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BOOK REVIEWS

INTRODUCTION
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During the 2012 Annual Conference of the Academy of Religious Leadership, members discussed ideas for upcoming conference topics. The intersection of spirituality with religious leadership soon emerged as the most popular topic. After discussing the multiple aspects this topic covered, the officer group in collaboration with the Journal editor asked for proposals. Over fifteen people or groups submitted proposals to research, speak, and/or write about spirituality and leadership. We accepted seven for presentation at the 2013 annual conference in Chicago, and these seven and one additional piece are featured in this issue of the Journal.

Spirituality embraces multiple expressions and includes hundreds of definitions. My favorite is from a book by Gerald Broccolo, *Vital Spiritualities*, and simply states: "Spirituality is how one copes with life." Ron Rolheiser, author and President of Oblate School of Theology, writes that none of us has a choice, everyone has to have a spirituality.[1] Even people writing leadership books and articles related to business cite a deep connection between good leadership and something they call spirituality. The academy has not addressed this subject, yet Senge writes about *metanoia* and *discipline* (disciple), Kouzes and Posner speak about living from a place of deep integrity and "walking the talk," authors speak about spirit, spirituality, soul and servant leadership so much that over 2,600 titles surface on an Amazon.com search. In my own work, I've studied the "competence" of religious leadership and discovered that respondents looking to religious leadership value a leader's spiritual depth above every other competence they identify.

This issue of the Journal, then, offers eight investigations into varieties of spiritualities and their impact on religious leadership. Each of the authors

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[1] Ronald Rollheiser, *The Holy Longing: The Search for a Christian Spirituality* (New York, NY: Doubleday, 1999), 6.

names a specific Christian context in their orientation and investigation. Together they provide thought-provoking stories, research in a variety of contexts, and connections that include cultural, differently-abled, theologically diverse perspectives. The collection invites readers to ponder the breadth of our Christian heritage and its deepest sources for sustaining pastoral leadership.

First, Lisa Hess speaks about how interreligious celebrations of word and symbol have invited her and her students to consider again the power of worship and liturgy in forming and sustaining leaders. She clearly states the dilemma of the notion of "spirituality" situating it in the "popularist speculation and self-help literature" that sometimes constitutes immediate understanding of the word. Intrepid soul, she moves forward toward a more methodological understanding based in the work of Sandra Schneiders and roots her definition in the "basic human capacity for transcendence." Hess then roots spirituality in the relationship with Christ and lived in Christian faith. She builds on insights from Maggie Ross and links her notion of the indwelling, kenotic God to eucharistic, incarnational embodiment that moves worshipping leaders to a hospitality of inclusion. Her article, "Liturgical Hospitality within Deeply Rooted Leadership," considers her own experience in interreligious dialogue and relates it to the deep spiritual connection with one God of both Jewish and Christian ancestors.

Shelley Trebesch draws upon her understanding of neuroscience and its potential impact in creating opportunities for spiritual formation. In her article, "Ecology of the Learning Environment: Creating the Context for Spiritual Formation," Trebesch speaks as a teacher interested in preparing ministers to be effective leaders with spiritual depth. She integrates her understanding of the ecology of the learning environment with her experience in spiritual formation and her passion for offering a transformative learning environment. Trebesch challenges pastoral leaders to consider their own stories of conversion, growth, and leadership

toward assisting them in developing similar types of processes for people in their congregations. Her findings suggest that "self-awareness, self-reflection, and responsiveness to the Spirit facilitate transformation." She further asserts that if a leader is transparent in this transformative process, the leader invites others' pursuit of similar transformation.

In "*Umunthu* and the Spirituality of Leadership: Leadership Lessons from Malawi," Harvey C. Kwiyani focuses on the impact of African tribal understanding and its relationship to Christian pastoral leadership. First, he clarifies that *Umunthu* translates as *Ubuntu*, the popular African philosophy articulated in South Africa by Archbishop Desmond Tutu and further amplified by Michael Battle, President and CEO of the PeaceBattle Institute. Kwiyani develops the meaning further and relates it to spiritualities found in Malawi. Based on this African context, he notes that spirituality moves from personal piety to communal spiritual phenomenon. Kwiyani offers the global church insights into the interdependence between personal spirituality, leadership, and communal response.

David Forney and Stuart Higginbotham reimagine pastoral leadership among people who profess spiritualities without aligning with religious traditions. In their article, "A Hermeneutic of Appreciation: Cultivating Encounters of Spiritual Experience within Congregational Ministry," they rely on insights from Raimon Panikkar's theological metaphor of "window" and Hans Georg Gadamer's philosophical lens of a "fusion of horizons." These authors argue for greater space in exploration of various spiritual impulses so as to encourage dialogue among widely differing viewpoints. After developing their theoretical underpinnings, these authors offer a case study—St. Benedict's—and apply some of their insights to practical pastoral considerations.

Tone Stangeland Kaufman completed research in Norway and reports some of her findings in "A Spirituality of Everyday Life: An Unnoticed Spiritual Source for Clergy." She identified three sources of

spiritual life for pastors in active ministry: everyday life, ministry, and intentional practices. Relying on her original research using in-depth interviews, she explores the kind of close connection that personal spirituality (of the pastors) offers these pastors in their community leadership. She concludes that pastors who identify these sources and celebrate their natural rhythm in life may also be able to sustain their leadership more effectively.

"Be Opened: Practicing Social Connectedness within the Deaf Community" offers author Nancy Delich's deep insight into spiritual leadership within both the deaf and the hearing communities. Rooted in scripture stories re-interpreted by one who is a member of the deaf community, her article examines the history of exclusion within the Christian community and counters that history with a challenge. A social worker, leadership faculty, and spiritual director herself, Delich integrates understanding from these disciplines toward coaching the non-deaf community in increasing its capacity to minister to and to receive ministry from members of the deaf community. Delich relies on research she conducted using a variety of tools that allowed deaf participants to receive spiritual direction for action in life.

Eileen Campbell-Reed and Christian Scharen suggest that developing a pastoral imagination through spiritual practice offers pastors greater capacity for leadership in their article, "Ministry as Spiritual Practice: How Pastors Learn to See and Respond to the 'More' of a Situation." They address what "more" means by inviting pastors to cultivate a capacity for perception of situations and God's movements as a fundamental spiritual practice. To learn this practice, pastors need to have an accurate view of reality, to understand the theological stakes in any given situation, to respond well, and to respond contextually and faithfully. Campbell-Reed and Scharen are co-directors of the Learning Pastoral Imagination Project (Luther Seminary), and bring their expertise to the table from their research.

In "Decision-Making for Christian Leaders Facing Adaptive Challenges," Paul Kaak, Gary Lemaster, and

Rob Muthiah consider how faith guides leaders and their communities in discerning God's will for the congregation. They carry this process through the implementation of decision-making by noting how the process sparks and sustains adaptive change. This team of interdisciplinary leadership faculty embraces both the notion of "waiting on God" as a spiritual practice and the insight of Ronald Heifetz concerning adaptive change. They identify some key assumptions related to pastors as collaborators and facilitators of communal activity. Together they draw from philosophical traditions about prudence rooted in Aristotle and Thomas Aquinas, models of decision-making, and finally Christian practices of discernment. They offer a case study called "Woodland Community Church" and assist the reader in applying collective and interdisciplinary expertise to the case study example. Finally, they appropriate Jesus language and deep biblical spirituality for pastoral leadership toward adaptive change.

We hope you find these articles as helpful in expanding the conversation around spirituality and pastoral leadership as did the members gathered at the annual conference in April 2013. Each author offers fresh insight into how personal call and conversion nurtured by prayer, discernment, biblical reflection, and action impact, motivate, and sustain pastoral leaders in their ministries, lives, and congregational work. The buffet of offerings encourages us to wish you in your reading: *Bon Appetit*!

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LITURGICAL HOSPITALITY WITHIN DEEPLY ROOTED LEADERSHIP: POSSIBILITIES AND PITFALLS IN "EUCHARISTIC INDWELLING ENGAGEMENT"

LISA M. HESS

Abstract

This essay brings the contributions of the discipline of Christian spirituality into covenantal companionships across faith traditions by way of formation and encounter, both confessionally Christian and liturgically hospitable. "Spirituality" may bring a heavy sigh or rolled eyes within critical discourse, surrounded as it is by popularist speculation and self-help volumes aimed at the fascinations and inconveniences of the human condition. Spirituality as "eucharistic indwelling engagement" may not fare much better, given it errs in the other direction. The argument here reviews Sandra Schneiders's methodological work in Christian spirituality, in conversation with the thought of professed Anglican solitary, Maggie Ross. Both voices, aligned with and deepening my own contemplative empiricism within an artisanal way, bring challenge and confirmation to a case-study of liturgical hospitality, a multifaceted event of table fellowship co-led by a Modern Orthodox rabbi and a Presbyterian (USA) minister of Word and Sacrament. The thesis: God's way of relating to creation in a kenotic, eucharistic, indwelling engagement—made known to Christians through Jesus Christ in the power of the Spirit—not only challenges functional understandings of ordination (Reformed) with clear implication for leadership formation. Ross's telos of spiritual maturity and its ever-presence in the covenant of beholding suggests an example of transfiguration in this case-study, but more importantly, of invited transfiguration of all of

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us as religious leaders in the pluralistic challenges of companionship today.

Introduction

"Spirituality" may bring a heavy sigh or rolled eyes within critical discourse, surrounded as it is by popularist speculation and self-help volumes aimed at the fascinations and inconveniences of the human condition. Spirituality as "eucharistic indwelling engagement" may not fare much better, given it errs in the other direction. Even so, I invite you to read along, at least into the academic discipline of Christian spirituality and its methodological tools for religious leadership studies. There is so much here for cross-disciplinary deepening. I should also say I am a trained practical theologian who has moved sideways into the discipline of Christian spirituality, largely because of what was made available to me within its integrative methods and immersion in critical-self-interiority. What I offer for our consideration today, however, comes through this problematic of spirituality challenged and nuanced a bit. Ultimately, I'm moving toward a way of formation or method of encounter at once confessionally Christian and liturgically hospitable unto covenantal companionships across faith traditions. A lot of folks will not come with me where I've found myself, but many of us can testify to the fruitfulness of this work and its potential for deeply-needed responsiveness to deepening, church-stasis confrontive challenges.

The argument begins with a bit of overview of the now established "academic study of Christian spirituality," specifically, Sandra Schneiders's now classic methodological contributions and her contributions to my own *contemplative empiricism within an artisanal way*, familiar in JRL context. A bit of introduction to Ross's work then allows us to bring all these voices to a case study of liturgical hospitality, a multifaceted event of table fellowship co-led by a Modern Orthodox rabbi and a Presbyterian (USA) minister of Word and Sacrament. The thesis: God's way of relating to creation in a kenotic,

eucharistic, indwelling engagement—made known to Christians through Jesus Christ in the power of the Spirit—not only challenges functional understandings of ordination (Reformed) with clear implication for leadership formation. Ross's *telos* of *spiritual maturity* and its ever-presence in the covenant of *beholding* testifies to the kin-dom of God both now and not yet, suggesting an example of transfiguration in this case-study, but more importantly, invited transfiguration of all of us in the pluralistic challenges of companionship today.

Spirituality—Disciplinary Frame and Difficulties

As with any guild that's been around for over 25 years, much effort has been spent in the Society for the Study of Christian Spirituality toward defining its problematic over and against theology, religious studies, and the like. Bernard McGinn traces the trajectory and potential of spirituality in conversation with other scholars such as Jean Leclerq, Walter Principe, Hans Urs von Balthasar, and Sandra Schneiders.[1] A large influence in my own work, Schneiders has defined the term with clear attention to cross-disciplinary concerns. However, the voice of Maggie Ross suggests unexpected and congruent tools necessary for considering this case study in liturgical hospitality within deeply-rooted leadership. Ross is a professed Anglican solitary responsible to the Archbishop of Canterbury and author of, among other volumes, *Pillars of Flame: Power, Priesthood, and Spiritual Maturity* and *Writing the Icon of the Heart: In Silence Beholding.* She demurs from most words in this area of inquiry—spirituality, mystic, transformation, transcendence—arguing a path of *spiritual maturity* rooted in "God's *kenotic* (self-emptying),

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[1] Bernard McGinn, "The Letter and the Spirit: Spirituality as an Academic Discipline," in *Minding the Spirit: the Study of Christian Spirituality*, eds. Elizabeth A. Dreyer and Mark S. Burrows (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins, 2005), 26–27. See also John LeClercq, "Spiritualitas," *Studi medievali* 3 (1962), 281-284; and Walter Principe, "Toward Defining Spirituality," *Science Réligieuses* 12 (1983), 127-41; Hans urs von Balthasar, "Spirituality," in *Explorations in Theology I: The Word Made Flesh* (San Francisco: Ignatius, 1989), 211-26; and Sandra Schneiders, "Spirituality in the Academy," *Theological Studies* 50 (1989), 676-97.

eucharistic, indwelling *engagement*, the love shown to us in the priestly humility of Christ."[2] As our conference examined *spirituality as a way of engaging*, my contention is that Ross's work not only expands current spirituality-scholarship with poignant critiques of transcendence and transformation; she also offers a desperately needed lens within which to conceive religious leadership formation in today's pluralisms. This section will bring these voices into conversation, with their provocative leadership questions in tow.

Spirituality, in Schneiders's view, is "the actualization of the basic human capacity for transcendence…the experience of conscious involvement in the project of life-integration through self-transcendence toward the horizon of ultimate value one perceives."[3] Spirituality here is not a catch-all term for the unclassifiably sacred or the inarticulate mysteries of human experience. Rather, it is a conscious and deliberate way of living within an integrative knowing, an ongoing project that orients a human being toward growth and learning beyond private gain, toward a perceived good or horizon of value. Christian spirituality study investigates both the *material* object—spirituality as an existential phenomenon—and the *formal* object—spirituality as religious experience.[4] The material object, so defined, allows inquiry into an overwhelming diversity of spiritualities expressed within the global community, refusing to universalize any into a descriptive category conditioned by one culture. The formal object focuses critical attention on the lived faith of concrete believing subjects, the "lived experience of the Christian faith." Experience here is not an end to itself or an abstracted object of study, but the *experience of* or *subjective awareness of* a particular person of articulate

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[2] Maggie Ross, *Pillars of Flame: Power, Priesthood, and Spirituality Maturity* (New York: Seabury, 1988, 2007), 3.

[3] Sandra Schneiders, "Approaches to the Study of Christian Spirituality," in *The Blackwell Companion to Christian Spirituality*, ed. Arthur Holder (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2005), 16–17.

[4] Schneiders, 16-17.

faith.[5] Religious consciousness of all kinds re-emerges here as a focus of analytical effort and discriminating interpretation, if only within the artifacts of persons in historical contexts.

Christian spirituality in this sense focuses its analytical and constructive tools on specific "texts," articulations of particular individuals on their own experience(s) of lived Christian faith. Schneiders brings Paul Ricoeur's imagery to mind when she calls this "the science of the individual,"[6] which opens doors into deeper and deeper understandings of the human condition in every particularity that we have time and effort to research and describe. This is not "spiritual experience" or the human condition as an absolute or universal, but a combination of concrete events and human awarenesses that draws us forward into self-implicating learning toward communally-shaped life-integration.

Lastly, "the horizon of ultimate value" articulated by Schneiders in her organizing definition establishes an end-state for spirituality's formal study free from emotive referents, free for multidimensional interpretation and invitation toward ultimate value. For example, the horizon of ultimate value for *Christian* spirituality is described as "the triune God revealed in Jesus Christ to whom Scripture normatively witnesses and whose life is communicated to the believer by the Holy Spirit…" Schneiders describes this horizon more concretely to include being made a child of God and living a new life celebrated communally, sacramentally, and in mission in the world toward God's reign.[7] Note the traditional theological formulations *and* the intimate reliance upon a received "new life" that has descriptive shape. Theological specificity *and* particular faith commitment are held together in a critical awareness that is at once self-implicating and historically concrete for collective investigation. Thus, spirituality becomes particular yet

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[5] Schneiders, 17–18.

[6] Ricoeur, *Interpretation Theory*, 78-79, cited by Schneiders, 18.

[7] Schneiders, 17.

collectively accessible, dependent upon the artifacts of its concrete participants engaged in the project of life-integration toward the horizon of ultimate value.

As JRL readers may recognize, the theological method engaged for my own work has been called a *contemplative empiricism*[8] underlying a larger movement toward a non-sectarian "horizon of ultimate value," what I've called "an expressive theological delight able to companion the suffering of self and others." The monograph for this *artisanal way*, this practical theological contribution to Christian spirituality, was published as *Learning in a Musical Key: Insight for Theology in Performative Mode*. The work roots insight and its transformative fruit in covenantal and radically covenantal companionships stewarded by historical faith traditions.[9] It is a radically sensate approach to theological knowledge received, released, and renewed within this covenantal inquiry and graced awareness. Learning becomes reoriented toward *embodied* insight, modeling and fostering an epistemological vulnerability,[10] a professional humility or willing surrender to a lively Subject beyond preferred disciplinary precision. I've begun to speak of this work as a *companionable way*, a way of engaging living traditions within and beyond their narrowly textual confines. It was *theo*-logical fidelity to God in this method, within my own rooted tradition of Reformed (Presbyterian Church USA) Christianity, that landed me in the event of liturgical hospitality to be examined below. Before we get there, however, let us turn to the substantive challenge to spirituality's problematic offered by professed solitary Maggie Ross.

Ross opens her 1988/2007 volume, *Pillars of Flame*, claiming: "God is related to the creation in kenotic (self-

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[8] Lisa M. Hess, "A Contemplative Empiricism: Methodological Musings for an Artisanal Theology in Religious Leadership Formation," *Journal of Religious Leadership* vol 8, 1 (Spring 2009).

[9] Lisa M. Hess, *Artisanal Theology: Intentional Formation in Radically Covenantal Companionship* (Eugene, OR: Cascade, 2009).

[10] Timothy J. Gianotti, "The Tests of Poverty: Qur'anic Perspectives," in *Crisis, Call and Leadership*, eds. Peter Ochs and Stacy Johnson (Palgrave-Macmillan, 2009), 124.

emptying), eucharistic, indwelling *engagement*, the love shown to us in the priestly humility of Christ."[11] Unlike just about anyone I've read within Christian theology, except perhaps a few Eastern-oriented theologians, Ross simply *refuses* the dialectical compromises made by a worldly church besieged by or enslaved to power. She names in a preliminary "theological abecedary" multiple myths within which this kenotic engagement has been refused:[12] the myth of *healing and wholeness*, which undergirds (among other things) the temptation to focus solely upon healing in exclusion and denial of the centrality of woundedness for participating in God in the flesh; the myth of *baptismal magic*, which continues to allow the ritual to bestow a vaguely social and even more vaguely religious magic stamp on uncomprehending babies; the myth of *two-level obedience*, where some of us have privileged access to the higher wisdom of God, enacted weekly, if not daily, in religious habits across the world; myths of *uniformity*, *immortality*, *power* (which I won't take space here to define more fully).

Amongst other words, she demurs from the word *spirituality* to urge, instead, an immediacy and deepening within the kenotic, indwelling, eucharistic God toward a spiritual maturity available to all "in silence beholding."[13] In multiple places, Ross therefore takes notions of *transformation* and *transcendence* to task for their unavoidable *dis*-incarnation, distraction, even idolatry. It is not the transcendence of our condition in which God meets us, but in its darkness, its deepening woundedness confronted. It is not our condition that transforms into the image of God, but God's woundedness lived in us that transfigures us, our here-and-now, into the kin-dom of God. Both transformation and transcendence distract our participation in God's willing woundedness within and all around us. Ross also thereby confronts any notion

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[11] Ross, *Pillars of Flame*, 3.

[12] Ross, *Pillars of Flame*, xvi-lvii.

[13] Maggie Ross, *Writing the Icon of the Heart: In Silence Beholding* (Eugene, OR: Cascade, 2013).

of a horizon of ultimate meaning, but for that available within the Silence of God, deeply within the bodies of each of us. The way to a life of integration courses not through self-transcendence but in *self-care* (asceticism), *self-confrontation*, and *self-forgetfulness*. In the ten beatitudes, in the three evangelical counsels of poverty, chastity, and obedience, Ross outlines what she would call *spiritual maturity*, rooted in *priesthood* available to all in "opening to and living out [divine] Humility within our brokenness, Christ's outpouring and indwelling that engages, transfigures, and re-creates."[14] It is this spiritual maturity and its corresponding call to priesthood within each of us that draws my attention forward.

Ross describes spiritual maturity with a cluster of ideas at the conclusion of her *Pillars*, though ultimately, she places it in what she calls a covenant of beholding, *Writing the Icon of the Heart*. Spiritual maturity, she begins, is "our coming to be, our confluence with God, self and community in ungrasping, eucharistic engagement,…We move from dependence to independence to interdependence,"[15] she suggests, aligning with a recognizable human developmental pattern (i.e., Robert Kegan). In this movement, "God's *kenosis* is received and confluent with our kenotic response, which is co-creation."[16] Receiving God's self-emptying Spirit results in co-creation, fruit of the Spirit. Additionally, individuality is no longer mistaken for authenticity, but self is not neglected. The goodness of creation is respected, cared-for, confronted in its separations, and ultimately relinquished, forgotten within the ever expansive and vulnerable joy of God. "We are able to live in ambiguity without leaning on props or propositions," she continues. "We have deepening love for Scripture and symbol and liturgy, but realize that they are feeding us only so that we may go into the desert and wait, watching in the dark."[17]

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[14] Ross, *Pillars of Flame,* lvii.
[15] Ross, *Pillars of Flame,* 188.
[16] Ross, *Pillars of Flame,* 189.
[17] Ross, *Pillars of Flame,* 190.

