

## From the Guest Editors

### Faith and Engaged Scholarship in the New Millennium

**Rich Janzen, Alisha Pomazon, Christopher Hrynkow**

Despite the prominence of the “secularization thesis” among academics prior to the turn of the millennium, religion is not in decline worldwide. The Pew Research Center’s (2015) estimates show that until at least 2050 the number of people practicing a religion is expected to grow globally, particularly in Africa, the Middle East, and southern Asia. Democratic trends mean these regions are likely to remain major sources of immigrants to Western countries (United Nations 2015). These trends will supplement other trends towards growing religiosity in immigrant-receiving countries such as Canada, the United States, New Zealand, and Australia.

Given such demographics, this issue is timely. This issue brings a community-engaged perspective into the dialogue concerning how to properly understand the place of faith in contemporary societies (Ager et al. 2015; Bramadat and Biles 2005; Cnaan and Boddie 2006).

In light of the need for this aspect of the dialogue to more prominent, we invited contributions from community and university-based researchers, teachers, and scholars who actively and purposefully participate in faith-based work. Community-engaged research is understood to be community-determined, collaborative, and action-oriented. As a result, the research process and results are more likely to be useful to community members in making positive societal changes (Israel et al. 1998; Janzen et al. 2016). In this special issue, we profile a number of community-engaged research projects that explore and re-conceive the place of faith within society and the role of religious actors in positive social change. Submissions reflect a variety of religious traditions and from scholars engaging with diverse global perspectives.

All the contributions provide tangible illustrations of the potential for faith to both motivate and drive community engagement. The contributions show that faith is more than something held privately. In the examples that follow, religiosity has an integral community-based expression. In this regard, faith informs community action and helps to clarify the desired outcomes of engagement. This issue is multi-disciplinary and explores the nexus between faith and community in various formats.



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The first section consists of a selection of peer-reviewed essays. Eduardo Soto Para offers wide ranging reflection about the home as a place to build community and substantive peace for released offenders. Next is a joint authored piece from Agatha Ogunkorode and Lorraine Holtslander, which effectively names the importance of parish nursing in offering community-based support and hope to women with breast cancer. Christopher Hrynkow then maps the significance of the concept men-and-women-for-others for identity formation geared toward community engagement. The final article in this section, co-authored by Rich Janzen, Sam Reimer, Mark Chapman, and Joanna Ochocka, analyzes the institutional drivers underlying community engaged research projects at two faith-based post-secondary schools in Canada.

The second section offers reflections on faith-inspired community action projects. One essay explores the efforts of the Mennonite Central Committee to engage international service learning in a post-colonial manner in Guatemala. Another contribution discusses bringing insights from the study of agricultural sciences into a program that attempts to heal addiction, in part, through gardening. The third piece surveys programming at universities in Indonesia that activate Islamic roots in establishing community-engaged research and learning.

The third section features exchanges with two academics. The first reproduces a conversation with an associate dean at a Catholic liberal arts college federated with a major public university. He discusses the establishment of healthy community engaged learning office and how it flowered from seeds within the Catholic intellectual. The second conversation is with Maria C. Power who works at a major British University. She helps to clarify what forms community engaged methodologies can take when researching peace and reconciliation within the academic study of history.

Rounding out the contributions in a section of book reviews. Here, a variety of works are surveyed and critiqued in a constructive manner. Topics addressed include climate change, civic engagement, and Indigenous and goddess spiritualities.

We hope you enjoy the variety of material on offer in this special issue.

## About the Authors

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