

BOOK REVIEWS



Matthew Floding, ed., *Engage: A Theological Field Education Toolkit* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2017), 170 pp.

Engage is the latest collective publishing effort of members of the Association for Theological Field Education (ATFE) spearheaded by Matthew Floding of Duke Divinity School. Previous offerings that Floding helped bring to the public include *Welcome to Theological Field Education!* (2010) and *Brimming with God: Reflecting Theologically on Cases in Ministry* (2015). The current endeavor is markedly shaped by its editor Floding, who wrote the introduction and also contributed four of the first eight foundational chapters of the book. The other contributors to the book are drawn from a notably wide array of backgrounds—both in terms of their religious denominational affiliations as well as their experiences with supervised ministry or field education. Each draws on his or her own work as seminary or divinity school faculty, clinical pastoral education supervisor, or pastor to offer the readers personal insights to help prepare them for what lies ahead in a field education experience.

The book is comprised of twenty-four brief chapters of four to five pages each that cover important topics to be considered before and during a field education experience. It begins with eight chapters that set the foundation for the experience. It then moves into eight chapters that address different aspects of the ministry in which the readers will be engaged. Next, it offers three chapters addressing cultural issues to bear in mind while in ministry, and it ends with five chapters that take the reader beyond the walls of a congregational setting for ministry.

All of the chapters, with the exception of one that is addressed to the supervisor/mentor, are addressed to the person preparing or currently ex-

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periencing a field education placement using the subjective pronoun “you” in a conversational tone. The hope is that readers will use this book either on their own or as a part of their seminary or divinity school work in conjunction with their field education placement. At the end of each chapter, questions for reflection invite readers to consider the topic covered from within their own context. A suggested reading list offers resources for digging deeper into the topic should the reader’s interest be piqued.

While the use of the pronoun “you” can be inviting and draw the reader in, it can also be alienating for others who would greatly benefit from reading this book—such as supervisors/mentors, lay committee members, and even field education directors. For them, reading this book addressed to another may feel like listening in on a conversation in which they were not invited to participate. This style of address was also employed in *Welcome to Field Education!* that had many of the same contributors.

Additionally, some of the advice given about what the students should expect from seminaries and divinity schools in their preparatory work with sites and supervisors seems to me more aspirational than factual, which is how it is presented. This could lead to false expectations on the part of students who engage in this fieldwork. It would be helpful to use language that shows the range of what seminaries and divinity schools are offering in these areas rather than stating as fact that all provide the same level of preparation.

Engage is an important contribution to the area of field education and is a must-read for all of the constituencies named above. The short chapters make it easy to read by boiling the issues down to their cores. The personal anecdotes bring the topics to life and allow readers to more easily imagine their own engagement with the issues in their own contexts. The breadth of material covered gives a good indication to the readers of all that will be asked of them in their field education experience. I will definitely use parts or all of this book with students, supervisors, and lay committees in my work in theological education.

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