

Adult Learning in a World Leaning Into God's Mission

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About the Author

Mary Hess is Associate Professor of Educational Leadership at Luther Seminary in St. Paul, MN, where she has taught since 2000. Mary has a PhD in Religion and Education from Boston College, an MTS from Harvard Divinity School, and a BA from Yale University. Her research focuses on the intersection of media, religion and education, and she is particularly interested in digital storytelling's implications for faith formation. Her most recent books include *Teaching Reflectively in Theological Contexts*, and *Engaging Technology in Theological Education*, and she has developed the website Storyingfaith.org.

This is an outline by APM President Benjamin L. Hartley of Dr. Mary Hess's presentation based on the powerpoint slides she provided to APM participants.

In keeping with our theme of "Transforming Teaching for Mission," Dr. Hess chose to present her topic through the use of images and short video clips which cannot be reproduced in a book. Internet URLs, however, are provided in this outline for the reader who wishes to re-construct at least some of what Dr. Hess presented to the APM at our annual meeting.

I. Introductory Remarks

- a. Identifying the "social location" of the presenter as a Roman Catholic laywoman teaching at an Evangelical Lutheran Church in America seminary in Minnesota.
- b. Goals of presentation:
 - i. To catalyze good questions and to ignite the imagination.
 - ii. To have an evening of adult learning rather than "information transfer."

II. What does adult learning look like when we speak of faith?

III. Three shifts which have taken place to which we need to pay attention.

- a. Widespread epistemological challenges:
 - i. How do we understand authority?
 - ii. What is meant by authenticity?
 - iii. Who has agency?
- b. Specific issues in transformative learning
 - i. Learning proceeds through an ongoing spiral of "confirmation," "contradiction," and "continuity."
 - ii. "Spreadable media" is implicated in all three of these dynamics.

- iii. If we don't understand this cycle, we find ourselves stuck in places where fundamentalism or relativism are evoked, rather than deep adult learning.

Two youtube videos were displayed offering two different views of ecclesiology which may be utilized to promote “transformative learning”:

- “Why I hate religion, but love Jesus” - <http://youtu.be/1IAhDGYlpqY>
- “Why I love religion, and love Jesus” - http://youtu.be/Ru_tC4fv6FEc.

c. The rise of “maker” culture. What is this?

- i. The participatory, active forms of culture-creation.
- ii. Easily shared – “spreadable.” Spreadable media are resonant, address meaningful issues, evoke relationship, are easily shared. Theologically we may understand this as “create, share, believe.”
- iii. “Value and meaning get created as grassroots communities tap into creative products as resources for their own conversations and spread them to others who share their interests.” -- Henry Jenkins, *Spreadable Media*, (2013).

Youtube videos to illustrate “spreadable media,” “disruptive innovation,” and “maker culture” were shared:

- “The Innovators’ Bible”: <https://vimeo.com/77818196>
- “Woman at the Well”: <http://youtu.be/Q49BbfgJbto>
- “Finding Hope in the Holy”: <http://youtu.be/WQ4nF07IC7U>

Following Dr. Mary Hess’s presentation APM member Dr. Stanley Skreslet responded to her lecture. One of the items he offered by way of critique was to briefly discuss a recent article in the *New Yorker*

by Jill Lapore on the problem of “disruptive innovation.” The link to that article, “The Disruption Machine,” is here: <http://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2014/06/23/the-disruption-machine>.