

Formation for (Faithful) Fresh Expressions: The Necessity of Theological Education for Methodist Ecclesial Innovation

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Introduction

We live in a time of ever-expanding ecclesial diversity. Responding to the challenges and complex realities that render Christendom obsolete, Elaine Heath suggests that “we are in a full-blown systems change in how we think about and practice being the church”¹ But given this increasing ecclesial diversity, in this paper, I ask, “How will we know the Church when we see it?” As Heath admits, “Not every emerging expression bears faithful witness to the gospel of Jesus Christ,”² and so, she continues, “the process of determining what connection (between new and old forms of ecclesial life) looks like can be confusing, anxiety provoking, and messy both for the innovators and for the inherited church.”³ Engaging this, “our challenge is both theological and practical” and requires reflection on both “ecclesiology” and “missiology.”⁴

In this paper, I hope to address that challenge, asking the question, “How do we judge legitimate appearances of the Church in an increasingly diverse world that must navigate between tradition and innovation?” I will suggest that assessment of what constitutes legitimate ecclesial diversity will require imagination and discernment to hold together tradition and innovation. Such discernment will be embodied not solely through episcopal oversight and the provision and application of static ecclesial marks, nor solely through the unfettered embrace of

¹ Elaine Heath, *God Unbound: Wisdom from Galatians for the Anxious Church* (Nashville: Upper Room Books, 2016), 45.

² Ibid.

³ Ibid. 59.

⁴ Ibid., 62.

new forms of local ecclesial life, but through both, and those formed and forming Christian communities of discernment.

More particularly, (and following Russ Richey's work) I will argue that this presents an agenda for the work of theological education; that is, as seminary is, itself an instantiation of ecclesial community, the work of the school is to offer missional formation and, at the same time, missional oversight. In short, the work of theological education is to support a faithful engagement at the intersection of tradition and innovation.

My argument will unfold in four stages. First, I will consider the challenge of seeking "legitimate diversity" among diverse ecclesial communities, and, second, consider this challenge inside the contemporary Fresh Expressions movement that emphasizes the power of careful contextualization. Third, after a brief consideration of American Methodist ecclesiology I will suggest that some focus on the marks of the Church will be crucial to an account of assessing ecclesial legitimacy. And fourth, I will finish with some reflection on the effect these commitments might have on the work of theological education.

I. Legitimate Diversity

In the broader ecumenical conversation, the wide variety of embodiments and ways of life that bear the common title of "Church"—despite some significant variations—represent what is called legitimate diversity. As a recent ecumenical statement points out:

Particular actual churches—local congregations, historical Christian traditions and their various strands and organizational groupings—have their own ways of being church. They are free to differ, and to some extent, they must differ, in order to relate to the situations in which they find themselves and in order to realize their particular gifts.⁵

⁵ The Committee on Faith and Order, The United Methodist Church, *Wonder, Love and Praise: Sharing a Vision of the Church*, http://s3.amazonaws.com/Website_Properties/council-of-bishops/committee-faith-order/documents/wonder-love-and-praise-full-en.pdf, accessed 7.21.2018, 30-31.

While the diversity of expressions of Church may simply reflect the reality of being located in diverse contexts, the unity of the Church amid such diversity must be understood as a gift of God.⁶ As God’s work, legitimate ecclesial diversity is important to recognize, particularly in a post-colonial reality that acknowledges the danger of one culture exporting a particular expression or embodiment of the Church onto another. In this light, the diversity of the Church is a path for the “*missio Dei*,” because as the ecumenical writers point out, “to understand and respect one another’s differences and the ways in which they contribute to the church’s fulfillment of its mission is itself a mode of sharing, and … is a hoped-for experience also among a local congregation or other form of *ekklesia* as well.”⁷

At the same time, when it comes to the identification or discernment of legitimate diversity, the ecumenical consensus is that there is no consensus. In the recent ecumenical reflection on the Church: “*Toward a Common Vision*,” the authors clarify the point:

Though all churches have their own procedures for distinguishing legitimate from illegitimate diversity, it is clear that two things are lacking: (a) common criteria, or means of discernment, and (b) such mutually recognized structures as are needed to use these effectively. All churches seek to follow the will of the Lord yet they continue to disagree on some aspects of faith and order and, moreover, on whether such disagreements are Church-divisive or, instead, part of legitimate diversity. We invite the churches to consider: **what positive steps can be taken to make common discernment possible?**⁸

This challenge is only exacerbated by the prolific diversification of the Church not only in global contexts but in the “full-blown systems change” evident in the forms and structures and practices taking shape in new ecclesial communities.⁹ So, in the next section, I want to take up

⁶ *The Church: Toward a Common Vision*, Faith and Order Paper No. 214 (Geneva: World Council of Churches, 2014), <http://www.oikoumene.org/en/resources/documents/wcc-commissions/faith-and-ordercommission/i-unity-the-church-and-its-mission/the-church-towards-a-common-vision>, 28.

