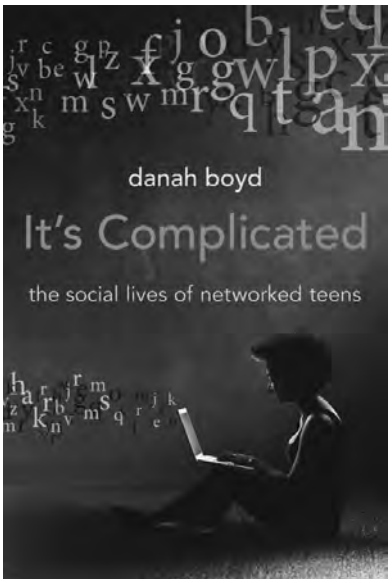
"thank you wise one for your wisdom,"
"thank you kind one for your kindness,"
"thank you willing one for your willingness,"

and I close the crypt. click.

Gina Marie Mammano

Gina Marie Mammano is a writer, teacher, and spiritual director living on Whidbey Island in Washington. The connections of people, both within the grit of the visceral, the playful, and the deeply spiritual, engage her writing in this meaning-making and storytelling world. Previous publications include poems in The Dos Passos Review, Relief Journal, Pilgrimage Journal, Christianity and the Arts, *and* The Other Side, *among others, prose in Spiritual Directors international's* Connections *magazine, as well as her book of poetry:* Bones of Lace, Sockets of Sorrow: Meditations on Jesus, The WordPoet. *She attended the Collegeville Institute's* Poetry, Prose, and Prayer *writing workshop this past summer.*

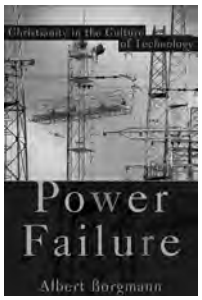
BOOKREVIEW



It's Complicated: The Social Lives of Networked Teens.
By Danah Boyd.
Yale University Press, 2014.

Danah Boyd's balanced book is a welcome addition to the public discussion on the relationship between teens and digital media, especially as concerns about the ill effects of technology on teens loom large. Of course, when it comes to the intersection of young people and technology there's plenty of room for concern: that the digital age has opened the possibility for cyberbullying, for identity theft, for the phenomenon known as "catfishing" (people pretending on social media to be someone or something they're not), and for other nefarious, predatory actions.

But safety is not the only worry. In *Alone Together: Why We Expect More From Technology and Less From Each Other* Sherry Turkle argues that digital networking creates only an illusion of community and actually results in increased levels of societal loneliness. In *Power Failure: Christianity in the Culture of Technology* Albert Borgmann argues that many technologies create a sense of *hyper-reality*, which fuels dangerous, abusive consumption of natural resources. We need to hear and reflect upon these analyses. But in the stew of techno-criticism, Boyd's book offers a new and unique flavor.



The book's title summarizes Boyd's view that technology is neither the savior of the world nor the modern "bogeyman" that destroys everything it touches. Hers is a middle path, and I found it refreshing. Through countless interviews, stories, and analysis of studies, Boyd offers important points for parents and teachers to keep in mind about the reality of teen life in a networked world: that we tend to idealize the past; that fear-mongering is easy with things that are new; and, that the world is not all that different now from the way it used to be—kids, then and now, use any available tool to be social.

That teens are concerned with finding their place in the world is a fundamental truth for Boyd. Digital networks allow them to fit into and create *networked publics*, which "formed through technology serve much the same function as publics like the mall or park did for previous generations." This comparison enables Boyd to take a measured approach to the dizzying worries about digital networks. For many social reasons today's teens do not necessarily live in close physical proximity to their primary social group. In place of the postwar norm of neighborhood affiliation and community, today's adolescents regularly connect with their friends via text, Facebook, Snapchat, and other social media platforms. These digital networks help young people to socialize and identify with a group, much as malls and food courts did for the teens of the 1990s. Boyd structures her main argument

on this analogy, a comparison that helps concerned adults make sense of the perceived teenaged "obsessive" interest in social network sites.

To flesh out her thesis Boyd analyzes, in a chapter each, eight basic points of concern regarding networked teens: identity; privacy; addiction; danger; bullying; inequality; literacy; and, community. Each chapter can be read on its own, and chapters can be read out of order. Boyd does not shy away from difficult issues, such as the sometimes-distasteful content that appears on Facebook "walls." In this case Boyd argues that teens are "damned if they do and damned if they don't" engage in networked spaces. Teens are damned if they are not on social media because avoidance risks social alienation. A person opting out may be perceived as lacking in social ability. Furthermore, today's employers and colleges expect young people to participate in social media.

But teens are also damned if they do participate. Digital social networks function much like physical social spaces once did, displaying teens' missteps. The difference? Whereas what teens might have said or done in a mall was isolated to that event and space, now their words and photos are documented online for all to see. The public nature of digital networks makes the repercussions of inappropriate social behavior larger and longer-lasting.