*Theo*logy's apophatic invitations, sustained paradoxes, and challenging risks infuse everything for Ross. The spiritually mature "are quick to realize and acknowledge when [they] do not know, when [they] cannot know, and when [they] presume.…[They] are willing to live in the ambiguity of not knowing without trying to manufacture a surrogate, a graspable substitute. [They] know that by remaining in unknowing, a truer, deeper engagement and insight will be given [them]: [they] will more deeply come to be.…[They] are willing to live in the tension of sustained paradox, in engagement with I WILL BE without trying to posit and determine and therefore control and make an idol of God."[18] Long-term aspiration and a willingness to suffer for God's life to grow within them mark this path, which brings "greater single-heartedness and transfiguration." And, of course, "All of this involves risk."[19] Not only in a secular or civic world in which politics and polarizations reign are these risks felt, but most especially in an ecclesial world organized for centuries to compromise with a notion of power "resolved" in a displaced and meta-narrative dialectic. Ross concludes, "Ours is an age for which the only hope is the kenotic wisdom of engagement—in the deepest sense of biblical knowing—with God, whose single movement of self-emptying and transfiguring Love enables us to live in creation through the wholeness of paradox."[20]

The most contemporary work of Ross places spiritual maturity in what she calls a covenant of beholding, begun with creation. In "Behold Not the Cloud of Experience," Ross argues for a retrieval of "the biblical word *behold* and the work of silence—the model of the mind—it entails as crucial to understanding ancient, patristic and medieval texts." It is "a liminal word," she argues, "signaling the threshold of contemplation where the self-conscious mind stops analyzing and becomes attentively receptive, open in

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[18] Ross, *Pillars of Flame,* 190-91.
[19] Ross, *Pillars of Flame,* 191.
[20] Ross, *Pillars of Flame,* 192.

an ungrasping and self-emptying way to irruption from the deep mind."[21] In the introduction to *Writing the Icon of the Heart*, Ross observes that *behold* has more than thirteen hundred occurrences in Hebrew and Greek, though critical study un-immersed in silence and its "deep mind" often translates it otherwise, such as *remember* in Matthew 28:20.[22] Most startlingly, Ross argues this "in silence beholding" to be "the first covenant, and the only one necessary." My eyes widened in recognition and possibility as she concluded: "the later covenants are concessions to those who will not behold."[23] In stark contrast to my habitual and familiar conceptual residence in the power of the Word, received in its Hellenistic cosmic intentions, Ross has reminded me that the Word cannot pretend to be silence or its surrender. As she writes, "silence is actually the context and end, with beholding the means. This silence is not the absence of noise; it is the vast interior landscape that invites us to stillness."[24] In all I have been trained to profess, within which to stand, I return to my youngest critiques that have been distracted for decades now. In a world increasingly distracted and divided, Ross's work challenges us with persistent return to the body, persistent challenges of entering into silence, and consistent wisdom that arises when beholding is the means of receiving, *theo*logical inquiry, and self-restrained action.

What all this means I have yet to fully integrate into my work, but it has fundamental challenges—and resonances, I might add—for understandings of religious leadership in (and out of) faith communities today. *Priesthood*, for Ross, has no necessary relation to the power structures of any church today, nor does it come into being/expression via ordination. It is "the eucharistic being of the creature in confluence with the eucharistic

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[21] Maggie Ross, "Behold Not the Cloud of Experience," *The Medieval Mystical Tradition in England VIII* (Boydell, Brewer, and Houston, 2013).

[22] Ross, *Writing the Icon of the Heart*, xviii.

[23] Ross, *Writing the Icon of the Heart*, xviii.

[24] Ross, *Writing the Icon of the Heart*, xvii.

God. The relationship is one of equipoise, the always-seeking-balance of ready response or *apatheia*."[25] Individual kenosis enables eucharistic community. Kenotic life in common—the Kingdom—cannot be accomplished without the commitment of each member to this aspiration that mirrors God's *kenosis* and [transfigures] us into God's image.[26] In this lens, "all are called to deepest priesthood. We are called to be, to the glory of our creaturely engagement in the Love of God that is the humility of Christ.…Priesthood *is* a commitment to a way of being; it is not ministry.…If ministry does not arise from and communicate Christ's life-enhancing sacrifice…ministry makes object of those it purposes to serve, *destroying their engagement*, draining away the very life it says it wishes to enhance."[27] Priesthood is the willingness to sustain in ourselves the tension of the paradox of self-emptying love.[28] "Christian priestly power is the self-emptying, self-restrained, concentrated power of love (love is by definition ungrasping) commingled with the self-emptying, self-restrained concentrated outpouring Love that is its source and model and sustains the life and coinherence of the divine with the creation."[29] As such, religious leadership—particularly that of ordination in functional terms, like the PC (USA) proffers—needs to reconsider its practice and its theology (it matters not which comes first, finally) surrounding sacramental celebration and being "set apart" for the right administration of the sacraments. Which brings us to the event of liturgical hospitality within deeply rooted leadership.

An Event of Liturgical Hospitality

The observations of event(s) are these: An invitation to Shabbat was tendered and accepted between two

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[25] Ross, *Pillars of Flame*, 15.

[26] Ross, *Pillars of Flame*, 19-20.

[27] Ross, *Pillars of Flame*, 21, italics mine.

[28] Ross, *Pillars of Flame*, 21-22.

[29] Ross, *Pillars of Flame*, 33.

leaders in Chabad and two Presbyterian ministers. All gathered at the Shabbat table where the *kiddush* was sung over a cup of kosher wine, filled to overflowing just as the Psalmist describes. The testimonial blessing was offered and received, and the Sabbath began, observed and kept holy within observant Jewish practice and hospitable welcome of two Christian companions. An implicit teaching was also received in this table liturgy, as two weeks later, one of the Presbyterians knew a Modern Orthodox rabbi and Presbyterian minister would be leading a largely Methodist Christian community in a practical theology course and then liturgy, followed by a Common Meal. After those two weeks, the rabbi arrived from out-of-town to teach on his book.[30] Class ended, and a Christian order of worship began, shaped in Psalmic order and heritage of Reform Jewish liturgy. The Christian liturgy was overtly concluded (spoken "With our liturgy concluded, let us proceed to Common Meal"), and the rabbi stood at a small table alongside his Christian companion to teach, via modeling, the Shabbat table practices of his own community. While he sang the blessing over the cup, both rabbi and minister filled two separate chalices to overflowing—just as the Psalmist describes—the former with kosher wine, the latter with grape juice. A loaf of bread was distributed to those gathered amidst a wordless song, and then the community's Common Meal began—a roomful of Christians and an (admittedly unusual) Orthodox rabbi, who was offered his own kosher meal. Not insignificant for hospitality, the location of all events in the seminary setting was a multi-purpose auditorium, not a sanctuary.

A poem emerged, not long afterwards, with a playful challenge to religious leadership in its various entitlements (roshi-Zen Buddhist; rebbe-Hasidic Jewish; pastor-Protestant Christian; rabbi-Jewish):

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[30] Brad Hirschfield, *You Don't Have to Be Wrong for Me to Be Right: Finding Faith without Fanaticism* (New York: Harmony/Random House, 2007), 1-127.

> Two cups filled to overflowing.
> Roshi observes that fullness obstructs
> Rebbe shows a fullness that welcomes
> Roshi pours hot water from teacup to table.
> The student awakens, disturbed to learn emptiness.
> Rebbe pours a care-full wine, just as the Psalmist says.
> The student awakens, startled with Life set apart.
> Such liturgical hospitality disturbs and disrupts
> What we cannot abandon or alter,
> Healing through yearnings well met,
> Blessing the unbidden tears.
> A pastor and rabbi attended a table,
> Two cups filled to overflowing.

The phrase "liturgical hospitality" is meant to juxtapose things we usually try to keep separate—like I enjoy doing—to see if their encounter and perhaps living relationship might beget, even in-form, new life. The daring act of liturgical hospitality was actually offered by a colleague of mine who, as musician, served simultaneously a Roman Catholic parish, a Reform Jewish Temple, and a Methodist seminary community, created the innovative liturgy. Had I known what was coming, I probably would have urged him against it, with fear of yet-again a Christian imperialism of Jewish observance/prayer. But his expertise allowed him to make judgments respectful of, yet innovative within, historical traditions for purposes of praise, proclamation, teaching, and encounter with a living wisdom, made bodily present in a practitioner of contemporary Judaism. *Liturgical hospitality* as a term is also meant to encourage deeply rooted traditional rituals to come in closer proximity to one another—not diffused, but held in tension—to see how and what they speak within covenantal relationship across faith traditions.

For our purposes, I'm asking a variety of questions these next several years: What may such an event have to teach faith communities, deeply rooted in an historic tradition of faith but open to the Spirit in discernment with others who have become companions in faith? How may we understand the role of particularity and difference in opening to sacred encounter within and beyond our

defined sense(s) of tradition toward transfiguration of our wounds, deepening of spiritual maturity of all engaged? Within Christian terms, does *koinonia* refer to communion only between Christians and their (understanding of a) Triune God? Does *leiturgia* extend far enough to refer to such an event of liturgical hospitality, where orthopraxis was maintained AND two irreconcilable traditions could speak? How does spirituality actualize into transcendence and conscious involvement in life-integration toward a Christian horizon of ultimate meaning—the Triune God made known in Jesus Christ in the power of the Spirit— while actualizing into transcendence and conscious involvement by another in life-integration toward his/her tradition's horizon as well? Or is this better engaged as a *beholding* in multiple covenantal fidelity to the One who self-empties *even at table* so that spiritual maturity will beckon to all who have ears to hear, eyes to see? I will narrow our attention to these last two, the contrast between spirituality (Schneiders) and spiritual maturity (Ross), for sake of discussion.

Deeply Rooted Leadership—Acts of Commission and *Omission*

Prior examination of this event in a paper entitled "A Liturgical Hospitality Project: an Experiment in Comparative Theology," offered the following thesis, expanded just a bit now with use of *leiturgia* and *koinonia*: "a Jewish logic of sanctification, offered in a modeled teaching of the Shabbat Eve *kiddush*, coincided and was interwoven with a Christian sacramental logic upon the conclusion of a formal, Christian "order of worship," thereby creating a liminal liturgical space (or event of "liturgical reasoning"[31]) in which neither rooted

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[31] Steven Kepnes, *Jewish Liturgical Reasoning* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007). "…liturgy is not a passive recipient or mere vessel of reason but…in liturgy, the…light of…reason fans out into a spectrum of colors and hues so that its concepts and ideals are clothed in particular images and displayed in ritual actions. …The clarion call of reason becomes a melody that is varied, repeated, submerged, and revealed anew as in a musical fugue. …[T]he reason of liturgy is temporal and spatial…it is never the same. Because liturgy

practitioner in leadership released his/her own theological particularity and both manifested, publically, a tenacious commitment to lived interdependence in difference, an "intimacy of difference"[32] conceivable in both Chalcedonian Christian and non-sectarian terms alike. As such, I proposed that two irreconcilable, wounded traditions "spoke" amidst their tradition-specific *leiturgia*, extending traditional wisdom and its fruit, not least of which was, potentially, a cross-traditional *koinonia*.

The traditions each offered their voices—each lent their 'logics' of sanctification and sacrament—because *both positive and prohibitive actions were engaged* coincident with halakhic discourse and Presbyterian (PCUSA) doctrine and practice. Attention was devoted equally to the actions able to be enacted and those that were forbidden within halakhic and polity traditions. Those positive acts taken, *and those acts omitted in honor of particularity*, enlivened a Jewish and a Christian awareness of a cup, filled with the "fruit of the vine," blessed and offered to all as testimony, as an act of sanctification, remembrance, event fulfillment of an obligation to God and all humanity. This "non-observant" analogical form of a Shabbat Eve *kiddush* upon conclusion of Christian liturgy assumed (if unintentionally) "the character of a sacramental act," to use Rabbi Adin Steinsaltz's words; "a sort of communion, in the performance of the mitzvah of union of the soul, the body, the food, and the essence of holiness."[33] The "liturgical reasoning" resourced here by observant Jewish practice and specified Presbyterian law arguably engaged two distinct but coincident traditions enlivened to offer

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is a living performance…, it always varies from its script. Thus, liturgical reasoning is always new. It is neither preexistent nor static; it is discovered and revealed in every liturgical performance." 3ff.

[32] Lisa M. Hess, "Toward an "Intimacy of Difference: Philosophical and Theological Resources for Human Connection Through Difference," in *Alienation and Connection: Suffering in a Global Age*, ed. Lisa Withrow (Lexington Books, 2011), 97-114.

[33] Steinsaltz, 154.

Shabbat holiness *and* sacramental union.[34] But how may we understand a liturgical event in which two irreconcilable traditions speak at the same time? How does *leiturgia* expand in a multiply-covenantal gathering of thanksgiving, or can it? How does *koinonia* express itself, or *does* it in such a multiple-covenantal belonging?

Spirituality and/or Spiritual Maturity
as "Eucharistic Indwelling Engagement"

I have much critique to bring to the work of Maggie Ross—her strident polarizations of intensely complex socio-cultural and theological realities, her unflinching tenacity to what she knows as *true* Christianity amidst such complexities (which implies *false* for all others), even her audacious suggestion to reverse the primacy of baptism with the formative power of eucharist—but I cannot but be overwhelmed by recognition and invitation into what she calls God's kenotic (self-emptying), eucharistic indwelling engagement for the questions at hand. The entire thrust of a contemplative empiricism within an artisanal way has been to return *theo*logical inquiry to the spacious and excruciatingly slow-paced wisdom of the body that is *relationally-formed*, *explicitly embodied*, *multidimensional*, and *centered around insight* (that arrives without control or demand). The observation of commission *and omission* for what I mean by *deeply rooted religious leadership* leads inexorably to *in silence beholding*

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[34] The event examined here certainly offers the hallmarks of "liturgical reasoning"—primarily temporal and spatial, communally-enacted, ritual actions, a living performance of two traditions' wisdom(s), simultaneous yet distinct. Kepnes responded to the original paper well, though with some reservation given the wounded/wounding relationship between Christianity and Judaism. I take courage in his approach, as he describes it. "In light of the plethora of dead signs that now litter the sacred spaces of synagogues, liturgical reasoning is an act of breathing new life into old signs. In Jewish liturgical terms, this can be referred to as an act of [*Techiyat hameitim*] reviving the dead." (Kepnes, 19). The text read *Mehiat ha Matim*, but one rabbinic companion to whom I am grateful corrected my prose. The Christian Church is no less littered with "dead signs," and so I pursue this work as a form of "apophatic resurrection life" made available to Protestant (and other interested) Christians within my tradition(s).

within which to deepen and receive *spiritual maturity* in a covenantal, companionable way, all of which was previously rooted in Schneiders's methodological work in *spirituality*. So, let us examine this event of liturgical hospitality in the lenses of *spirituality* and *spiritual maturity* to see what we learn.

Schneiders's work focuses our attention, in my view, to nodes of discourse including the human capacity for *transcendence* (self-transcendence), conscious involvement in integration (project of life-integration), and a horizon of ultimate value (perceived variously). This lens urges us to see these events of liturgy and table fellowship in terms of the capacity of those present to rise above their prejudices, self-identities, and formed practices of praise and proclamation. Most students had been prepared for the event, but a couple students did refuse to attend "because Christ was not central without the Christian liturgical service in the traditional form of Protestant Christian practice" (a respectful paraphrase). Varying levels of conscious involvement manifested themselves during the teachings, liturgy, and table fellowship, though it's unclear how to assess or track this criterion of spirituality in practice. The "horizon of ultimate value" then urges us, at least in contemporary practices of such things, to specify ourselves in tradition-articulate language highlighting irreconcilable difference. The Christian horizon, as per Schneider's writing noted above and my own convictions, is "the triune God revealed in Jesus Christ to whom Scripture normatively witnesses and whose life is communicated to the believer by the Holy Spirit…" Schneiders describes this horizon more concretely to include being made a child of God and living a new life celebrated communally, sacramentally, and in mission in the world toward God's reign.[35] I would have to inquire with my rabbi-companion how he might describe his tradition's "horizon of ultimate value," as Jewish articulations of such a concept would vary dramatically. (Three rabbis, five opinions, as the joke

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[35] Schneiders, 17.

goes.) Suffice it to say it would *not* be what my Christian articulation is. It is this traditional-difference within the concept of a horizon that encouraged my own work's impulse to a non-sectarian "horizon" palatable to all those I've been in companionship with so far: an expressive delight able to companion the suffering of self and others. All these nodes of discourse are to provide avenues to deeper understanding of particular human experiences (though McGinn resists that term, sometimes used by Schneiders) within concrete contexts of history and tradition.

Ross's spiritual maturity within a covenant of beholding offers different gifts for consideration. Thinking about my discomfort, post-facto, of standing at table with a rabbi who is singing over the cup and offering us all bread within a wordless song, Ross's work provides new language for the risk and the discomfort. As she began: "God is related to the creation in kenotic (self-emptying), eucharistic, indwelling *engagement*, the love shown to us in the priestly humility of Christ."[36] In her tensive contrast between the church enslaved to a non-kenotic model of power and that within the humility of Christ, Ross reminds me that "Sacraments by their nature tend to open systems up."[37] Her words resonate with the unintended but deeply traditional innovation in which a pastor and a rabbi stood at table together—not a Eucharistic feast, capital E, nor a Shabbat table, Friday eve—but a deeply indwelt, self-emptying, engaged liturgical action of praise, proclamation, engagement all the same. I find myself wondering whether, in sparse pockets, Jews and Christians can begin to move from Christian dependence upon Judaism, or mutual independence, into an interdependent time of companionship and listening. The event manifested its apophatic invitation—neither my friend nor I know traditional language to use for it but that which we have, halakha and Presbyterian polity that governed our actions.

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[36] Ross, *Pillars of Flame*, 3.

[37] Ross, *Pillars of Flame*, 24.

We are intimately aware of its sustained paradoxes of succession, simultaneity, and mutuality amidst irreconcilable difference. Both of us, and those who participated that day, seem willing to live in the tension of this sustained paradox, in engagement, long-term aspiration, and even a willingness to suffer for God's life to grow more fully in each and all of us.

But mostly, I'm drawn to the possibility that a *covenant of beholding* creates a new spacious way for us to rest firm within our traditionally defined senses of covenant, however singular, however multiple, and *belong deeply to one another across traditionally defined terms*. If my rabbinic companion has any gift I would embarrass him by proclaiming, it would be his observant ability to behold, as Ross describes it. I'll provide an image, to flesh it out. With all of my inter-traditional collaborations across various traditions/non-traditions (Tibetan Buddhism, various streams of Judaism, Divine Feminine, pagan, atheist, Muslim, and more), I have rarely been companioned myself, at the center of *my* tradition, at *Eucharist*, capital E. I have considered this a willing penance, of sorts, as practitioners of my tradition have historically exacted such pain of imposition and/or exclusion in the world surrounding this Eucharistic Meal. One Wednesday morning, after my rabbinic friend and I had sat on a panel discussing relationship across theological difference, we sat in my office as communal worship began. He inquired whether we ought to be present there, and I relented, uneasy with the liturgical focus of the day—evangelism and "Offer Them Christ." We had laughed about it together, but I was deeply uneasy. As the liturgy moved into the sacramental celebration at table, I mourned that my companion would never be with me at the center of *my* tradition. In sensate grief, I approached the table to receive, to give thanks, to bring my sadness to this center. As I turned to walk back to my seat, my eyes landed on my friend, sitting in a posture of devotion and prayer, deeply present with me, *beholding*. As I reflect on it now, it was the seal to our shared leadership at table together, two weeks prior.

Conclusion

Clearly, this work is not complete, nor does it offer the precision that literate discourse in religious leadership studies will need in the time to come, but I cannot help but smile at the collision of ordained leadership, rigorous attention to traditional specificities, liturgical hospitality, and generative contexts of engagement in which to more clearly conceive God's self-emptying, eucharistic engagement with us, with each other, with the world. As I think about how I've been trained to withhold eucharistic action, I'm challenged to see how this understanding opens up our systems. As Ross writes, "If what is offered is controlled, its creaturely engagement is denied and taken away and it is made object; by being made object its life is encapsulated and destroyed. It is killed, whether or not its throat is cut. God meets us in a *living* sacrifice, a sacrifice that neither denies our creatureliness nor destroys life, but reveals to us the glory of our creatureliness and *enhances* life, unity with life even as it is offered in eucharistic reciprocity, broken and sent forth."[38] I still value the Schneider questions: How does spirituality actualize into transcendence and conscious involvement in life-integration toward a Christian horizon of ultimate meaning—the Triune God made known in Jesus Christ in the power of the Spirit—while actualizing into transcendence and conscious involvement by *another* in life-integration toward *his/her* tradition's horizon? Mostly, I am thankful to consider this event of liturgical hospitality as a *beholding*, in multiple covenantal fidelity to the One who self-empties *even at table* so that spiritual maturity will beckon to all who have ears to hear, eyes to see.

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[38] Ross, *Pillars of Flame*, 29.

ECOLOGY OF THE LEARNING ENVIRONMENT: CREATING THE CONTEXT FOR SPIRITUAL FORMATION

SHELLEY TREBESCH

Abstract

The learning environment is a potential space for transformation. As such, studying the dynamic system (ecology) comprised of facilitators (educators, leaders, pastors), learners (students, followers, congregants), and their relationship leads to potential effectiveness in spiritual formation. This article explores the contribution of neuroscience and transformative learning to that system and offers subsequent implications for environments that encourage spiritual formation.

Confessions of a Reluctant Teacher…

Suddenly, I had the impression that I was outside my body, looking down on the audience and myself while I presented.

While initially excited to speak at a Christian camp attended by students from all over the Rocky Mountain West, the mental obsessiveness and lurking anxiety about the presentation took their toll in the weeks leading up to the event. Rather than easing as I prepared, the anxiety became a monster and practically took over in the days before my presentations until I couldn't sleep and considered cancelling. I even prayed that I would get some death-bed disease, just for the week of the camp, so I couldn't travel to Colorado.

Yet my performance orientation prevailed, and I stood before, or rather above, the students and gave my talks. It was easier after the first one, but the harrowing experience left me dreading the possibility of future presentations, and I seriously considered leaving the ministry.

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Several years later, while in seminary, I made a commitment to understand and tackle my extreme anxiety about talking in front of large audiences. Processing in therapy helped but not enough. I dreaded the required communications and homiletics courses, as well as the preaching practicums, leaving them until the last two quarters of my M.Div.

Over time, a number of interventions transformed my experience of teaching and speaking. With hindsight and new learning from the field of neuroscience, I now recognize how the interventions enabled these transformations, and I offer this essay for others endeavoring to create transformative learning environments. Here is a summary of the interventions: One, I understood and addressed personally, with compassion, the roots of my anxiety and fear of failure. With this extreme unease, I wasn't able to be truly present, either to those in my audience or to myself. Two, an accepting, nonjudgmental friend, who took the same preaching courses, patiently coached the writing and delivery of my sermons. That friend and I constituted a new community in which I could learn more effectively and experience transformation. Three, I was introduced to a new way of thinking about teaching and learning: it was a conceptual paradigm shift that teaching was not really about me but about serving the learning of others. These three elements form the basic structure of an ecology of learning that was crucial to the type of transformative learning whereby my anxiety was lessened and I was empowered to teach more effectively.