⁷ *Wonder, Love, and Praise*, 48-9.

⁸ *The Church: Toward a Common Vision*, 31, emphasis added.

⁹ Heath, 45.

the particular example of the Fresh Expressions movement that is currently gaining interest and traction in North American Methodism and use it as a means to explore the challenges posed in identifying legitimate ecclesial diversity. I do this not to critique Fresh Expressions *per se*, but rather, to help clarify the depth of this challenge for contemporary American Methodist ecclesiology, especially in terms of navigating between tradition and innovation in mission.

II. Fresh Expressions

Launched originally from a collaboration of the Church of England and the Methodist Church, the Fresh Expressions movement has pursued the mission, as described by Bishop Graham Cray, “to plant new churches or congregations which are both authentically expressions of the church of Jesus Christ, and contextually appropriate.”¹⁰ Or, according to a more formal definition, a fresh expression is

a form of church for our changing culture established primarily for the benefit of people who are not yet members of any church. It will come into being through principles of listening, service, incarnational mission and making disciples. It will have the potential to become a mature expression of church shaped by the gospel and the enduring marks of the church and for its cultural context.¹¹

Over the course of more than a decade, the Fresh Expressions movement has spread throughout Europe and across oceans to Australia, Canada, and more recently, the United States. In the UK, however, this span of time has resulted in a body of data detailing the movement’s development and impact. Evaluating results from over ten dioceses across England, the Fresh Expressions of church within the Church of England added a number of people equivalent to an

¹⁰ Graham Cray, Foreword to Travis Collins, *From the Steeple to the Street: Innovating Mission and Ministry Through Fresh Expressions of Church*, (Franklin, TN: Seedbed Publishing, 2016), ix.

¹¹ Quoted in Stefan Paas, *Church Planting in the Secular West: Learning from the European Experience*, (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2016), 233.

entirely new diocese.¹² As one leader puts it, “They generally are reaching people who were not followers of Christ before.”¹³

The growth is significant, but more significant for the purposes of this paper is recognition of the diversity that defines these Fresh Expressions. Reflecting on just a sample of Fresh Expressions in the Church of England, one author summarizes, “There are at least 20 types. Over half meet in spaces other than traditional church buildings, and over half are lay led”¹⁴ Other commentators point out the wide variety of gatherings—in size, theological identity, engagement with Christian practices, etc.¹⁵ An important claim made by those inside the Fresh Expressions movement is that these communities are not simply quasi or para-church organizations—Christian interest groups that all point to the necessity of eventual participation in the “real” or “proper” church—but rather an array of diverse communities that constitute the Church (with a capital “C,” so to speak). Inherited church—in familiar forms associated with Cathedral, parish, and congregation—and Fresh Expressions—embodied in missional group, neo-monastic abbey, and house church—together constitute a broader diversity, or what some call a “mixed-economy” of Church appearing in very different forms.

In ecclesiological terms, what makes Fresh Expressions distinct is its “(re)contextualization” of the church in new communities, which in turn shape local and specific structures, leadership, and practices. These ecclesial communities develop alongside the ongoing (if declining) work and witness of the so-called traditional or inherited church. While what may appear alongside is a novel and deeply innovative form of Christian community, Fresh

¹² Jonny Baker, “The Pioneer Gift” in Jonny Baker and Cathy Ross, eds. *The Pioneer Gift: Explorations in Mission*, (London: Canterbury Press, 2014), 16.

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ Heath, 58

Expressions seeks to be no less than an appearance of the Church in the world, even if in a nascent or provisional manner.