The life of a digitally networked teen is complicated. While it raises concerns, it is also quite natural. Boyd's book is a helpful guide to parents, pastors, teachers, and mentors because it provides insights into the contemporary teen psyche and offers helpful proposals for how to help navigate the digital age. □

Jarrod Longbons is Pastor of Education and Discipleship at Peachtree Christian Church in Atlanta, Georgia and a Ph.D. candidate in theology at the University of Nottingham. His research interests include ecology, the doctrine of creation, popular culture, and social philosophy. Jarrod participated in Awakening Theological Imagination in the Congregation: A Spiritual Practice of Writing with Karen Hering, *a Collegeville Institute summer 2014 writing workshop.*

PHOTO BY CARLA DURAND

Brokenhearted Online

Religious Dimensions of a Digital Community

Janel Kragt Bakker and *Jenell Paris*

"We who wander the Internet wailing have created our own culture around death, our own rituals of mourning. An angel writes our baby's name in the sand across the world. We write poetry. We light candles together. We trade skulls and hearts and ornaments." In the wake of her daughter's death, a mother who goes by "Sara" on Internet forums blogs these words at Glow in the Woods (www.glowinthewoods.com), an online community for parents who have lost babies to stillbirth or infant death. Sara is part of a group of bereaved mothers and fathers who turn to the Internet to find connection in the midst of the social alienation that often accompanies tragedy. Sara and other parents who visit sites like Glow in the Woods participate to discover companionship in emotional pain, process difficult emotions, find and make meaning in the midst of tragedy, and preserve the memory of their babies. As Sara's words illustrate, forums like Glow in the Woods help bereaved parents reconstruct their lives in the wake of loss.

Stillbirth and neonatal death often trigger immense and long-lasting grief in parents. These life-altering losses both call upon and call into question parents' religious beliefs and practices. Thus, online communities like Glow in the Woods often become religious spaces, even though they may have been designed as non-sectarian, pluralistic, or even secular. Attempting to illuminate the impact of stillbirth and neonatal death on parents' religion as it is expressed online, we conducted a study of the blog entries of bereaved parents. We chose Glow in the Woods because it is a hub site for such parents. It is first in its category in blog search engines. We compiled and analyzed a sample of over 250 entries that reflected religious content.

We found four major themes in these entries: religious disorientation, religious

reorientation, changed relationships with others, and a quest for meaning. We discuss these themes in "Bereavement and Religion Online: Stillbirth, Neonatal Loss, and Parental Religiosity," an article published by the *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* in 2013. Here, we can say briefly that a number of parents described crisis or disturbances in their religious lives after their baby's death. Many identified a constructive element in their process of religious struggle as well. Some parents described a reorientation of their faith over time, a new way of being spiritual and of relating to transcendent reality that felt more stable, either with less anger and fewer doubts, or more capable of incorporating anger and doubt. As parents sought to integrate loss into their lives, many articulated a religious quest for meaning and purpose—either related to the baby, the traumatic experience of the baby's death, or their own ongoing life. This process of reorienting their religious lives and/or engaging in a religious quest for meaning in the wake of loss was contextualized and complicated by both interpersonal relationships and religious communities. Some parents described altered relationships with others based on religious themes.

Glow in the Woods not only helps users navigate religious questions and deal with relationships in face-to-face religious communities, it also functions as a religious community in its own right. As Sara's quote reveals, parents who are active on Glow in the Woods help each other ritualize, commemorate, and make meaning of their babies' lives and deaths. Disaffected to one degree or another from religious institutions, whether because of their loss or for other reasons, many Glow in the Woods participants look to the site as a resource for developing practices of remembrance, as well as paradigms of meaning. Among both the religiously affiliated and the unaffiliated, Glow in the Woods provides a religious support system for those who share the experience of loss.

Religion online is a nontraditional but important social context for grief, especially regarding such statistically rare tragedies as stillbirth and neonatal death. By legitimating and shaping social expressions of grief, online forums like Glow in the Woods build solidarity among a population marginalized by loss. They create a culture of empathy buttressed by the at-once anonymous and intimate character of many online communities. The Internet allows parents to meet others with similar losses, to find affirmation and safety, and to share coping strategies. Additionally, the Internet provides space for processing offline relationships, especially difficult ones. Sites such as Glow in the Woods are safe for expressing anger and rage in an environment where validation and support are predictable responses.

"Glow in the Woods not only helps users navigate religious questions and deal with relationships in face-to-face religious communties, it also functions as a religious community in its own right."

Glow in the Woods attracts religiously affiliated individuals from a variety of traditions, as well as unaffiliated individuals, including athe-

ists, agnostics, and those who describe themselves as "spiritual but not religious." Rather than sidelining religion or featuring pro/con religious debates as many pluralistic venues do, Glow in the Woods facilitates open-ended dialogue about such religious topics as theodicy, determinism, human value, and life after death. While Glow in the Woods participants differ on many scores, their shared cultural assumptions about health, control, justice, and the exceptional nature of their experience give them a common platform for processing the far-reaching implications of the loss of a baby. At Glow in the Woods, participants from a variety of religious backgrounds compare their traditions' teachings and practices related to suffering, death, and grief. Lines between traditions are often blurred as participants personalize and reinterpret traditional teachings and practices, borrowing from each others' language and ideas.

For most of us, sites like Glow in the Woods do not readily come to mind when we think of "religious community" or "inter-religious dialogue." Historically, religious community has been linked with institutions—institutions with leaders, buildings, doctrines, and rules. Inter-religious dialogue, too, has often been considered institutional territory. "Official" representatives of discreet religious organizations gather in boardrooms to compare "official" teachings or draft "official" referenda. But as the religious activity taking place on sites like Glow in the Woods illustrates, the Internet is helping to reshape religious affiliation and identity. On their own terms, in their own voices, and through their own means, parents like Sara engage with religion and spirituality in the social context of the Internet.