This transformative learning ecology was merely the start of my journey to effective teaching. Because I still wanted to have a good reputation and be known for my speaking and teaching (I know, the arrogance! It's a long journey to be formed in Christ), I recognized the need to create classroom experiences that addressed all styles of learning—audio, visual, experiential, kinetic, etc. However, teaching was still really about me. The use of technology, the discussions, the fancy power points, the well-crafted lecture fed my need to be accepted and well-

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liked. But, I soon learned that pursuing gimmicks in the classroom would not necessarily lead to transformative learning and its reproducibility.

An experience in China helped me discover a paradigm for creating environments that kindle transformation. In 2005 I was asked to train Chinese professors who taught in a Master of Divinity program for pastors of "unregistered" churches in China. Their practice was to announce several weeks in advance that a class would be offered. Pastors in the region would then gather in staggered fashion in a designated apartment, where they would spend two weeks living together and listening to lectures and then return home. I did an informal needs assessment and learned that the classic M.Div. curriculum consisting of Western-enlightenment-informed systematic theology, church history, biblical studies, etc. delivered in days full of lectures and follow up assignments had little impact on the pastors' pastoral practices and negligible influence on their personal transformation and spiritual formation. They could memorize content, but many still misused authority and cheated in their business practices (most of these pastors are bi-vocational).

I then realized that learning did not happen because of what a teacher says, but because they create an environment for learning. This requires, in Paulo Freire's words, that the "professor" must die;[1] that is, effective educators are facilitators who create the context of learning. I initiated a quest to know and create a better learning environment.[2] To that purpose, this paper will highlight recent findings in neuroscience with their implications for transformative learning leading to spiritual formation. I recognize that neuroscience may not obviously signal the transformative dynamism leading

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[1] Referred to in Jane Vella, *Learning to Listen, Learning to Teach: The Power of Dialogue in Educating Adults,* Revised Edition (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2002), 20.

[2] I have chosen to use the phrase, "learning environment," rather than classroom since learning happens in many contexts besides a classroom.

to spiritual formation, or that neuroscience has been minimally applied to the interrelationship of humans and the learning environment. However, this article proposes that recent research in neuroscience offers profound implications for those who endeavor to create environments where transformation thrives. It is my assumption that we, as leaders (educators, pastors, elders, etc.), are the primary shapers of environments, both formal (university, seminary, Bible college, etc.) and informal (in the parish, congregation, apprenticeships, internships, etc.).[3] Therefore, we need to better understand ourselves and those we serve in order to create transformative spaces. New discoveries in neuroscience aid this understanding.

This essay argues that students must first experience contexts where spiritual formation happens, where transformation occurs, where the "ecology" invites spiritual formation. Then, when students take the roles of leaders, pastors, and educators, they are more likely to reproduce this ecology in future contexts.

Contributions of Applied Neuroscience to Understanding Learning Ecology

Ecology is "the study of the interrelationship of organisms and their environments;"[4] or for the purposes of this article, the study of the interrelationships of persons and their learning environment. Because teachers are primarily responsible for organizing the learning ecology, their leadership in the process is indeed significant. Overwhelming scientific evidence suggests that what "leaders do—specifically, exhibit empathy and become attuned to others' moods—literally affect both their own brain chemistry and that of their followers."[5]

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[3] Daniel Goleman, Richard Boyatzis, and Annie McKee, *Primal Leadership: Realizing the Power of Emotional Intelligence* (Boston: Harvard Business School Press, 2002), 6.

[4] http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/ecology (accessed March 27, 2013).

[5] Daniel Goleman and Richard Boyatzis, "Social Intelligence and the Biology of Leadership," *Harvard Business Review* (September 2008), 76.

The leader/follower dynamic is a system of conscious and subconscious interaction. Therefore, the leader, educator, facilitator, administrator, pastor and so on profoundly impact whether people thrive or wilt in any given organization, including the microcosm of the learning environment.[6]

Synthesizing the latest research in neurobiology, Daniel Goleman and his team present the rationale for this dynamic.[7] Evidence shows that people flourish, embrace transformation, and become their best in environments where there is "resonance—when leaders drive emotions positively."[8] Goleman labels this resonance "emotional intelligence." Likewise, there is "dissonance—when leaders drive emotions negatively, undermining the emotional foundations that let people shine."[9] This is due to our brain's functioning and more specifically, to how our limbic system (the emotional part of our brain, which includes the amygdala—the flight or fight response) operates. The limbic system is an "open-loop" system, which relies on external "connections with other people for our own emotional stability."[10] In fact,

> one person transmits signals that can alter hormone levels, cardiovascular function, sleep rhythms, and even immune function inside the body of another. Open-loop design means that other people can change our very physiology—and so our emotions.[11]

Approaching human development from the complementary discipline of positive psychology, Barbara Fredrickson characterizes human flourishing in this way: "to live within an optimal range of human functioning,

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[6] Daniel Goleman, Richard Boyatzis, and Annie McKee, *Primal Leadership: Realizing the Power of Emotional Intelligence* (Boston: Harvard Business School Press, 2002), 6.

[7] See *Emotional Intelligence*, *Primal Leadership: Realizing the Power of Emotional Intelligence*, and *Social Intelligence*.

[8] Goleman, Boyatzis, and McKee, 5.

[9] Goleman, Boyatzis, and McKee, 5.

[10] Goleman, Boyatzis, and McKee, 6.

[11] Goleman, Boyatzis, and McKee, 7.

one that connotes goodness, generativity, growth, and resilience." The term "languishing" refers contrastingly to "people who describe their lives as 'hollow' or 'empty.'" [12] Fredrickson notes the connection to positive emotions and particularly to generativity. Her research proposes that

> negative emotions function to narrow a person's momentary thought-action repertoire. They do so by calling to mind and body the time-tested, ancestrally adaptive actions represented by specific action tendencies….positive emotions prompt individuals to discard time-tested or automatic (everyday) behavioral scripts and to pursue novel, creative, and often unscripted paths of thought and action.[13]

She labels this phenomenon "the broaden-and-build theory."

Goleman's research leads to a similar insight: leaders' positive emotions inspire creativity, experimentation, and growth. This is because human beings, due to the mirroring neurons in our brains, have a tendency to take on what their limbic systems sense in another person. "Feeling good lubricates mental efficiency, making people better at understanding information…as well as more flexible in their thinking…more optimistic about their ability to achieve a goal, enhance creativity…."[14]

Neuroscience and Transformation, How We Change

Because of genetics and early formational social environment, some people are more naturally emotionally intelligent than others. However, because the limbic system is an open system in constant communication with others, and because our behavior creates new neural pathways, our brains can change and thus so can our

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[12] Barbara L. Fredrickson and Marcial F. Losada, "Positive Affect and the Complex Dynamics of Human Flourishing," *American Psychologist*, vol 60, No. 7 (Oct. 2005), 678.

[13] Barbara L. Fredrickson, "What Good Are Positive Emotions?" *Review of General Psychology*, vol 2, no. 3 (1998), 304.

[14] Goleman, Boyatzis, and McKee, 14.

emotional intelligence. "We are not necessarily prisoners of our genes and our early childhood experiences."[15]

Neuroscience reveals that from the time we are born, consistent, present relationships, especially with primary caregivers, form the neural connections our brains need for healthy, ongoing transformation. Due to mirroring neurons, our brains are predisposed to imitate those close to us. The plasticity of our brains enables ongoing change and transformation throughout our lives, and this most readily happens in the context of trusting relationships. This is why, some say, Alcoholics Anonymous is so effective in treating alcoholism. The brain is reformed through connection in trusting, nonjudgmental relationships.

Discoveries in neural plasticity and limbic transpersonal communication have profound implications for character development and spiritual formation.[16] Warren Brown and Brad Strawn connect spiritual formation to relationships in this way: "To flourish and to mature into persons of wisdom and Christian virtue, we need the shaping that comes with the best sorts of human relationships."[17]

Transformative Learning

Ultimately spiritual formation is transformative, yet what does it mean to create environments for spiritual formation? Transformative learning "is the process of effecting change in a frame of reference."[18] "Adults have…associations, concepts, values, feelings, conditioned responses" which are "frames of reference that define their life world."[19] Frames of reference "are

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[15] Goleman and Boyatzis, 80.

[16] Warren S. Brown and Brad D. Strawn, *The Physical Nature of the Christian Life: Neuroscience, Psychology, and the Church* (Cambridge: UK: Cambridge University Press, 2012), Kindle location 1304.

[17] Brown and Strawn, Kindle location 1618.

[18] Jack Mezirow, "Transformative Learning: Theory to Practice," in *New Directions for Adult and Continuing Education* no. 74 (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Publishers, Summer 1997), 5.

[19] Mezirow, 5.

the structures of assumptions through which we understand our experiences. They selectively shape and delimit expectations, perceptions, cognition, and feelings."[20] Frames of reference cause us to view people, values, actions, beliefs, etc. in certain ways. Our "frames" constitute the boundaries of our thinking.

Encountering difference or actions that do not fit invites a change in frame of reference or transformation. According to Jack Mezirow, transformational change happens when we encounter something beyond our experience (or something that does not make sense).[21] An encounter with anomaly initiates the transformative learning process.[22] Related to Habermas' "emancipatory" domain of learning,[23] transformative learning is a freedom-producing process whereby self-awareness leads to an understanding of how assumptions constrain the way we see and experience ourselves and the world, which in turn, leads to change and action based on the new understanding. Educators create the environment and activities that lead to self-awareness and awareness of others' assumptions. Of course, significant and sustained conversation is a foundational way that we learn about others and surface our own hidden assumptions. "In this

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[20] Mezirow, 5.

[21] Mezirow, 7.

[22] Andrew Kitchenham, "The Evolution of John Mezirow's Transformative Learning Theory," *Journal of Transformative Education*, vol 6, no. 2 (April 2008), 105. Mezirow's Ten Phases of Transformative Learning: 1) a disorienting dilemma, 2) a self-examination with feelings of guilt or shame, 3) a critical assessment of epistemic, sociocultural, or psychic assumptions, 4) recognition that one's discontent and the process of transformation are shared and that others have negotiated a similar change, 5) exploration of options for new roles, relationships, and actions, 6) planning a course of action, 7) acquisition of knowledge and skills for implementing one's plans, 8) provisional trying of new roles, 9) building of competence and self-confidence in new roles and relationships, and 10) a reintegration into one's life on the basis of conditions dictated by one's perspective.

[23] Kitchenham, 109. Mezirow was influenced by Habermas's three domains of learning: 1) technical: learning is rote, straightforward, and follows rules, 2) practical: addressing social norms, and 3) emancipatory: a more generalized and global understanding of assumptions. Habermas (1971).

sense, learning is a social process, and discourse becomes central to making meaning."[24] According to Mezirow,

> Effective discourse depends on how well the educator can create a situation in which those participating have full information; are free from coercion; have equal opportunity to assume the various roles of discourse (to advance beliefs, challenge, defend, explain, assess evidence, and judge arguments); become critically reflective of assumptions; are empathic and open to other perspectives; are willing to listen and to search for common ground or a synthesis of different points of view; and can make a tentative best judgment to guide action. These ideal conditions of discourse are also ideal conditions of adult learning and of education…[25]

It is critical to note at this point that transformative learning is emotional—the limbic system is highly engaged. It begins with disorientation, a threat, something that is not working, which elicits anger, fear, and shame, then proceeds to the point where the learner is open to engaging new paradigms—another potentially emotionally charged venture. Therefore, the educator must actively acknowledge feelings and encourage participants to dialogue about their feelings.[26] Obviously, this requires an environment where relationships and interconnectedness provide a safety net for the discomfort that often comes with tumultuous transformation. If there is no safety, the disorientation may engage the amygdala, and participants may resort to the typical defenses of "fight" or "flight."

The self-awareness and communal aspects of learning environments are where transformative learning intersects with neuroscience leading to spiritual formation. In fact, Taylor draws upon recent findings in

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[24] Mezirow, 10.

[25] Mezirow, 10.

[26] Edward W. Taylor, "Transformative Learning Theory," *New Directions for Adult and Continuing Education*, no. 119 (Fall 2008), 11.

neurobiology and reports brain imaging suggests that transformative learning (1) requires discomfort prior to discovery; (2) is rooted in student's experiences, needs, and interests; (3) is strengthened by emotive, sensory, and kinesthetic experiences; (4) appreciates differences in learning between males and females, and (5) demands that educators acquire an understanding of a unique discourse and knowledge base of neurobiological systems.[27]

Implications for Spiritual Formation

While many writers focus on the spiritual formation of individuals or the spiritual formation process that takes place in individuals, effective and lasting spiritual formation happens in community and through relationships. Relationships are critical because of the way our brains develop and change. Thus it is crucial for us to create learning environments where community is built. "The process of being known is the vessel in which our lives are kneaded and molded, lanced and sutured, confronted and comforted, bringing God's new creation closer to its fullness in preparation for the return of the King."[28]

Integration and Implications

I propose that if we desire spiritual formation and ultimately spiritual leadership for our students, congregants, mentees, etc., we must immerse ourselves in the study of interrelationships and the learning environment—what I have loosely labeled "ecology." Neuroscience informs this system and reveals ideal conditions for transformation

I began this essay with the story of my own pilgrimage as an "ecologist" of the learning environment, and I return to it now, as a means to integrate it with the major themes discussed above. I propose four themes for

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[27] Taylor, 8.

[28] Curt Thompson, *Anatomy of the Soul: Surprising Connections between Neuroscience and Spiritual Practices that Can Transform Your Life and Relationships* (Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale Momentum, 2010), Kindle location 504.

the synthesis of neuroscience, transformative learning, and spiritual formation.

One, transformation begins with an openness for initiating change. In my early years, I sensed a calling to ministry and particularly, leader development. Yet my anxiety in these settings was so extreme, I could not remain present and truly serve. If you like, my brain (limbic system) feared connection. Yet, as stated above, we are not "prisoners of our genes and our early childhood experiences."[29] Transformation occurs when an envisioned ideal translates into new behaviors, which in turn initiate and strengthen new neural pathways leading to more permanent change. With resolve and diligence, I was able to understand root causes of pain and make behavioral choices, which "rewired" my brain. In order to be present, we must explore reasons for our disconnect (pain, pride, fear, etc.) and seek, by God's grace and our inner work, to embrace transformation.

Two, those we serve mirror (for better or worse) our emotionality and spirituality, because our limbic systems connect. Others are profoundly influenced by our presence or non-presence. Therefore, we must seek to connect and offer transparency. Leaders' transparency and modeling sparks others' pursuit of transformation. Therefore, we must endeavor to create environments for sharing personal stories—successes, failures, learnings, etc., and this leads to the next theme, community.

Three, community is an essential context for progressive transformation. Therefore, leaders, pastors, and educators must create safe havens where trust can develop, which then accelerates the formation of new neural pathways and therefore transformation. As I received acceptance from others and dared to expose the aspects of my personality or aspirations I most feared, freedom followed. Life-producing connections replaced painful neural pathways. Informal settings, where humor, acceptance, commitment, and honest feedback are normal, aid the spiritual formation process.

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[29] Goleman and Boyatzis, 80.

Four, if those we serve experience this type of learning environment, they are more likely to create it in the contexts where they serve in the future. Our limbic systems thrive with connection. Our brains are designed for transformation in the context of community. Experiencing freedom-producing relationships invites replication in other contexts—the deepened neural pathways naturally facilitate similar processes in new settings.

For those leaders, whether pastors, elders, educators, or mentors, desirous of creating transformative contexts that facilitate spiritual formation, understanding interrelationships and the learning environment is critical. New discoveries in neuroscience and the discipline of transformative learning offer insights to support this "ecology."

Umunthu and the Spirituality of Leadership: Leadership Lessons from Malawi

Harvey C. Kwiyani

Abstract

In spite of all the problems that characterize the African continent, Africans have a sophisticated understanding of life and personhood. Malawians call this philosophy *umunthu*, being the equivalent of the much popular South African worldview of ubuntu. At the core, *umunthu* says that "I am because we are, and we are because I am." Thus, the person is because the person belongs in a spirit-mediated community (which includes all creation). Understanding life in this way has significant impact on how Malawians define leadership. In this essay, I focus on three aspects of leadership in Malawi: spirituality, communality, and generosity. The three cornerstones are useful for Christian leadership as well as civil leadership, not only in Malawi, but also in North America. Thus, the essay explores ways in which these cornerstones would relate to religious leadership in the West.

Introduction

The unprecedented growth of Christianity in Africa in the last quarter of the twentieth century is one of the most exciting stories in the world right now, especially coming from a continent whose name has become almost synonymous with bad news—poverty, diseases, corruption, among many problems facing Africa. The sudden jump in the population of Christians in Africa from 100 million to 500 million in the short period of the forty years between 1970 and 2010 is a phenomenon to reckon with for the academy, global church bodies, and other interested parties. The interests of this essay are confined to the area of leadership and its intention is to explore how Africa's understanding of personhood—

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umunthu—informs her understanding of leadership, and then how this "African leadership" could engage with missional Christian leadership in the West. Of course, Christian leadership is a very significant issue in African Christianity as the African church has had to develop leadership capacities quick enough to keep pace with the growing numbers of new converts and churches across the continent, and thereby, to enable the explosive growth to occur without the church bottlenecking itself. If the life of any movement rises and falls on its leadership, the growth of African Christianity suggests that there is something that the Christian leaders in Africa are doing that might actually speak to global Christians. In this light, I will attempt to reflect on what this African leadership could contribute to the global missional leadership conversation. Learning from my own people in Malawi, I will reflect on how *umunthu* has actually made available a huge number of leadership-capable converts that have led the Christian explosion in the country.

Umunthu and Christian Leadership

"Leadership lessons from Africa" sounds like the best way to start a conversation about how to derail civilization by means of political corruption, greed, coup d'états, and wars. In all honesty, why should we learn leadership from a continent that seems to have gotten everything wrong? Can a continent whose political leadership is largely characterized by greed and corruption—one that has seen more than 110 coup d'états in 50 years—truly teach leadership?[1] More often than I can count, I have had to answer the question: "If Africans understand leadership in ways that would help

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[1] Patrick McGowan, a professor of political science at Arizona State University in Tempe, says that in sub-Saharan Africa between 1956 and 2001, there were 80 successful coups, 108 failed coup attempts, and 139 reported coup plots. There have been 11 attempted or successful coups since then. See Patrick McGowan, "Coups and Conflict in West Africa," *Armed Forces and Society* vol 32, No. 1 (October 2005).

develop the world, why does Africa remain the least developed continent that continues to be ravaged by poverty and disease?" In many ways, this question sounds similar to Nathaniel's question in the first chapter of John, "Can anything good come out of Nazareth?" Figuratively, many Western Christian leaders have asked me, "Can anything good come out of Africa?" The answer to Nathaniel's question points to the Christ who actually grew up in Nazareth, and nevertheless, went on to change history as only the Son of God can. Similarly, in spite of the overwhelming problems that seem never to give Africa a break, God's work among Africans is a part of God's comprehensive message to the continent and to the rest of the world.[2] Indeed, many good things are coming out of Africa.

Umunthu

In Malawi, just like most African countries, the understanding of personhood in the cultural philosophy of *umunthu* is the center for the religious nature of the culture.[3] *Umunthu* provides the foundational philosophy through which the Malawian people view themselves and the world around them. *Umunthu*, which means 'personhood,' is an expansive philosophical, theological, and spiritual concept that actually puts human beings in a bonded community of life that includes God, spirits, society, and nature.[4] It describes a well-rounded

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[2] The factors behind the current situation of Africa's economy, politics, and development are complex, and are not within the interests of this paper. However, let it suffice here to say that many of those factors were shaped by slavery, colonialism, and are currently being enforced by globalization and neo-colonization.

[3] *Umunthu* means personhood. *Munthu* is person. Among other African peoples, the concept of *umunthu* is known by other names: *ubuntu* in Xhosa and Zulu, *utu* in Swahili, *obonto* in Kiisi, *nunhu* in Shona, *bunhu* in Tsonga, *numunhu* in Shangaan, *botho* in Sotho, etc.

[4] Harvey J. Sindima, "Community of Life: Ecological Theology in African Perspective,"in *Liberating Life* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1990). Also see John Zizioulas, *Being as Communion: Studies in Personhood and the Church*, Contemporary Greek Theologians Series, no. 4 (Crestwood, N.Y.: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1985).

philosophy of life in which to be a person—to have *umunthu*—is to be at peace with self, the community around, God, the spirits, and nature. It is the solid rock upon which the Malawian life, culture, and humanity are built. All normal-minded people would want to be appreciated as a *munthu* in life for to lack *umunthu* is to be a beast, which is what people who terrorize their communities such as thugs and murderers, are called.[5]

In South Africa, *umunthu* is translated to *ubuntu*, the popular philosophy which has been used extensively in the reconciliation process in post-apartheid Southern Africa. It embodies the Nguni proverb, "*ubuntu ngubuntu ngabantu,*" which translates to "a person is a person through other persons." At the root, it means, "I am because I belong, I am because we all are; you are because I am, and I am because you are." In this sense, *ubuntu* makes concrete the great communal values of solidarity, compassion, respect, human dignity, conformity to basic norms, and collective unity. Desmond Tutu's attempt at a definition of *ubuntu* says:

> A person with *ubuntu* is open and available to others, affirming of others, does not feel threatened that others are able and good, for he or she has a proper self-assurance that comes from knowing that he or she belongs in a greater whole and is diminished when others are humiliated or diminished, when others are tortured or oppressed, or treated as if they were less than who they are.[6]

As the foundational philosophy for the nation of Malawi, *umunthu* has been used to shape all spheres of life. It sustained communities long before colonization came to

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[5] For further reading on *umunthu*, see Harvey J. Sindima, "Bondedness, Moyo and Umunthu as the Elements of Achewa Spirituality: Organizing Logic and Principle of Life," *Ultimate Reality and Meaning*, vol 14, no. 1 (1991). Also, Gerard Chigona, *Umunthu Theology: Path of Integral Human Liberation Rooted in Jesus of Nazareth* (Balaka: Montfort, 2002). Also see Augustine C. Musopole, *Being Human in Africa: Toward an African Christian Anthropology* (New York: Peter Lang, 1994).

[6] Desmond Tutu, *No Future without Forgiveness*, 1st edition (New York, NY: Doubleday, 1999), 31.

Malawi. It continues to bring communities together even today, in the face of poverty, diseases, and famine. Its importance in Malawian culture is because it provides a wholesome, well-integrated system of support that takes care of all of life. *Umunthu* takes care of the spiritual and material needs of a community, while at the same time, protecting nature and honoring the ancestors. In times of famine, not only do people pray together, making sacrifices and invoking their ancestors, they also share generously the little they have. When there is death in the community, they all grieve together while making sure that the family at loss is well supplied for. This communality of life is a support system like no other. *Umunthu* is very expansive. We will here look at only three of its major aspects—those that have direct implications for leadership. These three are spirituality, communality, and generosity.