Consequently, we now must ask how we can trust that any particular Fresh Expression is a legitimate, albeit nascent, instantiation of Church, especially in light of the larger questions regarding diversity in the Church and the difficulties in determining what indeed counts as “legitimate.” These are not questions lost on leaders from inside the movement. As one Fresh Expressions leader in the US, Travis Collins, has recently written, “Without a clear understanding of church, attempts to decide whether a new form of church … is church at all will boil down merely to personal, preconceived notions.”¹⁶

Resisting this, many within the Fresh Expressions movement have appealed to the essential endorsement given in its early days by the then-archbishop of Canterbury, Rowan Williams. Collins draws from Williams’ well-known foreword to the original report on Fresh Expressions, entitled “Mission Shaped Church,” to say that, for Williams, Church is defined “in terms of relationships,” because, (quoting Williams) church “is what happens when people encounter the Risen Jesus and commit themselves to sustaining and deepening that encounter in their encounter with each other.”¹⁷

My concern is that the quote deployed by Williams from the original “Mission Shaped Church” report can be misunderstood when not engaged in its fullness. As a result, the key ecclesiological possibility and question Williams truly poses can be somewhat lost. It is, after all, a brief forward to a church report, not an exhaustive display of Williams’ complex and nuanced ecclesiological sensibility. Going back to the report, Williams says that if we might think of Church as a community of people in the orbit of the Risen Jesus (as we’ve just heard), then

¹⁶ Collins, 103.

¹⁷ Ibid., 104.

“there is plenty of theological room for diversity of rhythm and style...”¹⁸ However, this may be where the reader stops, and if so, it sounds like the Archbishop of Canterbury’s clear endorsement to allow 1000 new ecclesial flowers to bloom.

Williams, however, continues his line of thought by stating that there is plenty of theological room for ecclesial innovation “so long as we have ways of identifying the same living Christ at the heart of every expression of Christian life in common.”¹⁹ In short, what is often left out of the deployment of Williams’ words is the conditional clause/statement: a particular community might bear the name Church “*so long as*” we have sources and criteria, practices, ways, and means, in Williams’ terms to recognize in each context the presence of God in Christ.²⁰

These three words, “*so long as*,” bring us, once again, to face the difficulty of navigating the determination of ecclesial legitimacy. For some in the Fresh Expressions movement, the work of identifying the marks appropriate to name a particular Expression as Church becomes primary. For example, addressing the question of how the question of ecclesial identity will be adjudicated, Collins names, as one would, the credal marks (one, holy, catholic, apostolic) and the Protestant clarifications (gathered/visible community, with Word and Sacrament and order or discipline).²¹ However, he concludes that these marks or definition “is inadequate for the purpose of determining whether a fresh expression of church is, indeed, a church.”²² He goes on to offer a definition of Church against which a particular community might be measured.

We may call a Fresh Expression a ‘church,’ then, if it is a community of people transformed by the resurrected Jesus, committed to each other, growing together toward the likeness of Jesus, corporately celebrating the glory of our Creator,

¹⁸ Rowan Williams, quoted in Collins, 107.

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ Ibid., emphasis added.

²¹ Collins, 105.

²² Ibid.

teaching the Word of God, baptizing and celebrating Communion, serving the world through holistic mission, and identifying as a member of the universal family of Christ-followers.²³

Acknowledging that in Fresh Expressions one might not find all such marks defined or embodied in fullness, Collins continues, echoing Williams, to say: “any group centered on the resurrected Lord Jesus and exhibiting the upward, inward, outward, and ‘of-ward’ relationships spoken of here is fully church.”²⁴ Such marks can be found in some of the reports written for the judicatory bodies offering oversight (and funding) for Fresh Expressions, functioning as tacit if not explicit types of “litmus tests” by which the locations of true or proper Church can be identified.

This, however, introduces a classic tension in mission that we see now inside the Fresh Expressions movement. Given Fresh Expressions’ attention to context embodied in deep listening, faithful presence, and contemplative discernment, there is a clear tension with applying identification marks “from above” that could interrupt or even corrupt contextualization. Such a move “from above,” then, can lead to an overdetermined shape for church that may not adequately reflect contextual specificity. Even more, the offer of such marks is itself placed into question. As Elaine Heath has recently written, “The very notion of certain requirements for church to be church has come under scrutiny.”²⁵ As one pioneer in the Fresh Expressions movement suggests, “we have shown that church can be *done* differently, but we have yet to articulate a deeper understanding of the nature and role of church for the twenty-first century that transforms (or disrupts) dominant ecclesiology.”²⁶

While the space between inherited or traditional church and fresh expression may not be without anxiety and discomfort, we are learning the importance of dwelling in this space. We

²³ Ibid., 105-106.

²⁴ Ibid., 107.

²⁵ Heath, 57.