For Sara and many other people, the Internet is a place to find and make meaning out of tragedy. Sara grew up Catholic, but drifted away from the church as a teen. After majoring in religion in college, she adopted various Buddhist teachings and practices. Now, in the wake of her daughter's death, Sara struggles with her religious identity. She resonates with Buddhist conceptions of impermanence and suffering, but she finds the notion of karma distasteful and she cannot let go of the idea that her daughter has a personal soul. She considers Catholicism legalistic and circumscribed, but she yearns to recreate the religious rituals she experienced as a child at Día de los Muertos and Easter Vigil commemorations. Sara paints, meditates, writes, takes photos, and sculpts—each practice an avenue to express her grief. She shares the fruits of these practices with a community of bereaved parents at Glow in the Woods. Other parents do the same. On the first anniversary of Sara's daughter's birth and death, an Australian woman named Maggie writes the name of Sara's daughter in the sand of Cable Beach at sunset, and shares a digital photo of the scene online. This act is not religious in the traditional sense. But for Sara, Maggie is an "angel," name-writing is a ritual, and the Internet is church. □

"The Internet is helping to reshape religious affiliation and identity."

Janel Kragt Bakker is associate director of the Collegeville Institute. Jenell Paris is professor of anthropology at Messiah College in Grantham, Pennsylvania. She was a resident scholar at the Collegeville Institute during the fall of 2013.

PHOTO BY PETE DUVAL

PHOTO © ROSEMARY WASHINGTON

Ecumenical News

Digital Media Edition

Digital media platforms are buzzing with religious life. Here are a few examples to demonstrate the variety and expansiveness of religion in the digital arena.

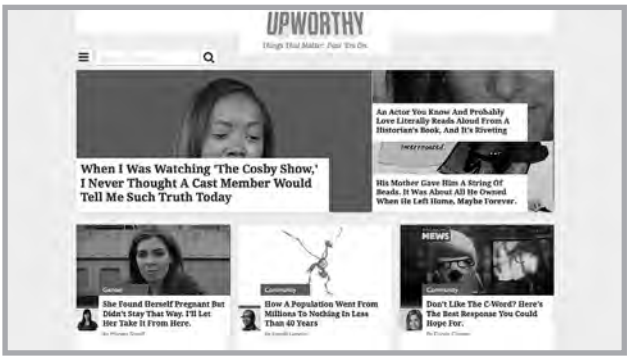
Second Life (www.secondlife.com) is an online, three-dimensional virtual world in which users interact with each other through personas called avatars. Second Life is like a video game that an infinite number of users can play at the same time. Users can meet and socialize with other users, participate in individual and group activities, and create and trade virtual property with each other. Developed by Linden Lab and launched in 2003, Second Life has registered over 21 million accounts, while the active userbase is about 600,000 individuals.

Spirituality and religiosity thrive in Second Life. The Second Life wiki (a web application which allows people to add, modify, or delete content in collaboration with others) lists more than 30 religious destinations in Second Life—destinations designed to attract everyone from atheists, freethinkers, and neo-pagans, to evangelicals, Catholics, and orthodox Jews. In addition to religious landmarks and organizations created by users specifically for Second Life, various offline religious organizations have established a presence in Second Life as well. LifeChurch.tv, a Christian church headquartered in Edmond, Oklahoma that operates both physical and virtual "campuses," opened a campus in Second Life in 2007 and broadcasts weekly sermons there. First Unitarian Universalist Congregation of Second Life was established near the same time, offering regular worship services for all who are interested. Islam Online has also purchased digital real estate in Second Life to allow Muslims to perform the hajj pilgrimage to Mecca in virtual form. Users study, pray, participate in rituals, and discuss spiritual issues together on Second Life. They also argue, proselytize, deface religious landmarks, and create schisms. In short, they replicate religious activity offline—though meditating, lighting

candles, or passing the peace are challenging activities to complete in front of a computer screen.

Streaming Faith (www.streamingfaith.com) is the largest Internet broadcast provider serving faith-based organizations. It offers broadband access to television and radio stations, podcasts, webcasts, and live video and audio streaming for millions of users. Catering to a conservative evangelical, and largely Pentecostal audience, Streaming Faith highlights media produced by megachurch celebrities such as Frederick Price, Eddie Long, Jamal Bryant, and Mark Chironna. Using a fee-based structure, Streaming Faith offers a menu of Internet-based services to churches, such as live video streaming, social media outreach, web design and development, virtual campuses, and targeted communications—all with the promise of "ministry growth" for churches.

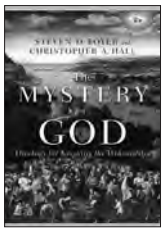
A surprisingly large number of churches, primarily non-denominational megachurches, have developed "virtual campuses" to augment their ministry taking place in physical spaces. Mars Hill Church in Seattle, Harvest Bible Chapel in Chicagoland, Saddleback Community Church in Orange County, Community Bible Church in San Antonio, and **LifeChurch.tv** in Edmond, Oklahoma are prominent examples. In addition to streaming their worship services online, many of these churches offer online small groups, online prayer chains, online ministry opportunities, and online pastors.



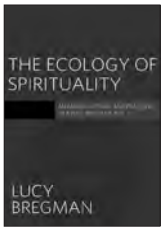
Upworthy (www.upworthy.com), a popular website with the tagline, "Things that matter. Pass 'em on," was started in 2012 by MoveOn executive Eli Parier and *The Onion* editor Peter Koechlev. Designed to send inspiring content about social or religious themes viral, Upworthy's stated mission is to host the intersection of the "awesome," the "meaningful," and the "visual." Based on sensationalized, formula-driven headlines, Upworthy quickly succeeded in its efforts to go viral. In two years it became the third-most-shared publisher on the Internet—earning itself the distinction of fastest growing media sites in the history of the Internet. Upworthy's headline style quickly caught on and has been replicated across new media outlets, much to the chagrin of serious journalists. Recently, Facebook changed its algorithm for which stories to features in users' newsfeeds, decreasing the visibility of sites like Upworthy on Facebook. As a result, Upworthy's site visits are in decline. Additionally, a growing number of bloggers are sharing spoilers about Upworthy videos on Twitter, with the goal of wresting the Internet from the hands of people they consider to be clickbaiter and charlatans.