Spirituality

At the center of the *umunthu* philosophy is the idea of the divine bondedness of all life—god, the spirits, human beings, and nature.[7] To be a *munthu* is to find one's harmonious place in this web of bondedness. The bondedness itself revolves around a Supreme Being (god) that created the world and has sent countless spirits as messengers to take care of the world. In this way, the Supreme Being is connected to the world through the agency of the spirits in the spiritual world. The essence of this Supreme Being fills the entire universe. Spirits roaming in the spirit world include not only those created as spirits by the Creator but also those of the departed human beings. There are some good spirits that serve the Supreme Being, and then there are evil spirits who seek to sabotage the orderly bondedness of the world. The spiritual world is invisible, but the spirits can, and usually will, inhabit the material world. As such, in the *umunthu* worldview, the spirits break into the human/material world on a regular basis. The gap between the spirit

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[7] Sindima, "Bondedness," 5.

and the material worlds is very porous; most Africans believe that there is no gap at all. Consequently, both human beings and nature are part of this grand divine connectedness.

Fundamentally, Malawians believe that to be a person—to have *umunthu*, or to be a *munthu*—is to be one who lives in harmony with both the spiritual and the material aspects of this web of connectedness. Such a person is at one with one's own spirit and the spiritual realm that comprises the Creator and the spirits. That person is also in harmony with nature. A *munthu*, then, is one who is spiritually conscious at all times, careful not to disturb the equilibrium in the web of connectedness by making the spirits angry in any way. That person's spirituality is grounded in extensive rituals, habits, and practices that are carried out to maintain a sense of harmony with the spirits. When that harmony is breached, a *munthu* will make serious efforts to purge the community of the iniquity in order to restore the harmony. Even in the case of a death in the community, far-reaching rituals are carried out to "remove the bad spirits"—known in chiChewa as *kuchotsa mphepo/mizimu yoyipa*.

Following the wisdom of the ancestors, Malawians say that *munthu ndi mzimu* (a human being is a spirit). Among the aChewa, as Sindima has shown, the word for personhood is *umunthu* and is also used to mean *spirit*.[8] Among the aLhomwe, in addition to "spirit," *umunthu* can also be used interchangeably with *nthunzi* (vapor, breath). Lhomwe hermeneutics, therefore, believe that the spirit which God breathed into Adam at creation is what makes the human being to be a spirit being.[9] Sindima adds that, "*Mzimu* [human spirit] is the principle of life, the divine

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[8] Sindima, "Community of Life: Ecological Theology in African Perspective," 139-41.
[9] Gen 2:7 (NRSV).

element in people, which is able to transcend death."[10] Indeed, this writer's Lhomwe upbringing believes that the spirit is the essence of the human being, the center of a person's gravity. Even though every human being has a spirit, those with *umunthu* have aligned their spirits to the good order of the spirit world. To have a spirit as a *munthu* then is to live in a reverent submission to the divine order. It is because of this that to have *umunthu* is a moral issue. One's submitted spirit is the connecting point to the spirit world. To be rebellious to this divine order is to lack *umunthu* and therefore, it is also to be an *animal* that is cut off from the bondedness of the universe. In a nutshell, the *munthu* is a very religious being who lives in a very religious world.

In a perfect world, everyone would have *umunthu* and the entire universe would be in eternal harmony. However, this is not the case. When the harmony is disturbed and the spirits are angry, misfortunes happen to people. The person with *umunthu* has the responsibility to sustain the harmony and to get it restored as soon as possible whenever breached. To be a person then is to pay constant attention to the spirit-world and to live in constant readiness to respond to the demands of the spirits, especially those of the ancestors who may communicate to people through dreams, visions, and trances, etc.

In addition to breaking down the barriers between the spirit-world and the material one, *umunthu* also bridges the gap between the priests and the lay. Generally, the official priest in any geographical area will serve as a guide and sanctified leader of the community which, in essence, is a community of priests. Major ceremonial rituals will demand such ordained priest's expertise. However, in the daily life of the community, every person that has *umunthu* has the responsibility as well as the mandate to religiously maintain the order in the bonded

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[10] Harvey J. Sindima, *Africa's Agenda: The Legacy of Liberalism and Colonialism in the Crisis of African Values*, Contributions in Afro-American and African Studies), (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1995), 146.

world. Usually, the older family members, especially the aged ones who are believed to be closer to joining the community of the departed, are responsible for making sure their families are living out this harmony. They will be expected, from time to time, to offer sacrifices for their family members…sacrifices that come in many forms like feeding orphans, helping the poor, and other rituals.

This understanding of the world places some serious spiritual demands on the leaders of the society. To be a leader here means that you are always engaged in the business of spiritual discernment. Further, it is to lead a community of discerners. In essence, the leader and his community are engaged in a constant discipline of spiritual discernment. This is necessary because, in most cases, communities live in a state of constant fear of angering the spirits or provoking the destructive attacks of the evil spirits. The leader joins the priests as mediators between their community and the spirits. They have to be exemplary in their conduct and sacrificial in their services. When all has been said and done, leadership in an *umunthu* community is a religious—or rather spiritual—exercise. To maintain the divine bondedness of life, the leader must be spiritual.

Communality

A popular Malawian proverb says *kalikokha nkanyama, ali awiri ndi anthu.* In English, it translates to: "anyone who is alone is not a person, but a beast, but those who are two are persons." A similar proverb further says that *kuyenda awiri simantha koma kudziwa*, meaning working/walking in pairs is not a sign of fear but wisdom. At its core, *umunthu* is a communal adventure. Individualism suggests a lack of personhood. Any person who is individualistic does not have *umunthu* for he or she does not know the meaning of living together as a people.[11] As such, individualism is scorned, rejected, and

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[11] Harvey J. Sindima, *Africa's Agenda: The Legacy of Liberalism and Colonialism in the Crisis of African Values*, 203.

shunned as poison that corrupts community. Individuality, however, is celebrated since it helps the individual to make their unique contribution to the community, and this makes communal life better. Individuality is encouraged as a building block for the community.

A person with *umunthu* must constantly seek to embody the belief that "I am because we are." True personhood entails a commitment to community in ways that prove a devoted "we are because I am." For one to prove *umunthu*, they must show a commitment to the betterment of the community through self-sacrificing service. They must put the welfare of the community well above their own. To believe that "I am because we are" is to say "without you, I do not exist as I am." Consequently, it says, "I need you to be the most authentic you can be for me to be me." Thus, without the community there are no individuals as they are, and without individuals, there is no community.

In this sense, then, personhood is a spiritual journey that one cannot embark on alone. One needs community to be fully the person they are. Musopole observed that among the people of northern Malawi, *umunthu* is established on two pillars of communal life: moral integrity and economic productivity.[12] To underscore the moral communal aspect of *umunthu*, Sindima observed that for Malawians, to have *umunthu* (now understood to be both personhood and spirituality) is to have *mtima wabwino* (a good heart)—making you a good neighbor. The spirit is housed in the heart (the seat of feeling and consciousness) whose identity it embodies after the heart stops beating.[13] To have *umunthu* is to be humane, hospitable, dependable, sociable, and many other

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[12] Augustine C. Musopole, "Religion, Spirituality, and Umunthu: A Perspective from Malawi," in *Agitated Mind of God*, eds. Dale T. Irvin and Akintunde E. Akinade (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1996).

[13] Sindima, *Africa's Agenda*, 148. Sindima, here, argues that in Malawian cultures, there is no distinct category for the soul. The human being is primarily a spirit and the body that houses it in the heart. Everything that is associated with the soul elsewhere belongs to the spirit in Malawian culture.

aspects that would make a person live favorably and in harmony with the society. Generally, when one's humanness is in question, it is common for people to ask, "*Ali ndi mzimu ameneyu?*" (Does he/she have a spirit/personhood/*umunthu*?)

This communal aspect of the *umunthu* life shapes everything to do with the people's religious lives. To be fully a *munthu* is to belong, but the community that you will belong to includes the spirits of the dead, etc. Generally, a *munthu* is not a *munthu* apart from his or her spirit (being in harmony with the spirit-world). In other words, to be fully human is both to belong and to be spiritual. Just like *umunthu* says that one's personhood is constituted through other persons, it appears that one's spirituality is also constituted through the spirituality of others. Any person with *umunthu* will pay attention to the spirituality of others as well as that of the community. Individual spirituality is never consummated if it does not end in communal spirituality. Together with the community, one worships the god of the community who is often the god of the ancestors. To breach this is to bring disorder to the web of connectedness that forms the foundation for the community's existence. Therefore, spirituality is never achieved in isolation. In a nutshell, *umunthu* spirituality needs company. As a matter of fact, the work required to maintain the harmony in the bondedness of life is communal. Indeed, the African understanding of the spirit-world demands a communal understanding of spirituality. Be it in ancestral veneration, or a simple pouring of libation to the *living-dead*, there is a way in which the community is represented. In most cases, the community will be present and actively involved.

For most Malawians, then, the entire spiritual experience is a public phenomenon. For instance, in the old days, when a soothsayer entered a village, life stopped for everyone in the village in order to hear what the ancestors had to say to the community. In those cultures where trances are a means of spiritual communication, when someone fell into a trance, the elders of the village

were brought together to listen and mediate for the entire community. Individual spirituality has its *telos*—purpose and goal—in communal spirituality. This spiritual orientation towards community is what makes the community itself a spiritual endeavor. To effectively engage in a religious activity, one needs company. The arrival of a newborn into the community, or the beginning of a new family by way of marriage are all junctures in the community's life when, through rituals, the spirit-world of the ancestors and the gods is invoked. In some cultures, a strict set of ritualistic religious activities will shape the initiation rites by which children are accepted into the society. A community broken, for instance, by death, has to go through rigorous ritual cleansing in order to restore itself. The existence of community itself is a spiritual process. The community itself is a spiritual phenomenon. Unity and connectedness, peace and harmony are the marks of a community that is in tune with its ancestors and the rest of the spirit-world. Ancestors will not hesitate to intervene through dreams, divination, etc., when such a harmony is destroyed.

Generosity

A more important characteristic of *umunthu* than spirituality and communality is generosity. Among the Malawian peoples, to have *umunthu* is to be a good-hearted, generous person who sacrificially gives of him or herself to help those that are in need in the community. The same is said to be true of *ubuntu* in South Africa. To be a *munthu* is to be one who cares deeply for the society. Naturally, when Malawians say '*wakuti ndi munthu*' (someone is a person/is a human being), they mean that the person is kind, sociable, caring, self-giving, generous, communal, and hospitable. Anyone who does not help others is not a *munthu*.

In this generosity, the community intends to humanize others through the acts of hospitality, inclusivity, and generosity, listening, etc. Generally, Malawians understand that to humanize others is to share

a person's *umunthu* with others, but this sharing is good for the giver just as much as it is good for the receiver. It humanizes the giver as well. Right from infancy, the Lhomwe people of whom I am part teach their children that you cannot humanize another without humanizing yourself. Consequently, we teach our children that if you seek to humanize yourself, you must humanize others. At the end of the day, all our humanity is intricately bonded together. When one member of the community is undergoing difficulties, the whole community suffers. When someone's humanity falls short, all our humanity falls short too. In a nutshell, the humanity of a community is seen in how well it takes care of its needy. It is because of this that the most common description of *ubuntu* is that of being hospitable to strangers in need. In describing *ubuntu*, Nelson Mandela paints the image of a community pleading with wayfaring strangers to stay the night for it is late and there are lions down the road that may attack them.[14] In offering this needed hospitality, the community is asserting its *ubuntu* while protecting the humanity of the strangers, for the humanity of the community depends also on the humanity of the strangers.

To exclude and to oppress a fellow human being is to dehumanize him or her, which in turn dehumanizes the oppressor. In this sense, the oppressor lacks *umunthu* and is therefore equivalent to a wild animal that does not have a moral compass. The baseline for this understanding of life is yet again spiritual. The involvement of the spiritual world in the material one opens up avenues whereby ancestors can appear in human form as strangers in need. When this happens, there is a possibility that they will appear needy, or hungry, or even sick. A person with *umunthu* will respond compassionately to such strangers, knowing it may be his or her ancestor. Even if it is not his or her ancestor

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[14] Mandela's video is accessible here:
http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ubuntu_%28philosophy%29 (accessed August 31, 2013).

appearing in human form, the stranger may have been sent by the ancestor. The writer of Hebrews may have had this in mind when he said, "Do not neglect to show hospitality to strangers, for by this some have entertained angels without knowing it" (Heb. 13:2).

A Little Caveat

Umunthu is life philosophy that has been the foundation of the African life for centuries. Its expansive geographical reach throughout sub-Saharan Africa suggests that it has been part of the lives of millions of people down the centuries. While it promises an orderly and harmonious connectedness in the world, it does not deal well with the problem of evil in the world. It understands the presence of evil spirits, but it assumes that ostracizing those without *umunthu* will solve the problem. As such, it leaves communities vulnerable to the cruelty of greedy and evil minds. While it does not think in terms of capitalism or communism, and it probably strikes a safe middle ground in between the two where there is a good sense of ownership but also expects an outrageous sense of generosity, it leaves people open for exploitation. Mzee Jomo Kenyatta's observation of the exploitation that took place when the colonialists took advantage of Africa's generosity is spot on. He said, "When the missionaries came to Africa, they had the Bible and we had the land. They said, "Let us pray." We closed our eyes. When we opened them we had the Bible and they had the land."[15] The political problems in Zimbabwe right now are a good example of this trust misplaced and abused.

As Africa develops to compete on the global scale, the spirit of *umunthu* finds itself in danger of being sidelined. The influence of outside philosophies like that of the Western Enlightenment's "I think therefore I am"

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[15] This citation is often attributed to Desmond Tutu. However, more reliable resources have suggested it belongs to Jomo Kenyatta who evidently showed similar sentiments in Jomo Kenyatta, *Facing Mount Kenya: The Tribal Life of the Gikuyu* (London: Secker and Warburg, 1938).

and its ensuing free market economy started to creep in and overshadow *umunthu*. Asian philosophies like *Soham* of India also began to make inroads into Africa. In globalism and capitalism, the innate greedy sinfulness that shapes the human heart was awakened among Africans when they learned of the goodness of having it all. The community ceased to be the ultimate source of security. Riches became the security. Generosity was conquered by the desire to accumulate and hoard as much as possible. The harmonious unity that marked community slowly gave way to vices like tribalism, nepotism, and every other divisive philosophy. The unforgettable civil wars of Mozambique, Angola, and Nigeria, the genocide of Rwanda, and the world-reaching greedy scams from Nigeria speak of the disappearance of *umunthu.*

There is an encouragement, however, in that for the past twenty years, there has been a renaissance of *umunthu* in Africa. Its impact in holding peace in post-apartheid South Africa brought awareness to the rest of the world that it is a powerful alternative tool for community building. In Malawi, the incumbent president has reclaimed it as the foundational guideline for her leadership. Malawians have spoken in chorus about the effects of having a uniting ideology on their national solidarity. Kenya has managed to move beyond the homophobic violence that marred the political elections of 2008. In addition, academic works on *ubuntu* are increasing in numbers significantly. As Africans become more confident in themselves and their cultural heritage, *umunthu* will continue to be a very valuable resource for progress.

The Implications of *Umunthu* on Religious Leadership

Umunthu is the most celebrated leadership philosophy in Africa. Without it, leaders lose their following and end up dictators. These leaders are leading from the heart, leading in communion with others for the betterment of the entire created world. I will for the remainder of this essay reflect on how *umunthu* may enrich our understanding of missional leadership.

Spiritual Leadership

Above everything, Christian leadership is spiritual leadership, and there is a world of difference between other types of leadership and spiritual leadership. While seminaries and business schools will help students to perfect their skills and sharpen their talents, leading congregations is more about maintaining continuous discernment of what the Spirit of God is saying and doing than it is about marketing and growing churches. To lead a spiritual community—a fellowship of the spirit—the leader must be spiritual. Social skills are helpful, but they are limited in that it is not possible to socialize someone into a spiritual community. To do this, spiritual disciplines like prayer and meditation are absolutely necessary. Without the connection with the Holy Spirit, churches may be reduced to self-help and social clubs. This, said in a context where pastors with MBAs are more marketable than those with Masters of Divinity, calls for a retrieving of a sound theology of the Spirit in theological education as well as in congregations.

The missional church network has done a great job of highlighting the need for strategic planning and organization. The momentous works of the missional leadership conversation have helped many congregations negotiate the adaptive changes that bombard them on all sides. The intentional listening to voices outside religious leadership conversations like those of Ronald Heifetz,[16] Richard Pascale,[17] and Margaret Wheatley[18] is also a step in the right direction. However, to stop at organizational leadership is to miss the spiritual nature of the kingdom

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[16] Ronald A. Heifetz, *Leadership without Easy Answers* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1994). Also Ronald A. Heifetz and Martin Linsky, *Leadership on the Line: Staying Alive through the Dangers of Leading* (Boston, MA: Harvard Business School Press, 2002).

[17] Richard T. Pascale, Mark Millemann, and Linda Gioja, *Surfing the Edge of Chaos: The Laws of Nature and the New Laws of Business* (New York: Crown Business, 2000).

[18] Margaret J. Wheatley, *Leadership and the New Science: Learning About Organization from an Orderly Universe* (San Francisco, CA: Berrett-Koehler, 1992).

of God. If anything, organizationally speaking, Jesus' strategy leaves a great deal to be desired. Starting a movement purposed to reach and change the entire world with a group of uneducated Galileans seems to spell disaster. However, in God's plans, these were the people who would usher in the work of the Spirit in the founding of the church, but they would only be ready after three and half years of learning to hear from the Spirit from Jesus.

Young Christian leaders in Malawi are usually taught that the art of organizing the church is effective if only it puts into practice something that has already been attended to spiritually. In other words, there are spiritual things—which comprise most of the church's life—that organizing and strategizing will not fix. The work of the Spirit has to be made concrete by leaders taking good biblically-informed, communally-discerned strategic actions. Both organizing and strategizing are important, but they are insufficient on their own. In the same way, spirituality alone will not run a church. On the one hand, praying may build a spiritual community that may eventually organize itself into a church, but on the other hand, organizing may form a social group that may find it hard to transform itself into a spiritual community.

When young boys and girls in Malawi go through their initiation rites as they reach puberty, the community leaders begin to pass on to them the habits and practices needed to attend to the spirit in ways that are edifying to the community. Before they reach teenage, they need to learn to recognize when the spirits are trying to communicate something to the community, and how to respond to the gentle nudges of the spirit world. Men and women learn how to offer sacrifices, pour libations, and invoke the ancestors at a very young age even though they may spend an entire lifetime watching the elders do it. In a community where attending to the spirit is a matter of life and death, this ability to decode the spiritual world is a must-have tool for leaders. This applies especially to Christian leaders whose work depends on listening and attending to the work of the

Holy Spirit through and among God's people in the world. Most Malawian pastors would not trust into a leadership position anyone who has not learned to communicate with the Spirit of God even if he or she had the best theological education. Ministry training is mostly done by apprenticeship simply because through the mentoring process, young leaders learn to hear what the Spirit is saying to the church. In such mentoring relationships, J. Oswald Sanders' *Spiritual Leadership* was required reading for many young leaders.[19]

Communal Leadership

When I grew up watching the community leaders in my village, *umunthu* taught me that good leadership is always communal leadership. Leaders with *umunthu* realize that they cannot be good leaders in isolation. The principle of "I am because we are" comes into play here. No leader can ever have it all by himself/herself. Important decisions that have repercussions in communities need to be communally discerned and agreed upon. For this reason, in Malawi, every chief has a team of *nduna*—advisors or counselors who have to be present at every deliberation of the community's affairs. Above all else, these *ndunas* are first and foremost co-leaders with the chief such that the chief is more like the first among equals with the *ndunas*. These counselors serve two purposes: (1) to make sure that the welfare of the community (which includes the harmonious connectedness with the spirit-world) is primary to the leader's vision, and (2) to take some pressure off the leader so the leader can remain healthy. Wise leaders in the context of *umunthu* are those who surround themselves with good co-leaders.

In the context of a congregation, *umunthu* leadership will also be always communal. The pastor is not a CEO in any way, and the team of advisers is not in any way similar to the church council or board. Both the chief and

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[19] J. Oswald Sanders, *Spiritual Leadership: Principles of Excellence for Every Believer*, Updated Edition (Chicago, IL: Moody Publishers, 2007).

the advisers have no power apart from that given to them by the people. *Umunthu* leadership often manages to break away from power, and is therefore able to lead the community from within. In many cases, *umunthu* leaders guide from behind the community. They are oftentimes invisible. The help the leaders receive from their advisers usually means they are more facilitators of conversations than directors. If anything, the leader's leadership is only possible because of the team of people that he or she works with, including the entire community.

Communal leadership goes against the individualistic leadership styles that have corrupted the congregational landscape of North America. As I have visited a considerable number of congregations in the past six years, I have become convinced that the individualism that is rampant in American culture also shapes the way most Christian leaders do their work. Business type entrepreneurial leadership styles driven by visions of grandeur of excellent church buildings and thousands of members have caused countless pastors to think of other pastors as competitors rather than coworkers in the field of God. Congregational leaders are bound to be just as territorial about their church as WalMart. With *umunthu*, the bondedness of the universe and submission to the overarching spirit-world would force leaders to recognize that the field is much bigger than they can handle and also that to maintain the harmony in the universe, there is need for them to respect one another and work together. If anything, they need to realize that they need one another for them to even be who they are. One pastor needs another pastor to help them be the pastor he or she is supposed to be. "I am a pastor because we are pastors." In the same way, congregations need other congregations if they are to be who God called them to be. There is no need for congregations to fight for members even to the driving of other congregations out of business. After all, the primary goal of *umunthu* leadership is to maintain the harmony in the bonded world of the spirits, society, and nature.

Humanizing Missional Leadership

In essence, *missio Dei* is God humanizing us all in God's Son. The Triune God is the Great *Munthu*,[20] who came to earth in the Person of the Son, Jesus Christ, to restore human beings to their full humanity—personhood, *umunthu*—and give them life in abundance. This is divine generosity at its best…for God so loved the world. The Pauline corpus suggests that the culmination of this humanizing begins with regeneration whereby God generously gives the Spirit (breath, *ruach*,) of God to bring human spirits to life (Gen 2:7).[21] The apostle Paul testifies to this when he said, "We were once dead in our sins…but God made us alive together with Christ" (Eph. 2:1-7, my paraphrase). Peter adds that, "You were once not a people, but now you are the people of God" (1 Peter 2:10, NIV). In this sense, the real *umunthu* begins with regeneration; the secular *umunthu* is only a shadow of the real *umunthu* that is made possible by Christ. When everyday acts of *umunthu* are undergirded by prayers and faith, they become divinely sanctified avenues through which God's Spirit draws people to God's humanizing love. Steven Sjogren's idea of the conspiracy of kindness could function this way.[22] After all, this is what *missio Dei* is about. This humanizing principle of *missio Dei* rightly extends the concept of salvation in Africa to include many ways in which life and personhood is shared. Many scholars have shown how salvation in Africa is more than the saving of the soul.[23] Salvation, even in its Greek translation, *sozo*, includes healing, deliverance, blessing, empowerment, liberation,

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[20] See James H. O. Kombo, *The Doctrine of God in African Christian Thought: The Holy Trinity, Theological Hermeneutics and the African Intellectual Culture* (Boston: Brill, 2007).