²⁶ Simon Sutcliffe, “Located and Rooted: Contextual Theology and Pioneer Ministry,” in Baker and Ross, 173.

are learning the importance of seeking a mode of discernment for legitimate ecclesial diversity that does not foreclose on the enduringly local, specific embodiments of Christian community and that may or may not be adequately captured in articulation and application of those common denominator marks of the Church catholic. The endorsement of the Fresh Expressions movement encourages us to keep aligned with the crucial work of seeking a mode of discernment that supports diversification of legitimate ecclesial community as an extension of the Church's mission in the world.

To Wesleyan and Methodist ears, the encouragement of this ecclesial diversity for the sake of extending the Church's mission may sound salutary. However, I want to turn next to some brief consideration of contemporary Methodist ecclesiology to make the case that American Methodists cannot let go of the need for an appeal to particular marks and the need for an account of ecclesial norms in the work of ecclesial extension and discernment. To make this case, let me begin with Albert Outler.

III. Methodist Ecclesiology

In his 1962 address to the Oxford Institute for Methodist Theological Studies, Albert Outler brought ecclesiological concerns to the fore when he starkly asked, “Do Methodists have a Doctrine of the Church?”²⁷ He argued that Methodism is best understood as an “ad interim” movement that functioned as an “evangelical order” within the church catholic to pursue a soteriological mission.²⁸ As Wesley put it to his preachers, “You have one business: saving

²⁷ Albert C. Outler, “Do Methodists Have a Doctrine of the Church” in Dow Kirkpatrick, ed., *The Doctrine of the Church* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1964), 11–28.

²⁸ Ibid., 14, 27.

souls.”²⁹ Thus, pursuing this mission, the Church is defined by Wesley as “act,” or as “mission” itself, “as the enterprise of saving and maturing souls in the Christian life.”³⁰

Outler argued that the centrality of soteriology as the engine of the Church’s mission gives rise to Wesley’s embrace of particular “ecclesiological irregularities” such as “field preaching, lay preaching, [an] extra-parochial, supra-diocesan pattern of supervision and control, [and] extemporary prayers in worship.”³¹ As Methodism evolved to become its own Church in the American context, Outler argued that this adaptive practice continued in the form of a “symbiosis,” where the American Methodist movement freely borrowed and adapted forms of organization and practice from the wider world seen as useful for its ecclesial life and effective in the expansion of evangelistic mission.

Such tendency reflects American Methodist theological method which, according to Thomas Langford consistently shows “a pervasive concern has been to understand the mind of the time so as to meet it with the Christian message.”³² For Outler, this practice often amounted to American Methodism “borrowing and patching and playing with pious gimmicks”³³ and risked the possibility that in its sustained effort to remain effective in its ecclesial mission through unreflective borrowing, Methodism imperiled its connection to the traditions and the practices of the Church catholic. In its desire to remain relevant to the wider world, Methodism, particularly in America, has put at risk its identity as Church.

Admittedly, Outler laments in this article the failure of Methodism in his judgment to inhabit an adequate space inside the Ecumenical movement of the mid to late twentieth century.

²⁹ Ibid., 13.

³⁰ Ibid., 19.

³¹ Ibid., 13.

³² Thomas Langford, “What Is the Character of Methodist Theology?” in Russell Richey, William Lawrence, and Dennis Campbell, eds., *Questions for the Twenty-First Century Church*, (Nashville: Abingdon, 1999), 46.

³³ Outler, 26.

His encouragement to Methodism is to sustain the particular marks of the “evangelical order” (evangelism, worship, discipleship), while also taking responsibility for the fullness of “proper” ecclesial identity (bell, book, and candle) amid other partners from Catholic, Orthodox, and Magisterial Protestant traditions.³⁴ These marks are important, Outler suggests, as they chart the space for a Methodist ecclesial identity, fueling the particularity and contextuality of the Church in mission, while not abandoning the calling to fulfill identity as a part of one, holy, catholic, and apostolic Church.

I acknowledge there are some who strongly disagree with Outler’s ecclesiological reticence when it comes to the appraisal of American Methodism. William Abraham sees instead Methodism’s robust ecclesial identity as rooted in a pentecostal pneumatology.³⁵ Even so, a robust appraisal of Methodist ecclesiology from critics like Abraham still acknowledges the difficulty that whether born of historical development or by the irruption of the Holy Spirit, local instantiations and practices in Christian community might fall short or miss the mark. As Abraham confesses, “there is no … bypassing the hard slog of critical ecclesial assessment.”³⁶

A welcome contribution from the United Methodist Church to resource this “hard slog” is found in the recent provision of a Faith and Order study document on the Church: “Wonder, Love, and Praise: Sharing a Vision of the Church.”³⁷ Developed by the United Methodist

³⁴ Ibid., 25.