For Christians interested in using technology to help them live out their faith, a growing number of apps for smartphones, tablets, and computers have flooded the market. The **YouVersion** Bible App, for instance, an online and mobile Bible platform, has been downloaded nearly 150 million times. Bible apps are the most popular religious apps, but they aren't the only type. Other apps are designed to remind users of prayer requests (Prayer Notebook), stimulate theological discussions (Questions to God), encourage Bible memorization (Christian Memory Game), present daily inspirational quotes (Daily Jesus), or filter news for religious content (Christian Post Mobile). If a user doesn't have access to the radio or a laptop, she can turn on K-LOVE, an app featuring commercial-free Christian music. K-LOVE also comes with access to staff pastors who offer a listening ear or a word of prayer. Or, a stumped user can type search terms into Not Just Words to locate a particular scripture passage.

News of Institute Scholars



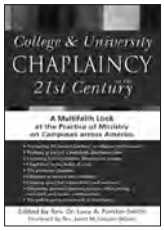
Steve Boyer (2005/06) writes that "the project I started work on during my residency at the Collegeville Institute back in 2005-2006 has borne fruit. My co-author and I published *The Mystery of God: Theology for Knowing the Unknowable* (Baker, 2012), and the book has been selected as the winner of *Christianity Today*'s 2014 Book Award in the Theology/Ethics category."



Lucy Bregman (2000/01) writes, "My new book *The Ecology of Spirituality: Meanings, Virtues and Practices in a Post-Religious Age* (Baylor University Press, 2014) addresses the rise of the contemporary concept of 'spirituality,' its many confusing meanings and uses, and how it emerged from obscurity to become the number one 'glow word' today."

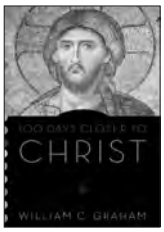
Lillian Daniel, summer writing workshop facilitator, had an article featured in the *Huffington Post* (April 14, 2014). Her essay "On Good Friday, If You Can't Say It in Front of the Rabbi, Don't Say It at All" can be accessed at www.huffingtonpost.com.

Christina Fleming's (Summer 2012) blog post "How could they thank God" appeared in the August 7, 2013 *Christian Century* blog. It can be accessed at www.christiancentury.org.

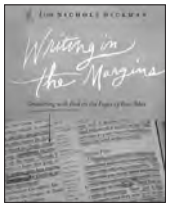


Lucy Forster-Smith (Summer 2010, 2011) writes, "Since my participation in the writing workshop, my book—*College and University Chaplaincy in the 21st Century: A Multifaith Look at the Practice of Ministry on Campuses across America*—was published (SkyLight Path, 2013)."

Kenneth Garcia (Summer 2013, 2014) published his essay "Diego and Our Lady of the Wilderness" in the *Gettysburg Review* (Summer 2014). Ken writes, "I worked on this essay while at the Collegeville Institute during the *Apart and Yet a Part* writing workshop. The advice I received from writing coach Michael McGregor was key to this success. He gave excellent recommendations for revisions and restructuring. He really has deep insights—not only into writing but also into the human soul. I am certain I would not have had this success without his help and without the wonderful opportunity provided by the Collegeville Institute."



William (Bill) Graham (Summer 2012, 2013; 2013/14) authored *100 Days Closer to Christ* (Liturgical Press, 2014). Bill writes, "This book began to take shape when I was a participant in the *Believing in Writing* workshop with poet Michael Dennis Browne. His good humor and extraordinary skill promoted much good work on the part of all the interesting folks in that group. My submissions to the other workshop members encouraged me to continue with this collection. I am very grateful to all the folks there, visitors and staff, for so great a gift."



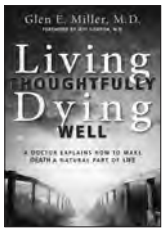
Lisa Nichols Hickman's (Summer 2008, 2012) book *Writing in the Margins: Connecting with God on the Pages of Your Bible* was published by Abingdon Press in 2013.

Bill Holmes (Fall 2012) is writing a monthly column for the *Church Health Reader* exploring a wide range of issues from a medical/theological perspective. His article "When Faith & Cancer Collide" was featured in the Winter 2013 print issue, which focused on faith and cancer.

Elizabeth Jarrett Andrew (Summer 2012) writes, "After 12 years of labor, I'm happy to announce the birth of my first novel, *Hannah, Delivered* (Köehler Books, 2014)." Writing workshop facilitator and former participant **Mary Lane Potter** writes, "Of all the gripping and suspenseful birth stories in this novel, the most moving is that of Hannah herself, a young woman hemmed in by fear who through courage and the help of friends is birthed into a new world of love and community. Her birth as a fully empowered woman will inspire hope and courage."

Jill Kandel (Summer 2013) writes, "A big thank you to the Collegeville Institute for a wonderful week of writing and friendship. The essay I brought to the writing workshop—"Paying the Piper," which all of my fellow participants read and critiqued—placed as a runner-up in the *Missouri Review*'s Jeffrey E. Smith Editors' Prize and was published in the journal's Spring 2014 issue, and can be accessed at www.missourireview.com.