[21] Among some Malawians, the word *spirit* is also used interchangeably with *umunthu*.

[22] See Steve Sjogren, *Conspiracy of Kindness: A Refreshing New Approach to Sharing the Love of Jesus with Others* (Ann Arbor, MI: Vine Books, 2003).

[23] See J. Kwabena Asamoah-Gyadu, *African Charismatics: Current Developments within Independent Indigenous Pentecostalism in Ghana* (Boston: Brill, 2005).

feeding, clothing, etc.[24] All of these are humanizing acts through which people can have the abundant life that Christ gave to humankind. In all these acts, plus many others, Christian witness is made and the Gospel is shared, even sometimes without proclamation.

The implications of this interpretation of *umunthu* on *missio Dei* are many and huge. For instance, by suggesting the possibility—or likelihood—of God's mission manifesting itself in *umunthu*, mission easily becomes theo-centric while placing an emphasis on the priesthood of all believers. We all have something to offer that can humanize someone…even if it is a listening ear. Every Christian is a missionary and God can use them anywhere, not just in church. Every Christian has the possibility to engage with the Spirit and can therefore effectively minister as the Spirit grants grace. In the daily grind of *umunthu*, then, God can surprise the church by drawing people to the cross of Christ.

In addition, in *umunthu*, mission becomes holistic. It pays attention to the whole human being, not just the person's soul. *Missio Dei* gets rooted in healthy loving and humanizing relationships between Christians and the community in which they live. In this sense, *missio Dei* also leads to a Christian identification with the poor and the marginalized. *Umunthu's* generosity makes such situations as we hear about in Acts that there was none lacking in the early church possible. Christian ministers leading by *umunthu* will be generous people who are there for their flock. Extortion for the sake of enriching themselves is thievery—*patse patse nkulanda*—and a sign of lacking *umunthu*. As such, *missio Dei* understood through *umunthu* encourages good stewardship of God's creation; for to have *umunthu* is to be in harmony with God, the spirits, the community, and nature. The desertification of the land and the exploitation of the lake

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[24] For a more detailed treatment of the subject of salvation among African Christians, see ibid. For further reading, see Veli-Matti Kärkkäinen, *Holy Spirit and Salvation: The Sources of Christian Theology*, 1st Edition (Louisville, KY.: Westminster John Knox, 2010), 399-416.

are contrary to *umunthu*, and therefore also contrary to *missio Dei*.

Conclusion

I have attempted here to think through missional leadership using a resource passed on to me by my elders in Malawi—*umunthu*. In doing so, I have tried to achieve two things. First, I have tried to contextualize missional leadership for a Malawian audience that would naturally use *umunthu* as a starting point for conversations on mission and leadership. Second, I sought to widen the missional leadership conversation to include resources from Africa. My hope is that, in doing so, I may convince some that a multi-perspectival approach to theology that includes resources outside one's theological heritage can be enriching. Indeed, *umunthu* can enrich missional leadership.

A Hermeneutic of Appreciation:
Cultivating Encounters of Spiritual Experience within Congregational Ministry
David Forney and Stuart Higginbotham

Abstract

In this article, we note the decline of membership within mainline Protestant denominations, and we propose that this decline—commonly experienced as a crisis—can also serve as a fertile ground for new opportunities for reflection and spiritual formation. We examine ways in which religious leaders can intentionally engage anyone seeking to deepen understandings of their experiences with God. We are especially interested in discussing Raimon Panikkar's and Hans Georg Gadamer's theological and philosophical frameworks as a means of encouraging religious leaders to engage the "spiritual but not religious" population in experiential and participatory ways rather than didactically and authoritatively. To illustrate such encounters, we also reflect on "The Obedire Project: A Resource for Contemplative Evangelism" as a case study of one reframing of ministry and parish spiritual formation.

Introduction

In the fall of 2012, the Pew Forum on Religion and Public Life released an updated study on American participation in Christianity.[1] Given the findings, the study received significant press coverage. As senior researcher Gregory Smith said, "We really haven't seen

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[1] Cary Funk and Greg Smith, "'Nones' on the Rise: One-in-Five Adults Have No Religious Affiliation," Pew Forum on Religion & Public Life, www.pewforum.org (accessed October 2012).

anything like this before. Even when the baby boomers came of age in the early '70s, they were half as likely to be unaffiliated as compared with young people today." Over the past forty years, the Protestant church has declined from claiming two-thirds of the American population to under half in 2012. Furthermore, this decline is not just among liberal, mainline Protestant denominations, but it is also among conservative evangelicals. What we have seen, according to Smith, is that instead of switching churches, people are simply not identifying with any religion. Nearly one in five Americans says they are atheist, agnostic, or "nothing in particular," or "Nones," as they are being labeled.[2] More alarming is that this change is currently accelerating, with the rate of change increasing about fourfold. Forty years ago, 7 percent of American adults said they had no religious affiliation. Then, five years ago, this statistic grew to 15 percent (about a quarter percent change annually). In the summer of 2012, when the current study was conducted, it was 20 percent (a full one percent change annually). The Nones are the second largest grouping in the survey, just below Roman Catholics, who make up about 22 percent of the population.

So what is going on? The report offers four theories to explain these changes. The first theory is "Political Backlash," arguing that young adults "have turned away from organized religion because they perceive it as deeply entangled with conservative politics and do not want to have any association with it."[3] The second theory is "Delays in Marriage," where adults under 30 who are married are more likely to have a religious affiliation than are unmarried people.[4] The third theory is "Broad Social Disengagement," or what Putnam calls "bowling alone."

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[2] Funk and Smith, 9.

[3] Funk and Smith, 29. The report cites Michael Hout and Claude S. Fischer, "Why More Americans Have No Religious Preference: Politics and Generations," *American Sociological Review,* vol 67 (2002), 165-190; and Robert D. Putnam and David E. Campbell, *American Grace: How Religion Divides and Unites Us* (New York, NY: Simon & Schuster, 2010), 120-121.

[4] Funk and Smith, 30.

This theory points to the trend away from social and community involvement, where "religiously unaffiliated Americans are less inclined than Americans as a whole to feel that it is very important to belong to 'a community of people who share your values and beliefs.'"[5] The final theory explored by the Pew study is "Secularization," where the United States is following the trend seen in many economically developed countries, like Australia, Canada, and some in Europe.[6] However, the Pew report found that even among Nones, few qualified as purely secular. Interestingly, two-thirds say they still believe in God, and one-fifth say they pray every day. It is for this majority of Nones, who are seemingly available to God, that we believe a more experiential engagement about faith is fitting.

Undoubtedly, the complexity surrounding the U.S. decline in church affiliation has many interrelated variables. For the purpose of this article, the Pew study offers the basic context for the Nones whom we believe would benefit from clergy who adopt a hermeneutic of appreciation.[7] This hermeneutic of appreciation is an intentional way to foster encounters among people rather

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[5] Funk and Smith, 31.

[6] The Pew study cites for this argument Pippa Norris and Ronald Inglehart, *Sacred and Secular: Religion and Politics Worldwide* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2004), who argue that "Societies where people's daily lives are shaped by the threat of poverty, disease and premature death remain as religious today as centuries earlier. These same societies are also experiencing rapid population growth. In rich nations, by contrast, the evidence demonstrates that secularization has been proceeding since at least the mid-twentieth century (and probably earlier) – but at the same time fertility rates have fallen sharply, so that in recent years population growth has stagnated and their total population is starting to shrink. The result of these combined trends is that *rich societies are becoming more secular but the world as a whole is becoming more religious,*" p. 216-217.

[7] While we specifically note "clergy" here, we also recognize that there are additional external authorities and doctrinal traditions and institutional structures that can demand an external validation in the model of "clergy expert." We also recognize that there are many religious leaders who are not clergy but who would equally benefit from a hermeneutic of appreciation.

than ultimately relying on the clergy to *validate* divine encounters (as experts about God).

We propose that religious leaders cultivate spaces that embrace multiple viewpoints—including those who hold deep questions and suspicion. Such a cultivation of encounters, exercises in a risk-filled faithfulness, enriches the entire spiritual community and empowers individuals to further their discipleship and spiritual growth. We have found two twentieth-century thinkers to be helpful in providing a theological image: Raimon Panikkar's "windows," and a philosophical image, Hans Gadamer's "fusion of horizons."

Raimon Panikkar

Raimon Panikkar died in 2010 at the age of 91. He was a renowned theologian whose father was an Indian Hindu and whose mother was Catalan Catholic. Thus, he grew up steeped in two markedly different faith perspectives, each with its own language to describe God and the way humans and creation encounter God—and, significantly, are encountered by *it*. His writings show that he wrestled his entire life with the question of how we grapple with what we term "an experience of God."[8]

Panikkar's work centers on the question of how we can engage in the "living tradition,"[9] a space that takes seriously the spiritual dynamics of human life. Panikkar's work challenges us to return, again and again, to the personal dimension of faith. For far too long, Panikkar argues, we have practiced theology, with the spiritual dynamic in our lives, as though it were a static object—a tendency of engagement that Panikkar terms *Christological* (*Christos* for Christ and *logia* pertaining to "a study of").

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[8] Panikkar's books and articles are myriad. The two principle texts we have used are *Christophany: The Fullness of Man* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 2004) and *The Experience of God: Icons of the Mystery* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2006). Panikkar is known for his groundbreaking work on inter-religious dialogue, specifically bringing in images and terms from Hinduism and Buddhism to illuminate Christian understandings. Many of Panikkar's works are in his native Spanish, but several are translated.

[9] Raimon Panikkar, *The Experience of God,* 27.

This objective mode of engagement can leave us unchanged because it, by definition, attempts to hold God at arm's length. In this way, religious studies begin to look like the natural sciences, with its specimens. Panikkar, though, argues that our engagement with God is not only something to be critically thought about but also something to be fully experienced. This engagement is his perspective of *Christophany* (*phaneo* pertaining to "a manifestation or a revelation"). Panikkar commends us to remember that "theology is not archaeology," but a fully lived experience.[10] Panikkar's Christophanic view encourages participation of the whole person, which means that each person's encounter is wonderfully unique. Each of us is a singular being who encounters God and others, in effect, to see what particular meaning she can glean from her circumstances.[11] It is a view that engages both the past and the contexts of the present, a perspective that embraces both the *fides quarens intellectum* (faith seeking understanding)[12] and the *intellectus fidei* (a critical engagement with the faith).[13]

Panikkar's Window Image

For Panikkar, a central question is how we dialogue with one another, while holding our different faith perspectives and experiences. To illustrate this dialogue, Panikkar uses the image of a window to highlight the importance of both self-awareness and respectful discourse. Panikkar describes our perspectives metaphorically as seeing through a window. And what

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[10] Panikkar, 27.

[11] Panikkar, 37. Here Panikkar offers a helpful image: 'Divinity is precisely that immanence-transcendence that is inscribed in the heart of every being."

[12] See St. Anselm of Canterbury.

[13] Raimon Panikkar, *Christophany,* 11. Here it may be meaningful to clarify that Panikkar is not arguing that such a *Christophanic* orientation completely eradicates all of the formative work of *Christological* endeavors or perspectives. Instead, Panikkar lays out, in detail, the ways in which such a *Christophanic* orientation grounds an individual in a more experiential framework that engages with the whole breadth and depth of spiritual experience. *Christological* endeavors indeed do have their value and are necessary.

each of us sees through our own window is a different view than our neighbor's. We cannot say that we are unable to see through our own window, and our neighbor cannot deny what he sees through his window. Further, we realize that we do not see the whole world when we acknowledge our own limited, albeit authentic, perspective on reality through our respective lenses.[14] The only faithful theological practice in this regard, then, for Panikkar is dialogue.[15] Dialogue happens when two (or more) persons share their perspectives of spiritual experiences in a space that is encouraging, empowering, and receptive. The degree of *receptivity* experienced by those engaging in the experiential dialogue is vitally important.[16]

Experience as an Ontological "Touch"

It may be helpful at this juncture to offer a brief reflection on what we mean by *experience*. In our current congregational environment, especially within mainline denominations, there seems to be a certain understanding of *experience* that connotes overly-emotional states that can easily lead to a space that feels manipulative and coercive. We would be rightly suspicious of such a space of emotional manipulation that has as its goal a certain

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[14] For an experience of Panikkar describing this process himself, I encourage you to go online to www.raimon-panikkar.org. The website has a beautiful reflective video of Panikkar describing the engagement with the metaphor of windows.

[15] Panikkar takes very seriously the need to engage with individual persons in a way that respects their own contexts. In describing the engagement with spiritual experiences, he quotes St. Thomas Aquinas in his understanding of revelation: "Whatever is received is received according to the mode of the one who receives it" (*Experience of God,* 43).

[16] *Experience of God,* 28ff. For an insightful exposition on the importance of receptivity, we invite you to explore more of Panikkar's use of a formula to describe such a dialogue. Panikkar offers the formula E=e.m.i.r., with E meaning "Experience," "a combination of (e) being the personal, unique experience that is conveyed by our memory (m), modeled by our imagination (i), and conditioned by its reception (r) in the cultural context of our time." Hence, the receptivity we would argue, is absolutely key in any ecclesial framework that wishes to engage in such a dialogue on experiences.

forced *obedience* to any religious leader's or community's ambition. Following Panikkar's lead, we believe that each of us already has an experience of God with or without the structure of religion. In this way, experiencing God is ontological to human beings. Each of us has moments in our lives when we feel ourselves connected to the 'Something More,' a deeper reality or connectivity that fosters a sense of belonging and broadens our understanding of our identity.

Panikkar's framework for engaging with *experiences* is set in an appreciative lens, albeit one that understands fully that all experiences are rooted in our limited human faculties. In his effort to move from a "study about" God (*Christological*) toward a perspective of faith that engages the mystical dimension of human existence (*Christophanic*), he writes: "Experience [is] understood as the consciousness of an immediate presence and thus as the irreducible instance of any human activity whatsoever— although even here we require verification from all other human faculties."[17] In this way, experiences are not to be dismissed outright in exchange for some objective-focused endeavor that treats God and faith as something entirely removed from one's self. Persons are to be seriously engaged through actively listening to their experiences of God. Our experience is key in understanding why, how, where, and when we encounter God—and how we continue to seek a deeper understanding of ourselves and our interconnection with God. As Panikkar argues,

> At the basis of faith, therefore, is an experience of union. I do not wish to be misunderstood. The word "experience" is ambiguous and polysemic. In this instance it is not a question of a mere psychological experience, but of an ontological "touch," so to speak. It is an experience that transforms our entire being.[18]

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[17] Panikkar, *Christophany: The Fullness of Man* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2004), 11.
[18] Panikkar, 21.

We may now inquire as to the shape of a process of dialogical encounter that honors a person's respective "ontological touch," their own unique and informed experiences, within a particular church community, while simultaneously honoring the community and its faith tradition. We turn to a twentieth-century German philosopher, Hans Georg Gadamer, to help provide just such a lens with his fusion of horizons.[19]

Hans Gadamer's Fusion of Horizons

We are drawn to Gadamer's fusion of horizons because it explores the way we come to understand both individual and collective experiences.[20] Gadamer's hermeneutics have been applied in many disciplines, including literary studies, theology, legal studies, sociology, art history, and cultural studies with each critically examining why Gadamer's hermeneutical paradigm is useful in these fields.[21] Simply put, Gadamer changed the course of continental philosophy in *Truth and Method* by entering into the philosophic dialogue the historical notion of hermeneutics in a groundbreaking way. "While Gadamer was carrying on the tradition of hermeneutics set forth by Schleiermacher (biblical studies), by Dilthey (historical studies), and by Heidegger (ontological studies), his contribution to philosophic hermeneutics was ground-breaking."[22] Gadamer broke with the rationalists, who were striving for a theoretical understanding of human nature, and embraced a hermeneutical understanding of "other." This hermeneutical process for Gadamer allows us to understand how it is possible to know "*the genuinely 'other' despite 'my own' convictions and opinions*; that is to say, how it

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[19] Hans G. Gadamer, *Truth and Method,* trans. G. Barden and J. Cumming (New York: Seabury Press, 1975).

[20] The rationale for choosing Gadamer's hermeneutics is two-fold. First, Gadamer's schema of the fusion of horizon connects with our weekly practice of biblical exegesis and, second, his hermeneutics focuses on the ways in which we engage the other.

[21] H. J. Silverman, *Gadamer and Hermeneutics* (New York: Routledge, 1991).

[22] Silverman, 18.

is possible to know them *both*."[23] For this article, the "other" incorporates the None, the member of the congregation, the religious leader and, even, the faith tradition itself. It is a dialogue of this group that we believe is a vital to hear God's mission in a particular time and place.

Hermeneutics Defined

The history of hermeneutics started long before Gadamer's landmark work, *Truth and Method*. Hermeneutics is classically defined as the interpretation that is reserved for the priesthood and lawyers. The theologian's method of interpreting the biblical text and the judge's method of interpreting the law code were learned in their respective schools. It is this process of understanding, or meaning-making, that is at the heart of Gadamer's hermeneutics.[24] With the widespread usage of hermeneutics in various fields of research today, however, the term itself has become convoluted.[25] Hermeneutics for us is a family of concerns that has at least these three critical perspectives:

(1) The resistance to positivism that posits that *understanding* can only take place when we objectively examine a phenomenon; therefore, the observer is

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[23] Hans G. Gadamer in *Interpretive Social Science: A Reader*, eds. Paul Rabinow and William Sullivan (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1979), 159.

[24] The Greek god Hermes served both as messenger and patron for the other gods. His deliverance of divine messages (understanding) would sometimes not be the whole truth and nothing but the truth, since Hermes was also the patron god of cunning and theft. Therefore, it is seems rather appropriate that this method of interpretation be named after such a god that might not disclose all there is to be known.

[25] As Wachterhauser has noted, hermeneutics is "now used in so many different contexts with so many different meanings that it no longer has univocal meaning. This is probably no accident, for hermeneutics represents not so much a highly honed, well-established theory of understanding or a long-standing, well-defined tradition of philosophy as it does a family of concerns and critical perspectives that is just beginning to emerge as a program of thought and research. Brice R. Wachterhauser, ed., *Hermeneutics and Modern Philosophy* (Albany, NY: State University of New York, 1986), 5.

independent of what is studied. In this way, understanding is acontextual.[26]

(2) The resistance to relativism, which holds as its basic conviction that "there is no substantive overarching framework or single metalanguage by which we can rationally adjudicate or univocally evaluate competing claims of alternative paradigms."[27]

(3) The critical perspective that "all human understanding is never 'without words' and never 'outside of time.'…In short, hermeneutical thinkers argue that language and history are always both conditions and limits of understanding."[28]

Gadamer tells us that understanding the meaning of a tradition inherently involves our own hermeneutical situation or horizon. Consequently, understanding is an interpretative exercise. "All understanding involves interpretation, and all interpretation involves understanding. (This claim scandalizes those who think that there is or can be 'objective understanding,' freed from all prejudices and not 'contaminated' by interpretation.)"[29] With understanding and interpretation, application is also tightly woven into the whole process for Gadamer. These three are internally related and function nonlinearly. Understanding involves interpretation, and interpretation involves application, and application informs understanding. This nonlinear play can start with any of the three. Furthermore, because these three are seamlessly woven together, we move into one without really ever leaving the other two. Finally, because we practice our understanding and interpretation in practical matters, to be told what to think and how to act by "experts" or the "anonymous authority" (i.e., the

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[26] For a more in depth discussion of positivism, and its related paradigms of interpretivism and constructivism, see David G. Forney, "Getting Our Bearings: A Schema for Three Ways of Knowing," *Journal of Religious Leadership,* vol 3, no. 1 (2004): 15–41.

[27] Richard J. Bernstein, *Beyond Objectivism and Relativism: Science, Hermeneutics, and Praxis* (Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1988), 8.

[28] Wachterhauser, 5-6.

[29] Bernstein, 138-139.

cleric, the creed, or the polity) is, in the extreme, a deification of office and role. And it is this deification of the expert (in whatever form it takes), that is especially pernicious to Gadamer.

> [This philosophical hermeneutics] corrects the peculiar falsehood of modern consciousness: the idolatry of scientific method and of the anonymous authority of the sciences and it vindicates again the noblest task of the citizen—decision-making according to one's own responsibility—instead of conceding that task to the expert. In this respect, hermeneutic philosophy is the heir of the older tradition of practical philosophy.[30]

While Gadamer is critiquing the scientific method and the scientist, we believe this deification of knowledge and method by the clergy has diminishing returns in the twenty-first century, especially with the "Nones."[31]

Fusion of Horizons Defined

So instead of the church's clergy, tradition, or governance being the touchstone of truth, we advocate Gadamer's "fusion of horizons," as a way of framing a dialogue of spiritual experiences where

> every finite present has its limitations. We define the concept of "situation" by saying that it represents a standpoint that limits the possibility of vision. Hence an essential part of the concept of situation is the concept of "horizon." The horizon is the range of vision that includes everything that can be seen from a particular vantage point.[32]

Our particular horizon is created by our pre-judgments, or prejudices, which are constituted (1) by the traditions

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[30] Hans G. Gadamer, "Hermeneutics and Social Sciences," *Cultural Hermeneutics*, 2 (1975): 316.

[31] The professionalization of the clergy was part of the general cultural trend with lawyers, doctors, professors, military over the past 150 years. The worst form of this professionalization, clericalism, is at cross purposes with Christ's permanent priesthood (Heb. 8:24) and our call to be a priesthood of all believers (1 Peter 2).

[32] Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, 269.

handed down to us, (2) by our own current understandings and social location (including our ethnicity, educational attainment, gender, socialization, economic standing, etc.), and (3) by our anticipation of what will be. The horizon that is created in any given moment, therefore, is open to both external and internal influences.