³⁵ William Abraham, “From the Linear to the Prototypical: An Ecclesiology of the Third Article” in Peter Ward and Martyn Percy, eds., *Wisdom of the Spirit: Gospel, Church, and Culture* (Farnham: Ashgate Publishing, 2014).

³⁶ Abraham goes on to say, “...we can have developments that are good or bad; we can have dead-ends or fruitful expansions. We can have fresh starts that are authentic or inauthentic, false or genuine. Equally we can have instantiations of the original prototype that are good or bad; they can be creative improvements or destructive deformations. Either way we are not stuck with the status quo; there is the genuine possibility of dynamic innovations and change. Perhaps thinking prototypically brings the importance of adaptation and innovation much more to the fore, but I am not so sure.” Abraham, 158-9.

³⁷ The Committee on Faith and Order, The United Methodist Church, *Wonder, Love and Praise: Sharing a Vision of the Church*, http://s3.amazonaws.com/Website_Properties/council-of-bishops/committee-faith-order/documents/wonder-love-and-praise-full-en.pdf, accessed 7.21.2018, 30-31.

Committee on Faith and Order, “Wonder, Love, and Praise” (or, WLP) is offered as a study document encouraging reflection on ecclesiology, seeking a faithful, Wesleyan, and United Methodist articulation of what it means to be Church. The document will return to the General Conference meeting in 2020 for consideration of adoption and, if adopted, would take a place alongside other “official theological statements of the church such as *By Water and the Spirit* (on Baptism) and *This Holy Mystery* (on Eucharist or Holy Communion).

Here, as well, we will find acknowledgement of American Methodism’s accretion of various practices for faith and order as means to fuel evangelistic mission. However, the document also seeks to name norms for Wesleyan ecclesial communities that might serve as marks to shape normative assessments and, as would be expected, these marks reflect deeply Wesleyan themes: a vision of God’s grace offering salvation and transformation for all people, resulting in the creation of new communities marked by hospitality, intimacy, and, of course, “connection.”

But also, highly pronounced in the document is a concern for the mission of the Church. Wesleyan marks of the Church would not be truly Wesleyan were they to fuel the vision of a fixed or static community, but rather, these desiderata fuel the engine of a moving vehicle: a movement defined by mission. This mission requires the Church to adapt and to take on new forms over differentiations of time and space. As the document puts it, echoing Outler, “[Wesley] and the early Methodists adopted some unconventional ways to bring the gospel of Christ to many sorts of people who were not being reached, or were not being reached effectively, by the established church.”³⁸

³⁸ Ibid., 11.

Once again, we are left at a place where the need to hold together in dynamic fashion both tradition and innovation pushes us to attend to both an account of the contextualization of the Church in mission as well as an account of the Church's marks, both in Methodism, and in the Church catholic. To this end, in a final section, I will argue, following Russ Richey, that the focus of our attention should be placed on those who will read this study document and those who will participate in the work of offering oversight and formation, namely, those engaged in the work of the theological seminary.

IV. An Agenda for Theological Education

In this final section, I wish to make gestures toward the kind of changes I believe will be necessary in contexts of Methodist theological education to make room for this vision of normative ecclesial definition in service of robust Wesleyan evangelistic mission. Considering the whole landscape of American Methodist methods of theological education and ministerial formation, Russell Richey suggests that a distancing dynamic can be seen to take effect, separating the work of education and formation from the work of episcopate, understood as oversight and authority.³⁹ As an effort to argue for a reconnection of oversight and formation, Richey stages an argument for extending the definition of church to the formational community (i.e., seminary). More specifically, considering the role of educational institutions in the work of ministry formation, Richey asks, "What does it mean for our doctrine of the church to recognize within today's seminary an ecclesial dimension in its role as a formational community as well as

³⁹ Russell Richey, *Formation for Ministry in American Methodism: Twenty-First Century Challenges and Two Centuries of Problem-Solving*, (Nashville: General Board of Higher Education and Ministry, The United Methodist Church, 2014). See particularly chapter 8, "Counseled Again? Wesleyan Imperatives—Episkope' and Community," 85-92.

in its exercise of *episkope*?”⁴⁰ He goes on: “Do we embrace the community or communities formational for ministry in some way in a Methodist ecclesiology? Does a Wesleyan self-understanding, in holding together formational community and *episkope*’, need to attend to both the many communities that function like church and the many exercises of teaching or *episkope*? ”⁴¹ What Richey gives us is the basis upon which a framework for discernment of legitimate ecclesial diversity can be articulated, holding together tradition and innovation. From here, I want to gesture to two important sites of change this will require for the work of theological education.