Arianne Lehn (Summer 2013) writes, "I want to thank you all so much for your help, support, and feedback with my Boston Marathon piece, "Running toward Resurrection." It is in the April 2014 issue of *Presbyterians Today*."



Glen Miller's (Fall 2011) book *Living Thoughtfully, Dying Well: A Doctor Explains How to Make Death a Natural Part of Life* was published by Herald Press (2014). The book arose naturally out of Glen's previous book, *Empowering the Patient* (Dog Ear Publishing, 2009), as people told him stories of their end-of-life issues. It includes his personal story as a patient and his need to prepare for a good death.

William Mills (Summer 2013) has published a new book, *Walking With God: Stories of Life and Faith* (Rollinsford, NH: Orthodox Research Institute, 2014). A collection of pastoral and practical reflections on 25 gospel lessons, it is a resource for sermon preparation, adult Bible study, and personal use.

Tom Montgomery Fate's (Summer 2010, 2012, 2014; Fall 2013) essay "In the Presence of Absence: On Writing, Faith and Remembering" was published in the *Chicago Tribune* (January 24, 2014). It can be accessed at www.chicagotribune.com.

Heidi Neumark's (Summer 2009, 2011) article "Bedbug Epiphany" was published in the January 22, 2014 issue of the *Christian Century*. It can be accessed at: www.christiancentury.org.

Bo Niles' (Summer 2013) poem "U" was published by *bluestem*, the online journal of the Department of English at Eastern Illinois University, and was also nominated for a Pushcart Prize. Additionally, her poem "Living Fully" was commissioned by New York City's Church of the Heavenly Rest for the installation of the Rev. Matthew Heyd.

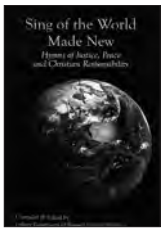
Dawn Nothwehr's (2013/14) article "A Deeper Look at the Consistent Ethic of Life" appeared in the *National Catholic Reporter* in January, 2014 (Vol. 50, No. 6). Her book *Ecological Footprints: An Essential Franciscan Guide for Faith and Sustainable Living* (Liturgical Press, 2012) was reviewed in the January 2014 issue of *Worship*.

Angela O'Donnell's (Summer 2008, 2012, 2014) essay, "The Bells of St. John's" was published in the August 18, 2014 issue of *America*. It can be accessed at www.americamagazine.org.

Mary Jean Port's (Summer 2013) essay "Says the Eye" won first place in the *Briar Cliff Review*'s 17th annual fiction, poetry, and creative nonfiction contest, and was published in the *Review*'s 25th Anniversary issue (May 2013). In December, 2013 it was nominated for a Pushcart Prize. Mary Jean's column "Wild City" appears regu-

larly in the *Southwest Journal*, Southwest Minneapolis' Community newspaper. You can access her December 16, 2013 article on home energy audits at www.southwestjournal.com.

Stephen A. Reed (2012/13) reports that the following pieces he worked on during his 2012/13 sabbatical have been published: a book review of *The Dead Sea Scrolls for a New Millenium* by Phillip Calloway (*Review of Biblical Literature*, November 2012); a review of *Food in Ancient Judah: Domestic Cooking in the Time of the Hebrew Bible* by Cynthia Shafer-Elliott, (*Review of Biblical Literature*, July 2013); and the journal article "The Relationship between Religious Beliefs and the Accounting and Economic Practices of a Society: Evidence from the Dead Sea Scrolls" (*Accounting Historians Journal* 40 (2013), co-authored with David N. Herda and William F. Bowlin.



Jeffery Rowthorn (Spring 1981, 2010, 2011) and Russell Schulz's new hymnal, *Sing of the World Made New: Hymns of Justice, Peace and Christian Responsibility*, has been co-published by GIA Publications, Inc. and Hope Publishing Company.

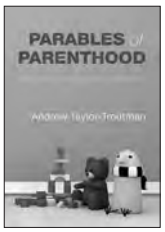
Gerald Schlabach (2013/14), along with Margaret Pfeil, edited *Sharing Peace: Mennonites and Catholics in Conversation* (Liturgical Press, 2013).

Donna Schaper (Summer 2008) writes regularly for the *Huffington Post*, where her most recent article, "Hobby Lobby: Lobby or Business," appeared on July 1, 2014. She also blogs twice a month for the *National Catholic Reporter*'s Eco-Catholic blog, and writes regular devotionals for the United Church of Christ's *Stillspeaking Daily Devotions* initiative. They can be accessed at www.UCC.org.

Susan Sink (2005/06; Summer 2006, 2012) authored *The Art of The Saint John's Bible: The Complete Reader's Guide* (Liturgical Press, 2013), which is based on Susan's three previously published volumes.

Rachel Srubas (Summer 2007, 2010, 2013) writes, "During the *Apart and Yet a Part* writing workshop of 2013, I had a grand time writing the article "Death of the Church and Dawn of the Nones: Fun with Cultural Anxiety," which appeared in the February/March/April 2013 issue of *Weavings*. The Collegeville Institute, the staff, and my writing colleagues created a nurturing environment for me, and I am thankful to you all."

Marjorie Stelmach (Summer 2011), a *Believing in Writing* workshop participant, recently published *Without Angels* (Mayapple Press, 2014). Marjorie writes, "Some of the poems I worked on during my workshop week are included in this volume. Workshop facilitator, Michael Dennis Browne was so helpful to me, and the workshop was key in the shaping of this book. [The Collegeville Institute] is, indeed, a place filled with angels."