> In fact the horizon of the present is being continually formed, in that we have continually to test all our prejudices. An important part of this testing is the encounter with the past and the understanding of the tradition from which we come. Hence the horizon of the present cannot be formed without the past. There is no more an isolated horizon of the present than there are historical horizons. Understanding, rather, is always the fusion of these horizons which we imagine to exist by themselves.[33]

How, then, do we come to understand another's horizon?

Gadamer points to a fusion of horizons whereby one horizon is changed by the engagement with another horizon (be it an object like art, experiences like worship, or another person). Again, interpretation is understanding. This engagement is represented by the initial overlap that is created as the interpretive process takes place. "Gadamer wants to show how the tradition communicates its goods, passes on its wealth. He describes a process in which horizons are formed and reformed, in which they mutually enrich and expand one another."[34] For Gadamer, the medium of our horizons is linguistic. So engaging in dialogue with the other brings not only a new understanding of the other, but also of

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[33] Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, 273.
[34] John D. Caputo, *Radical Hermeneutics: Repetition, Deconstruction, and the Hermeneutic Project* (Indianapolis, IN: Indiana University Press, 1987), 108.

ourselves—"only through others do we gain true knowledge of ourselves."[35]

The Obedire Project: A Case Study

Taking the juxtaposition of these two powerful images, Gadamer's "fusion of horizons" and Panikkar's "window," we wonder how we might cultivate a space within a congregation that fosters a generative dialogue, or appreciative inquiry,[36] into the spiritual experiences of those who are seeking a deeper understanding/encounter with God within a particular community of faith. This is the critical task before us as we envision a new paradigm of ecclesial formation given the rise of the Nones who believe in God and pray daily.

Recent explorations at St. Benedict's Episcopal Church in Smyrna, Georgia, offer one pattern for the cultivation of an appreciative framework. St. Benedict's parish is a five year-old new church development in the Episcopal Diocese of Atlanta. Early on, the church development framework placed a strong emphasis on hospitality and membership development, with a keen eye toward the need for ongoing, intentional spiritual formation among the people who were coming to the parish from many varieties of spiritual and religious backgrounds. What we have found there hundreds of people who could be described as "unchurched" as well as "spiritual but not religious." Because of this context, we have had the opportunity to explore the intentional cultivation of spiritual formation paradigms. The Obedire Project has been our evolving framework for such a context.

Obedire is one particular program that both takes advantage of the particular None demographic and goes

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[35] Hans Gadamer in Richard J. Bernstein, *Beyond Objectivism and Relativism: Science, Hermeneutics, and Praxis* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1988), 143-144.

[36] Much more could be said pertaining directly to the specific technique of Appreciative Inquiry, but for the purposes of this particular article, we wish to focus on the broad theme of an appreciate space that fosters open inquiry and wondering among people who can be described as seekers.

well beyond a typical, didactic or lecture-based approach to curricular development; instead, it delves into the cultivation of an actual encounter of experiences by those who are new to the parish community. The word *Obedire* is the Latin root for our modern English word *obedience,* which has its origin in deep, attentive listening in relationship than a mere following of external rules and/or behavioral codes, or simply submitting to the external religious authority of the clergy. The deeper resonances of *obedience*, therefore, demand that we enter into such an appreciative and dialogical space—such as Panikkar and Gadamer both describe—and engage with one another in a way that both honors the experiences of individuals and the faith tradition thereby, fostering more holistic encounters of God within the community.

An Embodied Example of the Encounter Among Spiritual Experiences

In its application at St. Benedict's, all new visitors, seekers, and recent transfers are invited to participate in the cultivation of the space itself, using an intentionally developed *contemplative curriculum*.[37] A hallmark of the *Obedire* experience is that the conversations continue even after the typical confirmation or new member cycle is completed. Confirmation, Reception, or Reaffirmation[38] is not seen as the completion of a person's journey of faith. Hence, being baptized, confirmed, or received as a new member does not make one a *complete* Baptist,

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[37] For in-depth information on the Obedire Curriculum, go online to www.obedire.com. That website houses the parish discussions and classes that use Obedire in our Confirmation classes and at other times during the year.

[38] Here, you may very well insert whatever particular ecclesiological paradigm your denomination offers for a "mature affirmation of faith" at some point in the life of the individual person of faith. The basic argument here is how we view such rites of mature affirmation as the end product of that particular dimension of the journey of faith—within the church community and denomination—and how we struggle with the deeper issues of church attendance and engagement. How might we reframe the conversation to rest upon the deeper engagement?

Episcopalian, or Presbyterian. Far from it. Even after completing the *Obedire* curriculum and after being confirmed, the new members are invited back to continue the conversation—together as a community. The horizon, per Gadamer, continues to be formed and reformed, always deepening and expanding conversation partners. The class participants, Panikkar would say, continue to be enriched by the experiences and visions they share from the perspectives found in their respective windows. There is an intentionality that empowers each person to claim her own spiritual journey and her own identity as a seeker who is beloved by God. Throughout this faith development, we all (religious leader, member, and seeker alike) grow in our awareness, identity, and appreciation of one another as children of God.

One example of the more contemplative-oriented curriculum of *Obedire* may elucidate the particular perspective it offers. When we are discussing Church History, a subject that too often claims to be an objective study of past events that helped shape our understanding of how Christianity *is* the way it *is* today, we try to take an approach that appreciates Panikkar's "ontological touch."[39] Class participants are first encouraged to look at their own lives and plot on a time line those events in their life which held deep spiritual significance for them. Questions that help frame the conversation are "How did God feel especially real to you at that moment?" and "How did God feel more distant to you at that time in your life?" It is not about imposing a preconceived idea that "a strong experience of God must mean you are closer to God." Instead, the exercise deliberately invites class members to delve into their own experiences, their own encounters with that "something More" that continues to intrigue them. They name their own *windows*; they name their own experiences, *touches* of God from their particular *horizons* and, in doing so, gain mutual understanding of the ways God has moved in their history and in the present. Such an engagement with their

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[39] Panikkar, *Christophany,* 21.

own spiritual experiences leads them directly into a new appreciation of Church History, namely, by realizing that the saints and figures we study *about* did themselves have spiritual experiences that they struggled to understand in their own time—and which resonated with the wider community. In this way, the individual experiences of persons within the *Obedire* program are understood as being interconnected with Church History in a much more profound manner.

This being said, what might be some of the critiques to such an approach? An Episcopal colleague in Ohio recently introduced *Obedire* to diocesan officials there. While she shared that they were intrigued at the appreciative approach and the emphasis on listening and experiential dialogue, one clergy person thought that such an approach might be too intrusive to folks who were new to the faith community. What *Obedire* seeks to show, among other things, is that such perceptions of hermeneutical approaches (i.e., feeling that such conversations are intrusive) are actually grounded in our own lack of experience (and comfort?). Or, in Panikkar's parlance, we believe a *Christophanic* framework rather than a *Christological* one is more authentic and, actually, more sought-after. God is already at work in everyone's life before, during, and after church. Therefore, all we are doing with an appreciative hermeneutic is to make a space to listen. Perhaps, though, we are hesitant to engage in just such a space because it risks that our own horizons might be changed by the encounter.

Nevertheless, *Obedire* explicitly supports the notion that every individual's experience of God has intrinsic worth and significance, both for them and for the wider community in which they are a part. It is a framework that encourages the notion of the church community as a place of spiritual inquiry, nurture, and encouragement, rather than a place solely for objective instruction. As Tilden Edwards points out, we would do well to remember that the root of the word "seminary," to

continue the emphasis on education, "derives from the Latin word for 'seed plot,' or 'nursery.'"[40] The same deep meaning can be easily applied to the congregation's education and spiritual formation initiatives. *Obedire* seeks to emphasize such a manner of discipleship, holding up the value of each individual seeker's capability to engage his or her faith in a way that honors the Spirit's movement.

> Openness to what might be given in the living moment might threaten the coherence of my talk, and the mind loves orderly, securing coherence, even though what we know of the Spirit's ways should lead us to appreciate potentially disruptive surprises.[41]

Conclusion

For an event at Shalem Institute for Spiritual Formation, renowned spiritual writer and former warden of Iona Abbey, J. Philip Newell, wrote,

> The great spiritual quest of the Western world today is not about belief in God. It is about the experience of God. It is about seeking to encounter Sacredness now—in the earth, in our relationships with one another, and in the simple disciplines of contemplative practice.[42]

Such an engagement in experience and encounter may not be the usual route taken in congregational approaches to spiritual formation and Christian education. Many of our experiences of these spaces have been more in the line of "here are crucial things you need to know in order to be communicant in good standing or a faithful church member." The usual pattern followed by congregations is to learn about a topic of faith or religious practice, either

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[40] Tilden Edwards, *Valuing and Nurturing a Mind-in-Heart Way: The Promise of a Contemplatively-Oriented Seminary* (The Shalem Institute for Spiritual Formation, 2010), 3.

[41] Edwards, 16.

[42] For more information on the Shalem Institute, explore online at www.shalem.org.

by reading a book or by coming to hear the religious leader share his or her thoughts. Such an approach is didactic in nature, emphasizing a certain objectivity and distance between *the person* and *proper understandings of God.*

By reflecting on Gadamer's philosophical hermeneutics and Panikkar's theological image and concept of an ontological touch, we have laid out a possible framework for experiential dialogue that honors and nurtures the spiritual journeys of members and seekers within congregations. We do believe that congregations suffer when the only meaningful *expert* on God in the room is the pastor. This clericalism does not honor God's mission in and through the lives of the congregants or visitors but, rather, serves to privilege a particular theological heritage and the particular pastor's experience of God.

Looking at the complexities of our current situation—and the struggles our churches face—might the question shift from one of "how *can* we offer such a space for the cultivation of a deeper appreciation for the spiritual experiences of church members" to "how *will* we embrace our vulnerability and vocation as we offer such a space that fosters rich dialogue in the context of the complex tradition of the church?" Such a space is as life-giving as it is risk-taking. Furthermore, it is a space that takes seriously a trust that God is at work within the life of each and every person and strives to understand together that *something More* that continues to draw all people closer to their true identity in God.

Such a perspective of engagement asks the congregation to explore how it can engage directly in this tension, moving away from a strict protectionist stance reinforcing clericalism to fruitful dialogue around *first order spiritual experience.* There are risks, to be sure, and there is a level of vulnerability entailed. It is a vulnerable and rich space, indeed, when we can cultivate such a space that fosters a deep, honoring relationship between individuals within a community. When we trust in the Spirit's presence, we can share of our own *touches* of God, through an honest sharing of our perspectives in our own

windows. We can be enriched by an encounter of *horizons* that challenges us to delve more intentionally in the discernment of God's Mission in our lives. We can experience how such a Spirit-prompted space of dynamic, rich, and challenging encounters in our congregations can awaken us to a much more complex and honoring vision of Christian unity. In keeping with this perspective of an experiential dialogue with the tradition, perhaps the Prophet Isaiah's words offer us as religious leaders a space to have our horizons broadened.

The former things I declared long ago,
*   they went out from my mouth and I made them known;*
*   then suddenly I did them and they came to pass.*
Because I know that you are obstinate,
*   and your neck is an iron sinew*
*   and your forehead brass,*
I declared them to you from long ago,
*   before they came to pass I announced them to you,*
*   so that you would not say, "My idol did them,*
*   my carved image and my cast image commanded them."*
You have heard; now see all this;
*   and will you not declare it?*
From this time forward I make you hear new things,
*   hidden things that you have not known.*
They are created now, not long ago;
*   before today you have never heard of them,*
*   so that you could not say, "I already knew them."*
                                        Isaiah 48:3-7

Pastoral Spirituality in Everyday Life, in Ministry, and Beyond: Three Locations for a Pastoral Spirituality

Tone Strangleland Kaufman

Abstract

Based on an empirical study of clergy spirituality in the Church of Norway (CofN), this essay identifies three *locations* for pastoral spirituality: *everyday life, ministry,* and spiritual practices that must be sought more intentionally located on *the margins of daily life*. The empirical findings of my study suggest that the interviewed pastors attend to their relationship with God in the midst of the messiness of ordinary life, both privately and professionally. I therefore argue that Dreyer's (1994) and Miller-McLemore's (2007) concern about a spirituality of everyday life (primarily directed towards lay people) is also highly relevant for clergy as well as an asset to their ministry. Thus, a spirituality of everyday life is a significant, yet rarely noticed, source for pastoral ministry and for religious leaders. Moreover, the three locations for a pastoral spirituality are analytical distinctions that help see and acknowledge each location. Yet, they should not be seen in opposition to one another, but rather as mutually enriching.

Introduction

Are pastors bad at praying, and what counts as "real pastoral spirituality"?

- "I am bad at praying!"
- "I am not as spiritual as the previous pastor!"
- "I am not very good at what is the most important [thing to do; that is to pray]!"
- "My prayer life is not much to cheer for!"

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These comments are self-descriptions made by pastors in the Church of Norway in the context of a research interview for the study on clergy spirituality, upon which this essay is based.[1] Although the spiritual self-image of some interviewees in the research (certainly not all of them) can be characterized as rather poor or at least modest, the same pastors still experience their relationship to God and their faith as being very significant. Further, when analyzing the data, I was puzzled by a discrepancy between *descriptions* and *evaluations* of the spiritual practices of some interviewees. They expressed an image of themselves as "not very good at praying," yet described their everyday lives both in ministry and privately as more or less enveloped by prayer and other spiritual practices. Some of the participants realized this gap as we were speaking, and came to see their spiritual life with new eyes. Olav, who was in his mid-fifties, and serving in a rural area at the time of the interview, reflects on his prayer life in the quote below:

> I find that it [my prayer life] is not much to cheer for. Because I am not the one praying the long prayers. But most of the time I do pray…. Prior to

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[1] Data are based on 21 open ended qualitative interviews with ordained pastors in the CofN recruited from three different dioceses. They represent ecclesiological and theological diversity in the CofN. The overall research design of the study draws on the model or method of mutual critical correlation proposed by John Swinton and Harriet Mowat, *Practical Theology and Qualitative Research* (London: SCM Press, 2006), 95. combined with the 'hermeneutic approach' outlined by spirituality scholar Sandra M. Schneiders, "The Study of Christian Spirituality: Contours and Dynamics of a Discipline," in *Minding the Spirit: The Study of Christian Spirituality*, Elizabeth A Dreyer and Mark S. Burrows, eds. (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2005), 6. Because the spirituality of Norwegian clergy is a fairly unexplored area of research, it seemed fruitful to develop new empirical, qualitative data by means of in-depth interviews with rather few interviewees, instead of distributing a survey to a larger sample. As I was interested in the research subjects' own reflections on their experiences and practices, interviewing was chosen as the methodological approach of the study. Semi-structured, open ended in-depth interviews provided rich data necessary for 'thick descriptions,' and enabled me to attain a more nuanced understanding of their spirituality.

the service, I pray for the service. I mostly pray before things are going to take place. And then I feel….I mean, my prayer life is mine there and then (…) There is much in that, I guess. There aren't many things we do around here that don't begin with a prayer.[2]

Olav's notion of a prayer life "that you can cheer for," as he puts it, seems to be one that consists of "the long prayers." Yet, he doesn't regularly practice a prayer life according to such ideals. On the other hand, though, both Olav and other interviewees clearly engage in a number of spiritual practices that nurture them as pastors and as human beings. However, some of these practices, such as table grace, pondering the details of a spider's web with a child, evening prayer with children, caring for a chronically ill spouse or child, small prayers offered in between ministry tasks or while being underway, have become so *embedded in daily life*, so *automated*, that they are more or less invisible to some of the participants in the study, including Olav, at the outset of our conversation.

What, then, counts as "real spirituality" or "real pastoral spirituality"? What can be sustainable sources of spiritual nurture for clergy and other religious leaders? Where is pastoral spirituality located? These questions might call for a wider understanding of pastoral spirituality than what has traditionally been the case, and also for the willingness to look for such spirituality outside of the explicitly "religious or spiritual sphere."

Where is Pastoral Spirituality Located?

Pastors[3] and other religious leaders very explicitly exercise their faith *as professionals*.[4] This makes them

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[2]All the quotes were first recorded and transcribed in the original Norwegian language. Next, they were slightly revised in order to make them more readable. Stuttering, incomplete sentences, and the like have for example been omitted unless such language forms are of significance for the interpretation. Third, the quotes have been translated into English, which involves a second interpretation.

[3] In this article the term 'pastor' in English ('prest' in Norwegian) refers to the ordained leader of a Christian community, both within and outside of the

somewhat different from those who are not employed by the church or a religious organization when it comes to spirituality. However, the way they relate to God and express and nurture their faith *privately* does not necessarily differ as much from the spirituality of lay people, and might also be of great significance for their spirituality as pastors as well as for their ministry.

While some argue that the spiritual practices for clergy are to be found in the liturgy, or more broadly in the pastoral ministry itself (*vocational spirituality*),[5] others opt for the necessity of spiritual practices as a foundation for—and as a supplement to—the core tasks of ministry.[6] The latter must usually be sought more intentionally or deliberately, and are located at the margins of daily life. Such practices are here called *intentional spiritual practices*, and they include practices such as setting aside a specific time for contemplative prayer, going on a spiritual retreat, or seeing a spiritual director.

In this essay I argue that *vocational spirituality* and *intentional spiritual practices* are both legitimate spiritual sources and practices, and of significance to the interviewees. Additionally, I suggest a third location for pastoral spirituality; that is, *everyday life* as it is lived in the

Church of Norway (CofN), and when referring to the interviewed pastors I use the terms 'pastor', 'clergy', 'interviewee', 'participant' interchangeably.
[4] Although I have interviewed parish pastors, their experiences might also resonate with pastors in other churches and contexts, and with other ordained or non-ordained religious leaders in churches and various religious organizations and movements. The crucial point here is that they exercise their faith as professionals.
[5] The term "tjenesteorientert spiritualitet" is used in Halvard Johannessen, "Pastoral spiritualitet i endring," *Halvårsskrift for praktisk teologi* vol 27, no. 1 (2010), 3-14 . This understanding of pastoral spirituality will be elaborated in the following.
[6] Swedish author Magnus Malm, who is widely read amongst clergy in Norway, claims that Christian ministry (whether ordained or not) should be based on a personal relationship with God, and that this relationship needs to be nourished for the sake of itself, and not only in and through ministry in order to have something to give or preach to others, When God is reduced to being an employer, the spiritual life, thus, equals work, which can easily quench a healthy spirituality and be experienced as draining, in *Veivisere : En Bok Om Kristent Lederskap* (Oslo: Nye Luther forl., 1991).

private sphere. During the last decades a number of scholars in spirituality and religion, as well as practitioners in the church have emphasized the significance of *everyday spirituality.*[7] Yet they have usually done so in order to make a case for what is often termed *lay spirituality*, at least in Catholic and Anglican circles.[8] However, a spirituality embedded in everyday life, as described by some of these authors, is also a significant source of spiritual nurture to *clergy* in my research.[9] I, therefore, make the case that a spirituality of everyday life is a significant source not only for laity, but also for pastors, and possibly for religious leaders and church employees more generally.[10] Yet, spiritual practices of everyday life are rarely noticed in literature on pastoral spirituality.[11]

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[7] See Elizabeth Dreyer, *Earth Crammed with Heaven: A Spirituality of Everyday Life* (New York: Paulist Pr, 1994); Claire E. Wolfteich, "Towards an Integrative Lay Spirituality: Living, Faith, Family, and Work" (PhD Dissertation, The University of Chicago, 1997); Elizabeth Drescher, "Practicing Church: Vernacular Ecclesiologies in Late Medieval England" (Ph.D., Berkely, 2008). Moreover, recently, contributions viewing parenting as a positive means for spiritual growth instead of a drawback have been published both in the US, Bonnie J. Miller-McLemore, *In the Midst of Chaos: Caring for Children as Spiritual Practice,* The Practices of Faith Series (San Francisco, Calif.: Wiley, 2007), and in Scandinavia, Lena Bergström, *Att Ge Plats För En Annan: Om Andlighet, Föräldraskap Och Vardagsliv* (Örebro: Cordia, 2002).

[8] See references in the previous footnote, especially Dreyer, Wolfteich, and Drescher.

[9] Tone Stangeland Kaufman, *A New Old Spirituality: A Qualitative Study of Clergy Spirituality in the Church of Norway* (Oslo: MF Norwegian School of Theology, 2011).

[10] This is only an assumption. In my study I only interviewed pastors.

[11] See Mary Ellen Hughes, *Maintaining the Well-Being of Clergy* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan, 1988); Urban T. III Holmes, *Spirituality for Ministry* (San Fransisco: Harper & Row, 1982); Harald Olsen, "Mot Stillheten Og Skjønnheten: Endring i Norske Statskirkepresters Spiritualitet," *Halvårsskrift for praktisk teologi* vol 25, no. 2 (2008); as well as Henri J.M. Nouwen, *The Wounded Healer: Ministry in Contemporary Society* (New York: Continuum, 1996), Henri J.M. Nouwen; *Reaching Out: The Three Movements of the Spiritual Life* (New York: Continuum, 1996); Henri J.M. Nouwen, *The Living Reminder* (New York: HarperSanFransisco, 1977); Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Nachfolge*, ed. Martin and Tödt Kuske, Ilse, vol 4; Dietrich Bonhoeffer Werke (München: Chr.

Seeking to portray the analytical distinction between spiritual practices *embedded in the everyday life* of the participants, both *privately* and *professionally* (in ministry),[12] and those located *at the margins of daily life*, figure 1 (below) introduces two axes: a horizontal one running from *Private* to *Professional,* and a vertical one going from *Embedded* to *Intentional.*[13] Thus, three locations where the participants in this study find spiritual nurture are identified (overlapping circles). Crucial for my understanding of a pastoral spirituality is that these three locations are not opposites. Rather, they should be seen as mutually enriching. However, for *analytical purposes*, and in order to see and acknowledge each of them more clearly, it is helpful to distinguish between them. Particularly, the (many) practices embedded in daily life are made explicit and visible, within this conceptual framework, and these should be acknowledged and appreciated as important spiritual sources to the clergy in my study.

Kaiser Verlag, 1994); Henri J.M. Nouwen, *Gemeinsames Leben* (München: Chr. Kaiser Verlag, 1987); Kenneth Leech, *True Prayer: An Invitation to Christian Spirituality* (Harrisburg, PA: Morehouse Publishing, 1995); Henri J.M. Nouwen, *Experiencing God: Theology as Spirituality* (San Francisco, CA.: Harper & Row, 1985); Henri J.M. Nouwen, *The Eye of the Storm: Living Spiritually in the Real World* (San Francisco, CA: HarperSanFrancisco, 1992); Henri J.M. Nouwen , *Soul Friend: An Invitation to Spiritual Direction* (New York: HarperSanFransisco, 1992); Henri J.M. Nouwen , *Spirituality and Pastoral Care* (London: Sheldon Press, 1986); Kees Waaijman, *Spirituality: Forms, Foundations, Methods*, Studies in Spirituality, Supplement 8 (Leuven: Peeters, 2002).

