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## Editorial: A New Venture!

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# A NEW VENTURE!

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The publication of the inaugural issue of *Salubritas* is the culmination of a vision given to the faculty of the counseling program in the Graduate School of Theology and Ministry at Oral Roberts University over 20 years ago. We envisioned an academic journal that would provide theoretical and research articles, book reviews, and other resources for Spirit-centered counselors. This vision grew out of an awareness that at the time the journal was envisioned there were few resources of benefit to Spirit-centered counselors. We thought that identifying a clearly articulated pneumatology, together with a twenty-first-century theological anthropology, and sound counseling methodologies would be of great benefit to counselors who wanted truly to integrate their Spirit-infused faith with their counseling practice. What we have learned is there are pneumatologies, anthropologies, and counseling methodologies in use by Spirit-centered counselors around the world, all of which have been beneficial for us. We have learned so much in this reciprocal process and continue to learn as the Spirit directs our interests and activities.

We thus must acknowledge the existence of significant diversity in experiences with the Spirit. In a recent editorial of our sister journal, *Spiritus*, Editor Jeff Lamp described the diversity in the Spirit-empowered world, referencing his mentor's term "Pentecostalisms" and even suggesting the utility of diverse applications and interpretations of the Spirit-empowered Movement to current issues. Spirit-centered counselors also have many voices that collectively inform and advance the field of counseling. Some from a Christian tradition may refer to activity within

the Spirit specifically as being the work of the Holy Spirit, one component of the relational (Trinitarian) godhead that facilitates and embodies mechanisms of positive change that appear non-reductionistic. Spirit-centered counselors do make some common assumptions: (a) the Spirit permeates everything, (b) the Spirit can be discerned, and (c) the Spirit facilitates functional order out of chaos. Our commonly held principle is thus in our assumption of the Spirit to be at the center of positive change. With this launching of the *Salubritas* Journal, we attempt to create an avenue for scholarship originating from the many voices who wish to speak about the role of the Spirit in the act of counseling as they experience it.

Bringing discussions of the Spirit and change into academic conversations within the counseling profession has its own set of challenges. Is it possible to measure counseling that is Spirit-centered, and if yes, are such measurements predictable? Can we isolate variance in the counseling process to observe the Spirit moving? Can science and faith truly be integrated in delicate matters such as the highly personalized experience of the Spirit in counseling?

These are all reasonable questions to ask, but we must acknowledge that attempts to measure the unseen are not novel in the world of scholarship. The questions emerge from traditional epistemological world views, but research in the social sciences and counseling has already done the necessary work of expanding to include ways of knowing embedded in “process” and underscoring the fluid nature of the human experience. Such epistemologies highlight the importance of the dialectical process in counseling and how a mere shift in perspective can result in positive change through creation of new meaning and deeper understanding of emotions, relationships, and one’s own growth. More recently developed ways of knowing consider context in change and how larger networks influence personal experience. Some in our contemporary world overlook the power of context by refusing to acknowledge patterns within the system that are oppressive and unjust, but in the field of counseling, the larger ecology is recognized as a driver that shapes and molds our clients’ experiences. The idea of being embedded in something larger than us also leaves room for productive and creative forces, like justice and transcendence. Aristotle’s

widely known quotation, which was adopted by Gestalt psychologists in the mid-20th century and later by the marriage and family therapy movement, “the whole is greater than the sum of its parts,” captures this principle. The world of scholarship and the study of human experiences, including the change process in counseling, has already expanded to consider those things that are not necessarily directly observable with the five senses but allow for something else, something “in addition to,” something beyond direct measure currently, something that might be recognized as the Spirit.

So the illuminating question becomes, how do we employ scholarly ways of knowing to expand and catalyze our understanding of the Spirit? It may seem a lofty goal, as our current cultural milieu in the United States quite literally supports the pitting of science against faith, creating gridlock that has never been so helplessly immobilizing as recently witnessed in the various responses to the COVID-19 pandemic. Namely, many publicly oppose scientific recommendations around vaccinations and mask-wearing for reasons attributed to their faith systems. (We recognize the diversity of reasons for this decision and refer here only to those related to faith.) In this way, science and faith are so polarized that a true marriage between the two seems unlikely if not impossible. We, however, the editors of this launch issue of *Salubritas* Journal, believe the integration of science and faith is possible.