Andrew Taylor-Troutman (Summer 2011, 2012) writes, "I am writing with the exciting news that I have published my second book, *Parables of Parenthood: Interpreting the Gospels with Family* (Wipf & Stock, 2014). Each chapter illustrates exegetical points by drawing on stories from my son's first-year. The goal is to model a way in which a close reading of scripture illumines one's life experience, whether with children or family or in a faith community. I did a great deal of the research for this book when I was a participant in *Apart and Yet a Part* during the summer of 2012. I am continually grateful for the lasting and loving impact the writing workshop experiences have had on my writing and my life."

Natalie Vestin (Summer 2013) writes, "An essay I researched and wrote while at the Collegeville Institute, "Sea of Crises," was published in the May 1, 2014 issue of *1966 Journal* (www.1966journal.org).

Relocations

Amy Butler (Summer 2013) was called as the seventh senior minister of the Riverside Church in Manhattan. She is the first woman to lead the congregation in its 83-year-old history. The Riverside Church, built by tycoon John D. Rockefeller Jr., and famed as the location where Martin Luther King Jr. delivered his historic anti-Vietnam War speech in 1967, is an interdenominational church affiliated with the United Church of Christ and the American Baptist Churches USA. Amy was interviewed on June 20, 2014 by Michel Martin for NPR's program *Faith Matters* shortly after being voted into her new position by the congregation. The interview can be accessed at www.npr.org.

Lucy Forster-Smith (Summer 2010, 2011) has taken a new position as the Sedgwick Chaplain to the University, and Senior Minister in the Memorial Church at Harvard University.

Peter Huff (Fall 2007) has accepted a new position in Campus Ministry and Theology at the University of Mary in Bismarck, ND. He will begin his new position full-time in January 2015.

František Trstenský (2012/13) was appointed as vice-president for Catholic University (CU) in Ruzomberok (Slovakia). As vice-president, he is responsible for the university's relations and cooperation with other domestic and foreign universities, and the student and teacher international exchange programs. He will also serve as an official representative of CU.

For updates

Bearings asks you to keep us up to date on your publications, professional accomplishments, and transitions. We also invite letters to the editor. Write us at **staff@CollegevilleInstitute.org** or:

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Theresa Schumacher, OSB

Roman Catholic—St. Joseph, Minnesota—Board Member since 2005

"My Benedictine sister, S. Shaun O'Meara, served on the Collegeville Institute board for quite a few years. When she left the post, she told Don Ottenhoff, the then newly-hired executive director, that I might be interested in being the board's representative from Saint Benedict's Monastery," recalls S. Theresa Schumacher. "When Don invited me to consider the position, it looked like something I could contribute to, as I have been involved with various ecumenical groups through the years."

Throughout her career, S. Theresa's work has brought her into a variety of churches, conferences, and classrooms, both in the United States and abroad. She notes, "For a number of years I taught the Psalms at the Academy for Spiritual Formation, an ecumenical organization that combines academic learning with practicing the spiritual disciplines and being part of a community. I have also worked with other ecumenical groups such as Washington, D.C.'s Friends of Saint Benedict and Bridgefolk, which brings together Mennonites and Roman Catholics who celebrate and explore each other's traditions and practices."

S. Theresa has taught elementary school children, traditional college-aged students, and adults. She began her teaching career in the St. Cloud Diocese, where she taught elementary school for 16 years. Later, she taught an upper division course in liturgy at Benedictine University College in Nassau, The Bahamas. "Now that was an ecumenical experience!" she says. "Since there were not many Catholics in the class, it was a real challenge to find ways to adapt the course for the gamut of Christian denominations on the islands."

S. Theresa received a B.A. in elementary education from the College of St. Benedict; an M.A. in liturgical studies from the University of Notre Dame; an M.A. in music history from the University of Minnesota; a certificate in spiritual direction from Hesychia School of Spiritual Direction in Cortaro, Arizona; and a certificate in clinical pastoral education from University of Iowa Hospitals and Clinics in Independence, Iowa. Her other academic pursuits are in the areas of philosophy, voice, and women's studies.

A professed member of the Saint Benedict's Monastery, S. Theresa celebrated her 50th Jubilee Year in July 2007. She has served her own monastic community as formation, novice and liturgy director. In addition, she has been both vice-president and president of the American Benedictine Academy, whose purpose is to cultivate, support, and transmit the Benedictine heritage within contemporary culture.

Currently, S. Theresa is the associate director of the Saint Benedict's Monastery Studium program, which invites and provides space for both members of the monastic community and lay people to continue intellectual pursuits in the arts, music, writing and literature, all at the heart of the Benedictine, monastic tradition. In addition, she teaches a course in Spirituality of the Psalms in the Monastery's novitiate program, gives retreats, and provides spiritual direction to both individuals and groups.

As a liturgist S. Theresa has thought about the theme of this issue of *Bearings*, particularly in relation to how digital media has impacted eucharistic liturgy, para-liturgy,

and worship. She is quick to point out some positive influences and when pressed, some cautions as well.

S. Theresa says, "The Word of God comes to us through our senses. We are so accustomed to the written word, but digital media can help us engage all our senses—our ears, our eyes, our sense of touch. It can enhance the environment by bringing the arts, visuals, music, drama, and gesture into the worship space. Digital media can help us discover new ways to reach the hearts and minds of people who are seeking God through prayer, meditation, and liturgy."

When it comes to cautions, S. Theresa notes that it's important not to lose the relational aspect of worship or liturgy when using various types of digital media. "The assembly gathered is the basis of worship. If the assembly is not gathered, there is only an individual receiver of sound or sight; no response, no dialogue results. Members of the Body of Christ at worship are an interactive community praising and thanking God together."