[12] Here the term *professional(ly)* simply refers to practices undertaken *in the role as pastor*, as opposed to practices engaged in *private(ly) as private persons.*

[13] Although the concept intentional is used in a somewhat different manner than Diana Butler Bass, *The Practicing Congregation: Imagining a New Old Church* (Herndon, VA: Alban Institute, 2004), it is to a certain extent inspired by her work. Moreover, the encounter with interviewees who clearly expressed a proactive or intentional attitude towards practices seeking to deepen or enhance their spiritual life made me keep this attitude or value as an analytical perspective throughout the research process.

Figure 1: Three Locations for Pastoral Spirituality
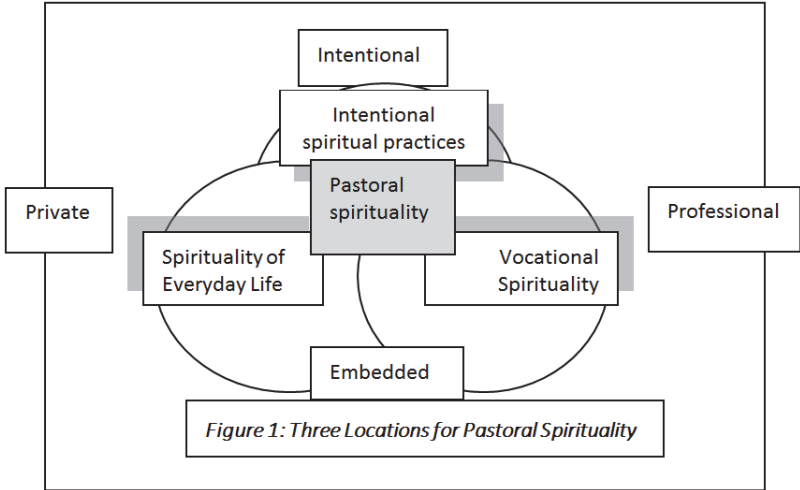
My understanding of Christian spirituality is largely informed by Sandra Schneiders' definition of the phenomenon, emphasizing *experience*, but also by Elizabeth Drescher's critique of Schneiders, and her move towards *practice*. In this essay, *Christian spirituality* is defined as "the way in which a person experiences the relationship to God, and nurtures and expresses his or her faith with a special emphasis on Christian practice."

Tensions for Pastoral Spirituality

As indicated in the introduction, I was puzzled by the paradox that while each and all of the participants report that they experience their relationship with God and their faith as a profound part of their lives, some still describe themselves as being "bad at praying" or "not as spiritual as the previous pastor," as a few of them put it. Olav's comment that "a prayer life to cheer for" equals "praying the long prayers" could very well mean having a specific time set aside for prayer concurring with the pietistic ideal of a having "a daily quiet time."

In the Norwegian context, the spiritual tradition rooted in 18th century Pietism has contributed to shaping

ideals for the Christian life.[14] This especially pertains to the south and west of the country, as well as other "Bible-belt" pockets. Such Christian backgrounds seem to be the common denominator for the pastors in my study who consider their own spiritual lives or practices as insufficient. This might be one reason why spiritual practices that don't exactly fit the pietistic ideal of a "spiritual life" are not so easily noticed or acknowledged by these pastors. When Nina, a young pastor and a mother of a child, was asked if she used to pray with someone else in private, she was about to say no. Then I specifically inquired about evening prayer with her child:

Nina: Oh, yes…he [my son] counts then perhaps, yes.

T: He counts.

Nina. Yes, I do pray….I do pray, when he… I mean, evening prayer with him. That's right…thanks. It is such a natural thing that I forget.[15]

Olav and Nina, in the examples above, came to see their spiritual practices—for example their prayer lives—with new eyes because some of their automated practices were made visible to them. Other interviewees explicitly distinguish between having *a defined quiet time* and "*prayers on the go*." The latter refers to the continual small dialogues with God attended to "on the go" throughout the day, in between things, and in the midst of various situations. "Prayers on the go" are prayers said on the way to the bus or train or in the car, a quick prayer of thanksgiving for the beauty of a snow covered mountain or the stunning sunset, a prayer offered before a confirmation class or in the office before dividing

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[14] Since the revivals of the 19th and 20th centuries were partly embraced by the Lutheran Church of Norway, which was a state church until 2012, pietistic and revival spiritualities have had a significant influence on a considerable number of CofN pastors and lay people. This tradition has been existing side by side with the "folk-church" tradition. The latter – at least to a certain extent – resembles mainline churches in the US.

[15] In this quote I deliberately kept the stuttering and pauses, because they indicate how Nina, in the midst of the interview, came to see her prayer practice with new eyes.

confirmation kids into groups, etc. Hanne, a younger pastor and the mother of three children, says:

> I am not the type who has gotten very fixed times for when I pray or take time to myself. I have realized that I am not such a very structured person in the first place either. But I do feel that my faith follows me and carries me in all situations, in my professional life. Also when I am on the go, I do pray when I am about to do something, or when I am in the midst of something (…) my spiritual life, is influenced by the life phase that I am in.

As opposed to Olav, Nina, and some others, Hanne sees and acknowledges these "prayers on the go" and other spiritual practices embedded in her everyday life. The analytical distinction between embedded and intentional spiritual practices helps show that spiritual practices are often invisible precisely because they are so embedded in everyday life and ministry. Moreover, this essay argues that it is important to make them more visible and explicit, and that they also count as "*real* spirituality," even "*real* pastoral spirituality."

Spiritual Practices Located In Ministry or Beyond?

Should pastoral spirituality be embedded *in* the ministry itself, or does the pastor rather need to look for spiritual sources and practices *in addition to* the ministry? One view of clergy spirituality is to claim that the spiritual life of the pastor should primarily, though not exclusively, be nurtured by the core tasks of ministry itself, and by presiding in public worship in particular.[16] In the essay "Pastoral Spirituality Undergoing Change," Norwegian theologian Halvard Johannessen[17] considers Lutheran liturgist Gordon Lathrop a representative for a

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[16] Additional core tasks in the Norwegian Lutheran context would be preaching, counseling (meeting with parishioners), and *diakonia* or the pursuit of social justice.

[17] Halvard Johannessen, "Pastoral Spiritualitet i Endring," in *Halvårsskrift for praktisk teologi* vol. 27, No. 1 (2010), 6-7.

vocational and *liturgical* understanding of pastoral spirituality. This is primarily based on Lathrop's book on pastoral spirituality, simply called *The Pastor: A Spirituality*.[18] Instead of claiming that the pastor should primarily look for spiritual sources *in addition to* his or her ministry, Lathrop insists that *the ministry itself* is the hub for the spirituality of the pastor. In that regard, he considers "learning the [pastoral] tasks by heart" a spiritual practice.[19] However, arguing that the primary source for a pastoral spirituality is the liturgy itself, Lathrop additionally recommends spiritual practices that are rooted in the liturgy, yet are practiced in the daily life of the pastor in the private sphere.

Lathrop's book has two main parts, whose headings capture the author's vision for a pastoral spirituality. He suggests that pastors are to *learn the tasks by heart* (part I, primarily related to the *ministry*) and to *live from the liturgy* (part II, primarily related to the *life* of the pastor in private). However, the two are deeply interwoven, and the pastoral tasks are not to be separated from the life of the pastor. Rather on the contrary, when "embarking on a lifelong catechumenate,"[20] and when "learning the tasks by heart,"[21] the pastor cultivates a way of life shaped by the Christian symbols. Lathrop encourages a deep intertwining of *Sunday worship* and *daily life*.[22] In my reading of Lathrop, his spirituality does include what I term intentional spiritual practices, but the crux is still the liturgy and the ministry itself.

Adhering to Lathrop's vocational spirituality, Johannessen, more clearly than Lathrop, considers this vocational and liturgical spirituality to be different from—and even opposed to—intentional spiritual practices that must be sought in addition to the core tasks

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[18] Gordon Lathrop, *The Pastor: A Spirituality* (Philadelphia, PA: Fortress; Edinburgh: Alban [distributor]), 2006.

[19] Lathrop,viii-ix, 21, 24ff.,

[20] Lathrop, 1.

[21] Lathrop viii-ix, 21, 25ff.

[22] See also Lisa E. Dahill, *Truly Present: Practicing Prayer in the Liturgy* (Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg Fortress, 2005).

of ministry. In his essay, he critiques contemporary Norwegian pastoral spirituality for not being sufficiently embedded in the liturgy and in the specific pastoral tasks. Rather, he claims to identify a movement towards precisely *intentional spiritual practices* and towards ecumenically oriented *contemplative spiritual practices* such as seeking spiritual direction and attending silent retreats. In Norway, this kind of contemplative spirituality has been offered by the Scandinavian retreat movement[23] and representatives from the Ignatian spiritual tradition.[24]

Having examined some significant contributions on pastoral theology from past centuries in the Norwegian context, Johannessen's argument is primarily based on the fact that this literature on pastoral theology did not usually include a separate chapter on the spiritual life of the pastor. Instead, this theme was woven into the chapters on the pastoral tasks or ministry.[25] This makes him conclude that the spiritual life of the pastor, according to these works, should be embedded in the ministry. His conclusion can be questioned, but going into a detailed discussion with Johannessen is not my point in this essay. Here I simply use him as a representative of a position that sees vocational spirituality rooted in the ministry in opposition to intentional spiritual practices. My own research supports Johannessen's claim that there has recently been a move towards a more ecumenically oriented contemplative spirituality, particularly inspired by the Ignatian tradition.[26]

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[23] See for example http://www.sandomstiftelsen.no/ (accessed July 5, 2013).
[24] See for instance Jan Schumacher, *Tjenestens Kilder: En Bok Om Pastoral Spiritualitet*, Presteforeningens Studiebibliotek; Nr 32 ([Oslo]: Den norske kirkes presteforening, 1990).
[25] Johannessen, 6-7.
[26] Kaufman, *A New Old Spirituality*. See especially chapter 8. See also Tone Stangeland Kaufman, "Ignatiansk spiritualitet for norske prester? Jakten på en mer erfaringsnær spiritualitet" i Knut-Willy Sæther, ed. Kristen Spiritualitet: Perspektiver, tradisjoner og uttrykksformer (Trondheim/Oslo: Akademika Forlag, 2013).

My interviewees are clearly spiritually sustained from their ministry. Yet, although this is a significant source, they also draw from other sources. One of these subjects is Julia. At the time of the interview, she was a single pastor in her mid-fifties, who has benefited immensely from the Ignatian spiritual tradition. She regularly attends silent retreats, practices contemplative prayer, and reads spiritual literature. Moreover, for many years she used to meet regularly with a spiritual director and see a counsellor. However, albeit drawing from a number of spiritual sources, Julia still emphasizes Sunday morning worship, the liturgy, as crucial spiritual source:

> When it comes to sources and stuff, I've used a variety of different things. But as a pastor, I have to say that working with the service and the service in and of itself is a huge source, because in a way it's always there, the fellowship at church and in the service, etc. Both participating in the service….That is, I suppose, what is time-wise the largest source.

To Julia both worship in itself and the congregational fellowship are two important aspects of why public worship is such a significant spiritual source to her. Perhaps more importantly, she stresses the pragmatic fact that "in a way the service is always there." I interpret her statement to mean that Sunday morning worship stands out as a spiritual source because of its presence and availability: "Because in a way it is always there," as Julia puts it. It is embedded in her professional life as a pastor, and in her everyday life when off work.

Further, the ministry is regarded as a spiritual source because it requires the pastor to reflect on and process her own experiences theologically in a profound way in order to be able to preach and convey the Gospel authentically. Being a "professional" religious leader and having a profession that involves one's faith is considered *both a blessing and a challenge*, and having a spiritual vocation makes pastoral ministry different than ordinary jobs. Recent research on pastoral burn-out in a Norwegian context documents that the ministry clearly

can also be experienced as spiritually draining.[27] The participants in these empirical studies have experienced severe conflicts, loneliness, an exhausting work load, burn-out, and other severe difficulties related to their ministry. Hence, they depict a more problematic or even disharmonic relationship between the ministry and what is experienced as spiritually refreshing. In my view, then, such experiences in ministry make spiritual practices solely based on the ministry itself vulnerable. When ministry is only experienced as draining, it is hard to be spiritually nurtured by it. Then it is necessary to draw from other sources as well.

A Spirituality of Everyday Life: Sanctifying the Ordinary[28]

To be sure, neither existing literature on clergy spirituality[29] specifically, nor Christian spirituality more generally has traditionally devoted much attention to the role of ordinary family life and parenting when it comes to shaping the spirituality of pastors, church employees more generally, or other religious leaders.[30] Rather, this kind of literature has focused on intentional spiritual practices, where a prerequisite has been that you are able to withdraw from—or do something in addition to—

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[27] Leif Gunnar Engedal, "Meningsfull tjeneste - belastende arbeid: En undersøkelse av slitasjefaktorer i norske menighetspresters arbeid," in *Halvårsskrift for praktisk teologi* 25 (1) (2008), 3-16; Inger Helene Nordeide, Ståle Einarsen, and Anders Skogstad, *Jeg er jo ikke Jesus heller! : Arbeidsmiljø og utbrenthet blant norske prester* (Bergen: Fagbokforl., 2008).

[28] This phrase is inspired from the second chapter of Miller-McLemore, *In the Midst of Chaos: Caring for Children as Spiritual Practice*.

[29] See footnote 10.

[30] An exception is Richard Douglas Shewman, "Grace Overflowing: Deaconal Spirituality in the Context of Marriage and Ordained Ministry" (Doctor of Ministry, Saint Mary Seminary and Graduate School of Theology, 2005), who in his study of the spirituality of Catholic deacons in the US points out that spiritual practices undertaken in the private sphere of family life is a perspective that has previously been more or less neglected in spirituality studies of ordained fulltime employees. However, he finds this aspect to have a significant impact on the overall spirituality of the deacons in his sample.

ordinary daily life. However, "a spirituality of everyday life" is a perspective that has become more common in studies of *lay spirituality*, particularly in Catholic and Anglican circles.[31] Highlighting this often-neglected area of spirituality might help us better understand the spirituality of clergy as well, especially those living in the context of a family.[32]

Where and how is God encountered in everyday life? How do the daily circumstances of life, such as parenting children, contribute to shaping the spirituality of the pastors in my research? In this section I set out to shed light on these questions, thus demonstrating how the ordinary can be sanctified. I will start out more broadly by describing how the interviewees experience that *the spiritual is not situated in a sphere of its own*, but rather *in the midst of everyday life*, and how they encounter what Elizabeth Dreyer terms "the worldly face of God,"[33] which entails attending to all of human life. Following this I examine how God is encountered in parenting children and ordinary family life, and how such experiences color pastoral ministry.

The term "a spirituality of everyday life" here has a twofold meaning. First, it refers to *spiritual experiences and practices which are embedded in everyday life*. This can be seen as opposed to considering the spiritual life of something that is divorced or separated from daily life and activities, belonging to a sphere of its own. Second, it refers to *the private sphere*, as opposed to the professional sphere of ministry, with a special emphasis on how faith is expressed in the context of family life.

From Separate Spheres to Integration in Daily Life

A number of the interviewees comment that the location of their spirituality has changed from being in a separate sphere (often in the fashion of an activity) to

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[31] See footnote 7.

[32] This applies to the vast majority of my interviewees and to a number of clergy in a non-Catholic context.

[33] Dreyer, 77.

being integrated in their everyday life. For example, Karen, a mother of young children serving in an area of strong pietistic and Evangelical influence, has experienced a transformation in her spiritual life, and has come to appreciate encountering God in her daily life distinct from activities or events arranged by a church or a parachurch movement. As a student she used to attend prayer meetings and be part of an evangelism group, but now it is more important to her to keep in touch with her maternity group. [34]

> I mean, I think, perhaps my faith has become more of an everyday faith over the years. Maybe that's the thing. As a student it was important to me to be part of evangelism groups and such things. Now it is more important to me to be part of the maternity group, to keep in touch with my maternity group in a way, I mean (laughter), where I probably actually do evangelize much more than I was on those….

Karen points out that this group of mothers with small babies is a place where she can share her faith. Laughingly, she comments that she can actually "evangelize" more effectively there than she could at the evangelistic outreaches she used to take part in, where sharing one's faith was an activity you did from, say, 7-9 in the evening. Here, the sharing of faith is embedded in her daily life in a different way. Karen clearly adheres to this approach to the spiritual life, and continues offering

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[34] What I call maternity group here is my translation for a specific Norwegian kind of group called "barselgruppe." It consists of mothers (or fathers) on maternity/paternity leave (mostly mothers), who live in the same local area, and who have delivered their babies approximately at the same time. These groups are arranged by the local health center, where babies are taken for check-ups (weight, height measurements, etc.), and where a pediatric nurse organizes and hosts the group at first. After a while, though, the group usually continues meeting on a more informal basis during the time of maternity leave, either in coffee shops, in the homes, or out walking with the babies. Norwegian parents have a paid year of maternity/paternity leave, and most often the mother will take at least the first six months of the leave. The father has to take at least ten weeks, but it is becoming more common to split the leave more evenly than that.

examples of an everyday spirituality embedded in daily life, including prayer:

> And I think that I am a bit this way with prayers and such things as well. I mean, *the things that I bring into my everyday life.* Whether that be saying grace before meals or evening prayer with the kids or "Our Father in Heaven" in public worship, it is in a way part of [my life], it is natural and integrated in my life. It is not necessarily an organized activity. Something that I am supposed to accomplish (emphasis mine).

This example is taken from a crucial point in the interview with Karen, who shares much about her faith having become more of an everyday faith. Central to this development in her spirituality is that these *practices are part of, and thus naturally integrated in her life.* Although worship is a clearly outspoken religious activity situated in the religious sphere, she sees this practice as distinct from *both* organized activities such as door-to-door evangelism *and* from something that she has to accomplish. She especially refers to the "The Lord's Prayer" when she mentions worship, and this is a prayer that, to a large degree, connects the spirituality of the professional sphere with the spirituality of the private sphere. Furthermore, "The Lord's Prayer" and the liturgy have become embodied knowledge, embodied habits. Therefore she finds rest in these practices.

Elizabeth Dreyer's phrase, "Encountering the worldly face of God" means looking for God's presence in "the 'stuff' of our daily lives,"[35] as there is no clear cut dividing line between spiritual and human or personal. Like some of the interviewees, Carl, an urban pastor in his fifties, refuses to keep his "spiritual life" apart from his "ordinary life" or "the rest of his life." Instead, these aspects of his life are deeply intertwined:

Carl: I have not focused that much on it [my own faith life]. I have not distinguished that much between my own life and my faith life.

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[35] Dreyer, 140-141.

T: But even if it is not visible, do you experience having a prayer life?

Carl: Yes, I do. Indeed, I do. But I experience that it is very integrated in what I think and feel and and say, breathe.

T: Yes. Can you say a bit more about that?

Carl: It is about me, in relation to…praying, it is not something I do from one point to the other. I haven't done that since I was sitting in the prayer room in seminary, sort of. And [there I] was having half an hour following a [set] schedule, right? (…) I experience that I don't have such particular spheres, then, as…prayer, this is my spiritual life, here is my…the other life. I mean, I understand little of such [kind of division]. Or perhaps, I want to understand little of it. There has not been anything conscious that has made it this way, it has simply become this way. It is my daily living that has made it this way.

His body language and voice clearly underline his words, which makes me interpret him to strongly distance himself from the kind of prayer life practiced in seminary. As opposed to other participants in this study, though, Carl seems to see this understanding of the spiritual life as opposed to intentional practices that must be more deliberately sought. He is critical to locating prayer or spirituality to a specific spiritual sphere, and has not focused much on his "faith life." That is probably why, he reasons, people consider him "less spiritual" than the previous pastors.

To some of the interviewees it has taken a while, and has often been a tiring and draining journey before realizing that *God is actually present in the midst of everyday life.* William, who is the father of several children, and who was around forty years old at the time we met, started out the interview by sharing about his first years of ministry, which he found hard, full of tension, and very busy. However, this has changed. Now he has discovered that God is in the midst of his everyday life and daily toil. This has made his spirituality far more down-to-earth,

but at the same time more open and more able to embrace all of life. Now he can encounter God in all the little things of daily life, such as the joy of being able to have dinner with his children:

> God encounters me wherever I am if I seek him. In the midst of the everyday and in the midst of it all. And this made it an entirely different experience for me, and an encounter between me as a human being and experiences of God. That became much more commonplace, but in a way it also got much greater, for all of a sudden I could see God in small things. In the joy of being allowed to eat…, of having dinner with the kids, and it was much more the everyday stuff that all of a sudden became fundamental. That there was something about, that's where God's faithfulness was appearing.

William also makes the connection to public worship and his preaching. This major turning point of his own spiritual life has influenced his sermons. Realizing that he must use whatever "raw material" he has got, he now dares to include more of his own experiences, at least as background material when preaching. When asked what made this happen, he reflects:

> What made this happen? [I guess] it was a longer process. But after some time [I think] it was the encounter with a kind of spirituality that helped me find God in my everyday, where I am at. A kind of insight into [the fact] that the raw material God has to use here is my life right now, just today. It is not my life the way it is tomorrow, or the way it should have been or could have been, but exactly that...to try to be present in the moment. That's where…God is. God is not before me so that I have to rush in order to try to encounter God.

The theological and spiritual literature William was reading helped him in the process of integrating his faith and spiritual practices in his daily life. Now they are no longer separate rooms "out of touch with each other," as he puts it later in the interview.

According to Hanne, life should not be taken for granted. Rather, all of life is wondrous and given by God, and she can:

> Find God in all things; and for me it is a little more significant with a bit more concrete things. I have a very *earthy* faith [in God] that is more oriented towards creation perhaps. I mean, I find that many things in life point towards Christ and towards both God incarnate and God the creator. And I also try to let this be expressed in my preaching. I think there is something about the perspective that life is wondrous and given by God, and in a way it gives...an open and good perspective on life. Because God is omnipresent, and therefore God can also enrich us in so many ways. I think, anyhow. It's not like it's one particular thing, or place or...(emphasis mine).

In Hanne's spirituality the material and spiritual are deeply intertwined, and this is a point she makes when preaching. Furthermore, the experience of a number of the pastors is that God's presence is not limited to one specific practice or place, as Hanne puts it in the quote above. Rather, God can enrich us in so many and unexpected ways, which leads us to the next section on parenting children as a spiritual practice.