Focus on Laity

First, let us emphasize the significance of the laity as a focus for the work of the theological seminary. Enrollment statistics and decline prognoses aside, the seminary must see its work in ways to overcome the duality between degree and non-degree programming and to offer formation for the rising significance of lay leadership in the development of new ecclesial expressions.

As Elaine Heath has made clear, “as we move further into emergence Christianity, the church will wrestle increasingly with questions about authority, particularly with regard to who is ordained, why they are ordained, and what it means to empower the ministry of the laity.”⁴² This is certainly the case with the evidence received from the Fresh Expressions movement; many of these new expressions of church are lay-led. If the argument about the significance of

⁴⁰ Ibid., 92.

⁴¹ Ibid.

⁴² Heath, 64.

formation for the enduring connection of tradition and innovation in discernment is right, the need to focus this work on the laity is crucial.

Shaping Not Only Pastoral, but also Pioneering Imagination

Second, we must consider how we might build upon the work of Craig Dykstra who has so helpfully articulated the significance of a well-formed “pastoral imagination” in the work of ministry.⁴³ Shaped by attention to scriptural and traditioned study and immersion in an ecclesial community itself gifted with a faithful way of life, the pastoral imagination functions as “a way of seeing, a source for action and response, a screen for the interpretation of all experience, all lensed through ‘the eyes of faith.’”⁴⁴

In this construction, Dykstra speaks of the need to shape “multiple intelligences,” bodily, emotional, interpersonal, all requiring integration.⁴⁵ Also crucial, of course is what Dykstra calls “a deep, sustained, and thoroughgoing engagement with the Scriptures and with a sound theological tradition that brings the word of God into an ongoing history of endlessly contemporary thought and practice.”⁴⁶ Such formation develops alongside capacities for understanding “what makes human beings tick,” including engagements with literature, psychology, as well as scripture and theology and spiritual practices.⁴⁷ On top of this development, healthy pastoral imagination also requires “truthful and nuanced understanding of how congregations and other institutions actually work...”⁴⁸ Dykstra writes, “Pastors must have

⁴³ Craig Dykstra, “Pastoral and Ecclesial Imagination,” in Dorothy C. Bass and Craig Dykstra, eds., *For Life Abundant: Practical Theology, Theological Education, and Christian Ministry* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2008), 41-61.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 41.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 51.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 52.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*

a broad awareness and understanding of the world that the church exists to serve, both in its broad scope and contemporary need and in relationship to the specific environment in which one is operating as a pastor and as a congregation.”⁴⁹

Given the focus in this paper on forming ecclesial discernment at the intersection of tradition and innovation, I wonder if we might extrapolate the shape of a “Pioneering Imagination” on top of or in expansion of the “Pastoral.” What we can detect in Dykstra’s approach is the development of imagination not so much as an object that can be attained, but rather, as a method to be employed, a way of life cultivated over time. As one step in this direction, we might consider the increasing necessity for students’ formation in interdisciplinary engagements. Speaking from the particular context of a university-based Divinity School, this points immediately to the increasing importance of intra-school partnerships to allow coursework, certifications, and multiple degree pursuits that draw together engagements, for example, at the intersections of theology and medicine, scripture and public policy, ministry with innovation and entrepreneurship.

Conclusion

Russ Richey rightly says that “the cacophony of the late twentieth century, for all of the challenge that it has posed, should remind all who care about formation for ministry that clergy (and I would now add, laity and all those who are called to the pioneer ministry of forming fresh expressions) need to be prepared to live and minister faithfully in an ideologically and religiously diverse world.”⁵⁰ In this light, Richey continues, “The task of theological education is huge, including indeed an exercise of *episkope*’, and requires helping the church find ways to reclaim

⁴⁹ Ibid.

⁵⁰ Richey, 95.

some unity for Christ's body amid the pluralisms. The latter challenge, it seems to me, we have yet to successfully address.”⁵¹ That work is ours to pursue moving forward.

⁵¹ Ibid.