When asked about her favorite books or authors, S. Theresa says, "My favorite author on the Psalms is Fr. Carroll Stuhlmueller, C.P. Another person whose books I am drawn to is Dorothee Soelle. She teaches me a lot about suffering. And I love historical novels." Her favorite movie is *Moonstruck*. "It's wonderful to see that Italian family around the kitchen table, where all the decisions are made. And the women are so strong. Hurrah for open and truthful interaction!"

In addition to reading, S. Theresa's hobbies include flower gardening, cooking, baking, editing her family's ancestry.com information, and journaling. She notes, "I journal a lot, mostly in the early morning, in a little corner in my room. Dreams go into my journal. I also make greeting cards. I'm not a great photographer, but I do enjoy the photo opportunities that seem to be given. When I design cards, I often include a Haiku that I write as a greeting. Then it is a unique card made especially for someone."

Harry Pappas

Orthodox—Stamford, Connecticut—Board Member since 2008

"I first learned of the Collegeville Institute during my pastorate at St. Mary's Greek Orthodox Church in Minneapolis (1995-2006), when a learned member, Maggie Bovis, who was on the Collegeville Institute board, brought its work to my attention," recalls Fr. Harry Pappas. "Additionally, a dear mentor, Fr. Anthony Coniaris, pastor emeritus of St. Mary's and a prolific author, had some interaction with the Collegeville Institute over the years. Because I had also become familiar with Saint John's Abbey through a personal retreat and Saint John's University through collegians from our parish, it was only natural that I would take an interest in the work of the Collegeville Institute."

"In 2007 I was blessed to attend the writing workshop *Writing and the Pastoral Life* led by Eugene Peterson. I was enthralled with the process, and, at some point afterwards, the Collegeville Institute's executive director, Don Ottenhoff, asked me to consider joining the Board," says Harry. "I thought it quite an honor, and all these years later I continue to be impressed with the on-going, high level effectiveness of bringing together people of faith across a wide spectrum to engage in prayer and work—writing, thinking, conversation, and action."

Born and raised in St. Louis, Missouri, Harry is a third generation Greek-American. When asked about how he heard the call to become ordained, Harry muses, "That was due to a mystical experience with Jesus Christ himself. It took my breath away (literally), left me completely shaken and disturbed, turned my world upside down, but then brought an unmistakable sense of peace that was totally and radically new. Then, at Holy Cross School of Theology, it was spiritual mentors like Fathers Alkiviadis Calivas and Theodore Stylianopoulos who guided me more specifically to ordination and ministry."

Since 2009 Harry has been pastor of the Church of the Archangels in Stamford, Connecticut. In addition to his years in Minneapolis his previous pastorates include Holy Trinity in New Rochelle (NY), Nashville (TN) , and Enfield (CT). Alongside his parish work, Harry has spent the past eight years teaching pastoral theology as an adjunct professor at St. Vladimir's Orthodox Theological Seminary. He notes, "I am now transitioning out of pastoral theology into my own field of specialization, Old Testament, and will be offering an elective course on the Psalms this fall. The opportunity to teach courses on pastoral care, parish administration, homiletics, priesthood, and social justice has been most advantageous for me to integrate years of ministry with reflection, study, prayer, and dialogue, greatly enriching my own continuing formation as a pastor."

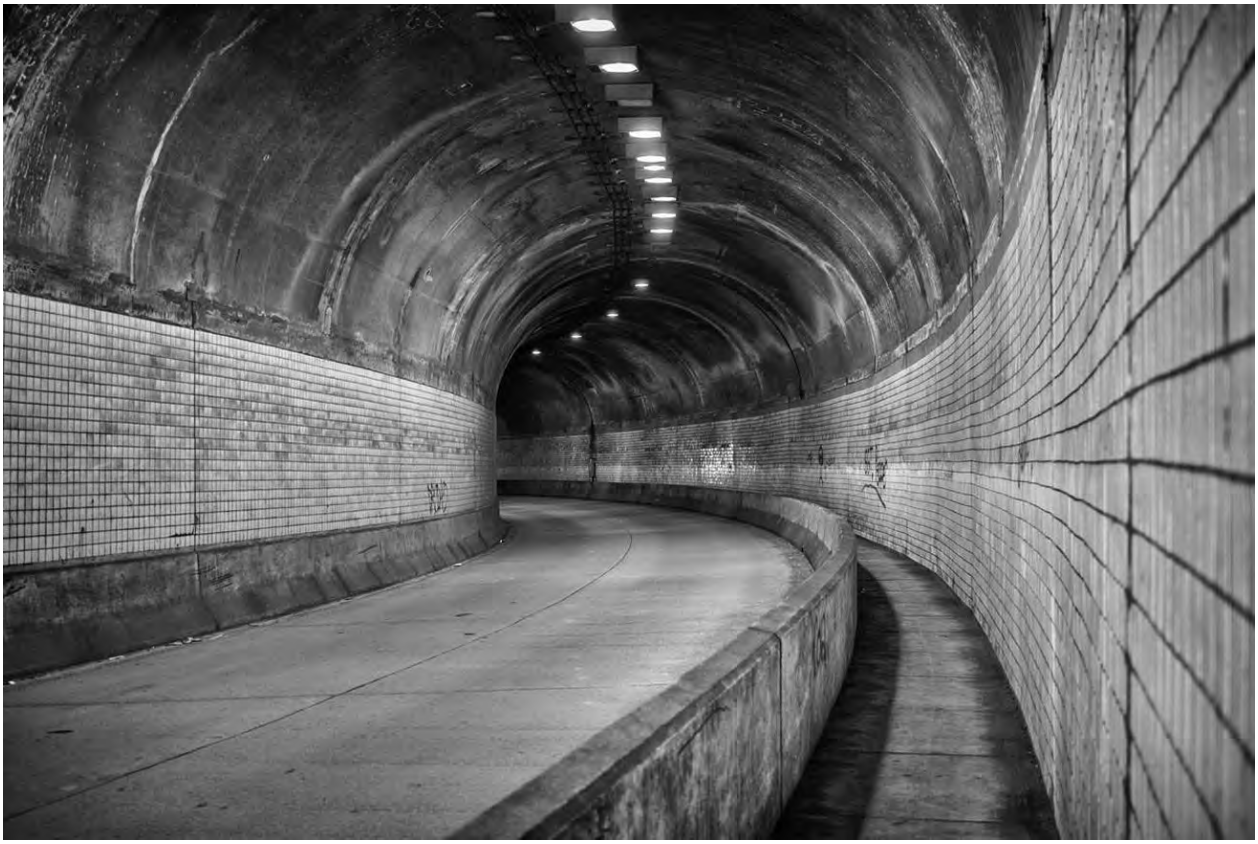
When asked how he sees today's church using digital media, Harry notes, "The same ways it has used technological advances through the ages—with careful, patient, critical discernment that comes through the Spirit, ready to affirm whatever is good, true, beautiful and useful, ready to reject whatever is not, and ready to adapt and modify whatever can be changed in the service of the Gospel—email, web sites, YouTube, Facebook, etc."

