

Preface

This book explores the ways in which virtue ethics, with its focus upon the development of practices that shape a life, offers an overarching way of understanding the formation of ministers of the church. The language of formation has come to dominate much ministerial training, replacing earlier designates such as theological education or training. Formation signifies the shaping of the whole of life to the goal or end of godly and fruitful ministry, with character and spirituality as important as the acquisition of skills for the competent undertaking of the tasks of ministry, and the growth in understanding of the fields of knowledge appropriate for ministry (such as theology, biblical studies, pastoral psychology, and missiology), if not more so.

The shaping of such a life requires multiple modes of pedagogy, and not just the traditional lecture-hall delivery of knowledge or the field placement practice of ministerial roles, such as preaching and pastoral visiting. There is still plenty of room for the passing on of knowledge through a lecture, seminar or private study, but to this default mode of delivery of formation should be added apprenticeship, mentoring, supervision of practice, and awareness of the great significance in the personal journey of faith and growth in spirituality.

Because the delivery of formation takes place on a variety of ways, I decided that a range of approaches within the confines of the written word might offer a richer way of exploring formation and ministry than simply the mainstay of theological writing: the argumentation of theological discourse. So, as well as some personal narrative and story (present not simply out of egotism, although something of that might be detected, but as an example of how important is the life story of the minister-in-training or ordinand), I have used on a number of occasions analysis of paintings or music. The images that I refer to have not been reproduced here, but all are

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