What might the marriage of “what is” with “what might be,” the integration of faith and science in the realm of counseling, look like? We have yet to fully uncover this, but this journal is intended to begin the conversation. Research in this domain might explore ways of helping clients expand their capacities in the face of life’s stressors so that they are able to simultaneously hold room for both joy and grief, disappointment and hope, disillusionment and faith, discontent and love. Theoretical formulations might attempt to explain the process of allowing space in a seemingly hopeless situation to remain open to the possibility that things can change and something different can emerge. Scholarship might include acknowledgment of the transcendence in a sense of connectedness to a higher power. In short, it might begin to examine seemingly paradoxical

human experiences, as they appear to produce the seeds of truth. Such examinations will not ignore human pain felt to its fullest, but they will begin from the vantage point that clients and counselors might also at times experience more. *The whole is greater than the sum of its parts.*

The growing vision that the ORU Counseling faculty have nurtured since its birth over 20 years ago, now further cultivated in partnership with the Behavioral Sciences faculty, culminates in the launch of this new Journal. From the conceptualization of this avenue of scholarship, our purposes have been and remain as follows: (a) to build bridges among the various “Pentecostalism” and advance the conversation about the nature of change in the Spirit-empowered world, (b) to build bridges between science and faith in scholarship, and (c) to understand better the integration of the Spirit into the change process to improve our counseling interventions.

This issue begins with a pair of studies that examine Spirit-centered counseling in a broad, conceptual sense. First, Bill Buker, Edward E. Decker, Jr., and Jeffrey S. Lamp offer a vision of Spirit-centered counseling that operates on three foundational assumptions—an ontological assumption that God, in the person of the Holy Spirit, permeates all of creation; an epistemological assumption that there are means by which human beings might know what the Spirit is doing in the world, namely discernment and participation; and a functional assumption that attests that the activity of the Holy Spirit in the world is bringing order out of chaos. The article develops the contours of a model in which emphasis is always on the importance of being aware of and experiencing the Spirit and utilizing this awareness within the counseling endeavor. Following this broad picture, Buker follows up with a study using the image of a fractal to propose a Spirit-centered approach to counseling that conceptualizes the Spirit’s activity as seeking to replicate the patterns of God’s redemptive story throughout creation, forging an epistemological shift from ways of knowing shaped by the conventional wisdom of culture to a renewed mind grounded in the transformative wisdom of Jesus, in order to facilitate deep second-order change. This pair of studies provides a starting point for the journey to explore Spirit-centered counseling.

Following this orientation to Spirit-centered counseling, four studies follow that engage specific areas of counseling practice. Pamela Engelbert, drawing on both the theory of intergenerational trauma and Matthew's mention of "the wife of Uriah" in the genealogy of Jesus (Matthew 1:6), presents a compelling argument that Jesus communicates #metoo in his identification with the victims of sexual assault, represented in the inclusion of Bathsheba in his family lineage. It concludes with a call for the church to take the stance of "radical disciples" in listening to the stories of survivors of sexual assault and thus facilitate Jesus' healing of these traumas. Haley French reflects on counseling in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic through the eschatological lens of the "already, not yet" dialectic. The counseling process is presented as a place in which suffering is encountered and explored as the counselor stands in solidarity with the sufferer, anticipating hope and the prospect of change in the present through the work of the eschatological Spirit of God. Practices of companioning, lament, and re-storying are presented as ways of navigating the tension of the already, not yet. Robert McBain draws on his own experience of suffering from depression to provide direction for the church in ministering to those suffering, often in silence, from depression. Charting the church's history of helping sufferers interpret their experience of depression, McBain laments that the church has been pushed to the periphery of the mental health conversation by the emergence of the medical, therapeutic, and pharmaceutical communities. He urges a model of "Jesus-style friendships" to help sufferers from depression find identity, purpose, and meaning within the church community. Karuna Sharma offers a look at the growing prevalence of Christian counseling in the nation of Nepal. The nation's people have experienced great political, social, religious, and economic upheaval in recent decades, resulting in mental health crises and the acceptance of counseling as a mode of healing. Sharma argues that Spirit-centered counseling in churches is especially well-suited to address this situation in Nepal.

In the final article in this issue, Melinda G. Rhoades and Andrea C. Walker present the results of a research project that analyzes the

responses of college students in an evangelical university to experiences of bereavement. The authors posit that this study may be the first to utilize narrative descriptions from participants describing their own changes in spirituality and beliefs about God after experiencing a close loss. The authors utilized Bill Buker's Spirit-centered Change Model as a construct for measuring spiritual growth, with results from the study serving as a first empirical step toward measuring spiritual growth as epistemological change.

So let's proceed with the launch of this new venture!

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