Regarding how digital media has impacted ministry, Harry says, "The younger generation growing up in America has a much more difficult time simply being present with one another as the level of distraction has exponentially increased. On the other hand, what a blessing it is for different generations to connect anywhere in the world and for communication to be so quick and easy. Certainly, the world has shrunk; despite distance and time, we are far more likely to be aware of and in communication across the globe." Harry continues, "I think we are only at the beginning of coming to grips with the human and spiritual issues being raised as a consequence of explosive changes in this regard. Naturally, ministry will have to adapt and respond in healthy and holy ways."

Harry holds his B.A. in Religion from Davidson College (NC); M.Div. from Holy Cross Greek Orthodox School of Theology (Brookline, MA); Th.M. in Old Testament from Harvard Divinity School; and a Ph.D. in Old Testament from Yale University.

As for his hobbies, Harry notes, "I enjoy athletics—working out in the gym, jogging, and walking, as well as playing golf and tennis. I am an avid vegetable gardener, but without much of a green thumb. I also enjoy reading, and of late am reading *Wounded By Love*, the simple but profound autobiography and sayings of the Elder Porphyrios, the most recently canonized Saint of the Church of Greece, and one of the greatest saints of the 20th century."

He and his wife, Kerry, have three adult children and two grandchildren, who, Harry says, "are teaching me to play spontaneously again." Describing his family, Harry says, "Our son, Joshua, a seminarian at Hellenic College Holy Cross, is married to Joanna, who is the great-niece of the remarkable contemporary Elder Aimilianos (Vafidis) of Greece, the first truly holy person I ever met. We met when I visited Mt. Athos for the second time in 1979 and stayed for six weeks. I am stunned that 35 years later our families are related by marriage. Our daughter, Hannah, is a preschool teacher, and our eldest daughter, Rebecca, is a licensed social worker. My wife gave up her private practice three years ago to work for our Archdiocesan Center for Family, concentrating on clergy marriage and family. Thus, our entire family is focused on ministry and service for the common good." □



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In Memoriam

+ John S. Mogabgab – August 2014 – Resident Scholar 1980/81

John Stevenson Mogabgab

Former Collegeville Institute Resident Scholar, John Mogabgab died on August 8, 2014. Raised in New Canaan, Connecticut, he graduated from Bowdoin College in Maine. Post-graduate work included an M. Div. from Union Seminary in New York, and an M. Phil. from the Yale University Religious Studies Department followed by Doctoral studies in Systematic Theology. During the 1980/81 academic year, he resided at the Collegeville Institute while on sabbatical.

COURTESY OF *WEAVINGS*

While at Yale, he became acquainted with former Collegeville Institute Resident Scholar, renowned priest and author Henri Nouwen. John became Henri's teaching and research assistant for five years, editing several of the books Henri wrote during that period and forging a lasting friendship with him.

A life-long Episcopalian, John began leading spiritual life retreats for the Episcopal Diocese of Connecticut. In 1982, he was recruited to serve an advisory group from which the Academy for Spiritual Formation emerged. The Academy remains a distinctive program of The Upper Room, an ecumenical ministry of the General Board of Discipleship of the United Methodist Church. John designed the curriculum for the original two-year model of the Academy and became its first Theologian in Residence.

In 1985, John and his wife, Marjorie, moved to Nashville, Tennessee, where John was invited to begin a new journal for The Upper Room. John became the founding editor of *Weavings, A Journal of the Christian Spiritual Life*, which soon became an award-winning journal for content, design, and original artwork. John guided the development of *Weavings* for 25 years, cultivating a remarkable stable of spiritual life authors and contributing his own wise editorials to each issue. In the last several years of his life, John served as an editor with Upper Room Books.

From the time his friend and mentor Henri died in 1996, John served on the Board of the Henri Nouwen Society. He was also instrumental in establishing a partnership between the Nouwen Society and The Upper Room, editing four books in the Henri J. M. Nouwen Spirituality Series from Upper Room Books, based on Henri's unpublished teachings and writings.

John is survived by his wife, Marjorie; his sister Mary; his nieces Zenobia and Jessica; and their children Bethany and Rupert.

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