Parenting Children

Seventeen of the twenty-one participants have one or more children living at home. However, age, number of children, and circumstances of life vary considerably between them. One of the pastors is divorced and has shared custody of the child. Others parent children or live with spouses who are chronically ill. And others again face the ordinary challenges of the "time squeeze" caused by parenting children in addition to both spouses having a demanding job. It seems as if having children colors the spiritual life and ministry of the pastor in various ways, and parenting can be seen as one way of sanctifying the ordinary.

Some participants with young children living at home report that they are in a special "phase of life," or that

their life, including their relationship to God, has changed after becoming parents. First, the *content* of the spiritual life has changed for some of them. Second, the amount of *time* they have to themselves is far more limited than for other interviewees, which for most of the participants seems to influence the way the spiritual life is shaped and lived. Third, *having children seems to be an asset in developing a down-to-earth spirituality which is embedded in everyday life*, helping interviewees to (re)discover the beauty and sacredness of creation and everyday life.

After having described his spiritual development and different strands of inspiration, David ends up with a reflection on how being the father of a toddler has changed his spiritual life, which now even includes children's songs. He considers the practice of singing such songs part of his prayer life. Hanne, too, emphasizes the phase of life she is in, and finds that being a mother profoundly shapes both her spiritual life and her ministry:

> But at the same time I learn stuff from being a mother, and I feel that it gives me, how should I put it then, sacred…sacred moments (laughing), that I believe are God given. And it gives me ideas for my preaching that I also believe can contribute to opening up for others.

Hanne could have expressed frustration about not having enough time to herself or not being able to go away on conferences or attend retreats, but instead she has deliberately decided to let her children be an important source of inspiration both for her (spiritual) life and for her ministry. As she expresses it later in the interview: "I have chosen to have a positive outlook on [these] things [being a parent], because I believe it is good theology." According to Hanne, God is present in the life she lives here and now, not in some ideal life with ideal spiritual practices or disciplines described by desert monks, medieval mystics, or the pietistic tradition. In this phase of life, experiencing "sacred moments" with her kids seems more important than spending time alone in the sanctuary or reading a book, although she would have appreciated such practices if she

had had more time to herself. When asked to describe such "sacred moments," Hanne reflects:

> It can simply be the way a 4-year-old understands or talks about her first experience with death, right? (…) They always have that first experience, but they use it to interpret new experiences. That was an entirely new experience to me. But it can of course also just be that one of them makes you aware that the raindrops on the spider's web look like diamonds. Or such things that make you lose track of time, or what should I say? It is of course great when one is able to enjoy it. To simply be together, right?

Attending to children the way it is described by Hanne in the quote above illustrates the spiritual practice Miller-McLemore calls "pondering."[36] This is a practice of being attentive to the small wonders of ordinary life, like the reflections of children, or the shared joy of discovering something unexpected in nature, such as the raindrops which resemble diamonds in the spider's web. Parenting children is a source of inspiration for ministry for a number of the other interviewees as well.

Evening prayer with kids and table grace are two of the most salient spiritual practices undertaken by the participants in this research. Both of these practices are strongly connected with having children, and wanting to establish some family practices and habits. Hence, Karen notes that "saying grace before meals and such things" was not as natural for them before having kids:

> But of course I notice that for us, table grace and evening prayer have been brought into our lives through our kids. It has actually done something to my Christian life and my faith as well. That was not as natural for us before having kids, table grace and stuff. But with the kids we have sort of gotten table grace and evening prayer into our daily life. It is okay then (laughing cautiously) with such simple, natural things that remind us that there is somebody to give thanks to and that there is somebody to pray to.

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[36] Miller-McLemore, 40 ff.

However, although table grace and praying or singing with the kids in the evening are widely practiced among the participants in this study, these practices seem to vary in significance to them. Like other interviewees, Karen, for example, really appreciates this practice, as she and her family are "reminded that there is somebody to give thanks to and pray to." She further acknowledges that these practices have positively influenced her faith. This statement is underlined by her being clearly emotionally moved when sharing about it in the quote above.

In this section I have explored how the faith of the clergy is expressed in "the ordinary" or "mundane," and the context of family life has emerged as particularly significant. Moreover, it seems as if quite a few of the pastors have undergone a change in their spiritual lives towards encountering God in the ordinary practices of family life with all its limitations and routines, and not only in a separate religious or spiritual sphere. Thus, many of them have also come to greatly appreciate spiritual practices embedded in everyday life.

A Spirituality of Everyday Life as a Rarely Noticed Spiritual Source for Clergy

The majority of the participants in this research report that they experience the presence of God in all the small things of daily life, thus expressing a spirituality with an emphasis on creation and incarnational theology. Not specifically addressing the spirituality of *clergy*, Bonnie Miller-McLemore and Elizabeth Dreyer argue for a spirituality that can be lived "in the midst of chaos," as the former puts it.[37] Their approach to spirituality challenges much of classical spiritual literature, which is usually written by a spiritual elite with the opportunity to live in a monastic context, or withdraw regularly from ordinary life or family life.

Amongst classics in spirituality, however, Luther is an exception. Both the Lutheran doctrine of vocation as well

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[37] Miller-McLemore, *In the Midst of Chaos: Caring for Children as Spiritual Practice*. Quoted from the book title. See also her preface, xv.

as the way Luther himself practiced his faith clearly acknowledge the mundane toil of everyday life, including caring for children.[38] As Miller-McLemore admits, she had never expected to find a male theologian in the 16th century who was also encountering God in stinky diapers and crying babies. Hence, she was baffled and named a paragraph in her book: "What a friend in Luther!"[39] Luther has a well-developed theology of creation, for example expressed in his comments to the Faith in the Large Catechism.[40] In Luther, God is found in the mundane of everyday life: "Thus the world is full of God. In every alley, at your door you find Christ; stare not at heavens!"[41] Luther, then, offers several examples of a spirituality deeply rooted in creation, incarnation and daily, ordinary life, which is of course related to a theology of vocation, where he was redeeming ordinary work from being considered secondary to the vocation of pastors and those having taken religious vows. Hence, the doctrine of vocation has primarily been used to acknowledge the vocation of *lay people*, as Luther strongly opposed a two-tier spirituality and a spiritual elite. This critique was aiming at the Catholic tradition of leaving ordinary life to enter a monastery, as this was considered a higher calling than being a baker or a blacksmith. The Lutheran pastor, however, was to live his life and serve

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[38]Birgit Stolt, Luther Själv : Hjärtats Och Glädjens Teolog (Skellefteå: Artos, 2004); Bradley Hanson, *A Graceful Life: Lutheran Spirituality for Today* (Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg, 2000). Regarding the recognition of the spiritual in the mundane, there are of course other exceptions as well, such as Brother Lawrence in *The Practice of the Presence of God* (New Kensington, PA: Whitaker House, 1982 (1691)) but few of them were responsible for the daily care of children.

[39] Miller-McLemore, 28.

[40] Theodore G Tappert, *The Book of Concord: The Confessions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church* (Philadelphia, PA: Muhlenberg Press, 1959), 412.

[41] WA 20:514,27f. quoted in Vitor Westhelle, "The Word and the Mask: Revisiting the Two-Kingdom Doctrine," in *The Gift of Grace: The Future of Lutheran Theology*, ed. Niels Henrik Gregersen, Ted Peters, and Bo Holm (Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg Fortress, 2005), 178. In the original language: "Also ist die welt vol von Gott. In allen gassen, fur deiner thur findest du Christum. Gaff nicht ynn himel!"

his congregation in the midst of the mundane and ordinary and outside the walls of the monastery. Luther's theology of everyday life, then, might be an untapped source for clergy spirituality in a context where clergy also lead ordinary family lives.

The kind of spirituality described in this essay partly resembles the spirituality which in Catholic circles is often termed *lay spirituality*.[42] Yet, according to my interviewees, the spirituality lived in the private sphere of family life and the practice of parenting children also seem to be influencing *the spirituality and ministry of pastors* in significant ways. Among other things, this includes their theological outlook, their image of God, their view of the spiritual life, and the way they preach, etc. Based on my findings, then, I propose that since most pastors in the CofN now partake more actively in family life and the upbringing of children, spiritual practices undertaken in the private sphere of daily life also contribute to shaping the spirituality of the pastor. Moreover, I argue that this is a rarely noticed (at least in the literature of pastoral spirituality), yet significant source of spiritual nurture for clergy in the Lutheran tradition, and that more attention should be given to further explore it.

Making explicit and acknowledging spiritual practices embedded in daily life might contribute to bridging the divides of spiritual and mundane as well as professional and private in the lives of clergy. Further, by emphasizing the importance of ordinary human everyday experiences also for pastoral spirituality, the (often hierarchical) divide between cleric and lay may be partly overcome or at least reduced. The resonance of extant literature on lay spirituality in this study on clergy spirituality makes me question whether the pastor is as different as Manfred Josuttis insists.[43] Rather, a spirituality of everyday life portrays the pastor as being ordinary, almost—although

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[42] Dreyer, 23 ff.

[43] Manfred Josuttis, *Der Pfarrer Ist Anders: Aspekte Einer Zeitgenössischen Pastoraltheologie* (München: Chr. Kaiser, 1982). The reference refers to the work as a whole.

not entirely—like the parishioner in the pew. If the pastor uses the ordinary experiences of her life as "raw material" for her sermons, though, this would most likely resonate with the experiences of those present in the service. Sermons that help interpret ordinary human experiences in light of the Gospel readings might even apply to spiritual seekers at the margins of institutionalized religious practice, as the preacher actually speaks about and to "their lives" as well. And yet, I do agree with Josuttis that the pastor is different too (see pp. 5-7), but I find it helpful to emphasize both aspects of pastoral spirituality.

Conclusion

In this paper I have identified three main locations for a pastoral spirituality. These are *everyday life*, *ministry,* and *intentional spiritual practices located at the margins of everyday life*. By employing the concepts of *embedded* and *intentional* spiritual practices, I have pointed out how spiritual practices embedded in daily life in the *private* and *professional* spheres are significant, though not sufficient, to the spirituality and ministry of religious leaders. Hence, spiritual sources and practices located at the margins of daily life are also important, and should be encouraged. The crux is to keep the three locations of spiritual nurture together. They should not be seen in opposition to each other, but rather as complementary sources. The main reason for distinguishing between them is that the analytical categories contribute to acknowledging, articulating, and appreciating the spirituality *actually lived and practiced* by the pastors. They help see practices that were previously invisible to some of the pastors. Further, albeit strongly emphasized by Luther himself, I make the case that a spirituality of everyday life is an important, yet a rarely noticed and acknowledged source for a viable pastoral spirituality in the Lutheran tradition, at least in the literature on pastoral theology and spirituality.

BE OPENED: SOCIAL CONNECTEDNESS WITHIN AND BEYOND THE DEAF COMMUNITY

NANCY ANNE MARIE DELICH

Abstract

The concepts of social inclusion, social exclusion, and social connectedness in the Church setting are explored within the context of the Deaf community's linguistic and cultural orientation.[1] An examination of Deaf culture and the presentation of two research studies investigating the spirituality of Deaf persons may assist spiritual leaders and communities to develop best practices for establishing a Deaf ministry. The article concludes with specific recommendations and their rationale for establishing different forms of Deaf ministry.

Introduction

> *They brought to [Jesus] a deaf man who had an impediment in his speech; and they begged him to lay his hand on him. He took him aside in private, away from the crowd, and put his fingers into his ears, and he spat and touched his tongue. Then looking up to heaven, he sighed and said to him, "Ephphatha," that is, "be opened." And immediately his ears were opened, his tongue was released, and he spoke plainly.[2]*

Be opened. Jesus opens the deaf man's ears and mouth to hear and to speak. What does it mean to be opened? Who and what is changed? The Deaf cultural

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[1] For the purposes of this paper, the terms, deaf and deafness, with the lower case "d" will signify hearing loss while the term, Deaf, with the upper case "D" will relate to those who hold the cultural and linguistic values of the Deaf community.

[2] Mark 7:32:35, *The New Oxford Annotated Bible: With the Apocryphal/Deuterocanonical Books*, New Revised Standard Version (New York: Oxford University, 2001), 43.

interpretation of this story presents Jesus as not merely opening the ears and mouth of the deaf man or healing him from his condition. It is because of Divine intervention that the deaf man's mind and heart are opened. Jesus' relationship to the deaf man through touch and vision echoes a Deaf-centric interpretation and shows Jesus—and thus God—revealing, understanding, and relating to the needs of Deaf people.[3] Likewise, the minds and hearts of both secular and spiritual leaders can also be opened to understand that people who are Deaf can participate in society while preserving the integrity of their language and way of life.

For centuries, the meaning of deafness and resulting attitudes have been influenced primarily by religious and medical authorities, and more recently by educators.[4] Deafness has long been viewed from the perspective of pathology as a disability, where a cure was frequently sought to eradicate the problem. Within religious circles, healing of deafness in the form of exorcism was performed to remove the evil spirit in the deaf person while various scriptural interpretations regarded deafness as a metaphor for wickedness. For instance, the metaphor of spiritual deafness is commonly used to exemplify the concept of the person's sinfulness and estrangement from God.[5] To be spiritually deaf means to be closed, resulting in a failure to be open to the truth and thus consequently a failure in obedience. Conversely, to be forgiven and reunited with God means to be able to hear again and obey.

Another interpretation of this passage relates to the restoration of the member back into the spiritual community where sinfulness as deafness is perceived as a barrier between the sinner and the members of the

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[3] Wayne Morris, *Theology without Words: Theology in the Deaf Community* (Cornwall, UK: Ashgate, 2008), 88.

[4] See John Van Cleve, *Deaf History Unveiled: Interpretations from the New Scholarship* (Washington, D.C.: Gallaudet University Press, 1999).

[5] http://www.biblemeanings.info/Words/Body/Deaf.html (accessed June 1, 2013)

community. A literal interpretation of St. Paul's letter to the Romans has been applied to the combined concept of deafness and faith. This gave rise to both the perception and its resulting action where equating the inability to hear to the incapacity to have faith barred deaf people from becoming Christians.[6] Historically, such worldviews have been unfairly and unconsciously projected onto deaf people with disastrous results. Examining our own assumptions and hidden beliefs while learning about the Deaf community's cultural understanding of the world holds the rich possibility of opening up to a life-affirming approach. Moreover, understanding the spiritual and religious needs of the Deaf community, while developing culturally appropriate and spiritually sensitive practices, may make way for greater inclusion in the Body of Christ.

Social Inclusion, Exclusion, and Connectedness

Let's begin by looking at our language and choice of words. What does social inclusion mean? What does social exclusion look and feel like? Can one be socially included and not feel connected? Some argue that social inclusion and social exclusion are two sides of the same coin. On one side, social inclusion is defined as "the attempt to re-integrate or increase the participation of marginalized groups within mainstream goals."[7] Thus, participation, integration, and access are words that are often used to describe inclusion. On the other side, these words may imply social exclusion at some level. The language of social exclusion demonstrates mechanisms of marginalization, silencing, rejecting, isolating, segregating, and disenfranchising. Exclusion consists of dynamic, multi-dimensional processes driven by unequal power relationships interacting across the four main factors of economic, political, social, and cultural dimensions.

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[6] See George P. Dwyer, *St. Augustine and the Possibility of a State of Pure Nature: A Study of the Opus Imperfectum Contra Julianum* (1937).

[7] See Bob Pease, "The Other Side of Social Exclusion: Interrogating the Role of the Privileged in Reproducing Inequality," in Ann Taket Beth R. Crisp et al., eds., *Theorising Social Exclusion* (New York: Routledge, 2009), 37.

Exclusion takes place at different levels ranging from individual to global levels and results in a continuum of inclusion/exclusion characterized by unequal access to resources, capabilities, and rights.[8]

Social connectedness refers to the relationships people have with others and the community. The focus on social connectedness as the opposite of social exclusion is more appropriate for understanding people's experiences.[9] The language of social connectedness recognizes mechanisms of acceptance, opportunity, justice, equity, and validation. An individual who is socially included is not necessarily socially connected. Moreover, social inclusion does not imply social connectedness. Inclusion is something done *to* people rather than *by* them. For that reason, inclusion can be experienced as paternalistic or patronizing, and thus, may be perceived as the other side of the same coin—which may be experienced as exclusion.

Social connectedness was considered as a major determinant of the choices people make during a research study.[10] Psychological factors that exert considerable influence on one`s daily life were studied. The researchers developed and evaluated the psychometric properties of an 18-item Personal Acquaintance Measure (PAM) as well as investigated how the PAM relates to self-other agreement in personality ratings. Results showed that six components emerged to help determine the quality of one's interactions and psychologically-defined social connectedness with others. The six components include the following: (a) duration of relationship, (b) frequency of interaction with the other person, (c) knowledge of the other person's goals, (d) physical intimacy or closeness with the other person,

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[8] Ann Taket et al., "Introduction," in Ann Taket et al., eds., *Theorising Social Exclusion* (New York: Routledge, 2009), 8.

[9] "Conclusions and Reflections," in Ann Taket et al., eds., *Theorising Social Exclusion* (New York: Routledge, 2009), 187-192.

[10] See Katherine B. Starzyk et al., "The Personal Acquaintance Measure: A Tool for Appraising One's Acquaintance with Any Person," *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology,* 90 (2006), 833-847.

(e) self-disclosure with the other person, and (f) social network familiarity—how familiar is one person with another person's social circle.

These components of social connectedness along with one's choice of language are often influenced by the cultural worldviews and social locations of the involved parties. Through the conscious understanding of one's role in culture as well as one's view of oneself and others, religious leaders' efforts toward social connectedness can be enhanced.

Characteristics of the Deaf Culture

"Culture" here describes shared behaviors and beliefs that are characteristic of a particular social, ethnic, or age group.[11] For many ethnic groups, cultures are usually associated with a specific country. For the Deaf community, however, associations and special places provide the relationships and common ground in place of a particular country.[12] American Sign Language, also known as ASL, contains the essence of Deaf culture as a visual and gestural form of language.[13] Thus, Deaf culture refers to those who adopt American Sign Language as a primary means of communication and who share a distinguishable set of beliefs.[14]

Hearing acuity can be viewed on a continuum, ranging from perfect hearing threshold sensitivity to a complete inability to perceive any sound. Hearing ability falls somewhere between these two extremes for most

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[11] John F. Longres, *Human Behavior in the Social Environment,* 3rd edition (Belmont, CA: Brooks/Cole, 2000), 95.

[12] Definitions of culture were defined based on three books. See Harlan Lane, Robert Hoffmeister, and Ben Bahan, *A Journey into the Deaf-World* (San Diego: DawnSign Press, 1996); Carol Padden and Thomas Humphries, *Deaf in America: Voices from a Culture* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1988); and John F. Longres (2000).

[13] Gill Valentine and Tracie Skelton, "Changing Spaces: The Role of the Internet in Shaping Deaf Geographies," *Social & Cultural Geography*, vol 9, no. 5 (2008), 469-485.

[14] See Charlotte Baker and Carol Padden, *American Sign Language: A Look at its Story Structure and Community* (Silver Springs, MD: T. J. Publishers Inc, 1978).

people. While there is a tendency to classify all people with hearing loss as hearing impaired, some object to the implication of this term suggesting disability or defectiveness. Others claim this expression is an accurate portrayal of one's audiological status, which serves to distinguish individuals with normal hearing acuity from those who have a demonstrated physical hearing loss.[15]

As stated previously, the Deaf community's identity does not stem from a medical or a disabled point of view, which focuses on the need to correct or augment hearing loss. Defective social constructions of Deaf persons have been the focus of professional debate for centuries. Instead, the American Deaf communities favor the affirming cultural constructionist model.[16] Their perspective consists of a cultural understanding of being-in-the-world.[17]

Within the cultural model, the various identities within the Deaf community are complex.[18] Elements of Deaf identities are not limited to the physical actuality of a hearing loss; rather, they include ethnic, sexual, generational, social, educational, and political constructs that are incorporated in varying degrees from both the Deaf and hearing communities. The term Deafhood was coined to capture and represent the process where Deaf people attempt to understand and explain their place in the world. Through continual inner and outer dialogue, Deaf people become involved in the dynamic process of acknowledging, maintaining, and becoming Deaf and, more importantly, of discovering what this means for them.[19] For some, Deafhood has also come to represent the foundational aspect of their spirituality. The

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[15] Nancy A. Delich, "Leadership by the Deaf community for Social Change" in *Religious Leadership: The SAGE Reference Series on Leadership,* ed. Sharon H. Callahan (Los Angeles, CA: SAGE), 510-520.

[16] See Padden and Humphries, 1988.

[17] See Paddy Ladd, *Understanding Deaf Culture: In Search of Deafhood* (Buffalo, NY: Multilingual Matters, 2007).

[18] See Irene Leigh, *A Lens on Deaf Identities* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009).

[19] Ladd, 3.

multifaceted and reciprocal interaction between the experience of deafness and their spiritual worldview can be likened to a dance executed by two partners moving together in rhythm across the ballroom floor.[20]

Spirituality of Persons who are Deaf

Defining the term "spirituality" is useful to study the spirituality of those who are Deaf. Spirituality is understood as the gestalt of the total process of human life and development, encompassing the biological, mental, social, and spiritual aspects. More specifically, spirituality is the wholeness of what it is to be human and is not reducible to any of the listed components. It is distinguished from the term religion in that a religion involves patterns of spiritual beliefs and practices formed in social institutions and traditions that are maintained by a community over time.[21]

Spiritual direction, as a form of spiritual guidance, is operationally defined as "whenever one person helps another to see and respond to spiritual truth."[22] People are motivated by various reasons to seek a spiritual director who provides spiritual direction. Some of their goals may be to integrate spirituality in their everyday lives, practice discernment in difficult decisions, nurture a sensitivity for social justice and concern for the poor, live their spiritual or religious affiliation with integrity, or identify and trust their experiences of God, Divine, or

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[20] The concept of weaving various aspects of oneself through dance is borrowed from Boni Boswell, in Boni Boswell et al., "Dance of Disability and Spirituality," *Journal of Rehabilitation,* vol. 73, no. 4 (2007).
[21] See Edward R. Canda, "Religion and Spirituality" in T. Mizrahi and L. E. Davis, eds., *Encyclopedia of Social Work*, vol. 2 (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008), 413-418; Edward R. Canda and Leola D. Furman, *Spiritual Diversity in Social Work Practice* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010).
[22] Gerald G. May, *Care of Mind, Care of Spirit* (San Francisco: Harper Collins Publishers, 1992), 1.

the Holy.[23]

There is a dearth of research studies exploring the spirituality of persons who are Deaf. Two studies that focus specifically on this topic are presented: (a) The De Sales Project and (b) my dissertation research study.

The De Sales Project

The De Sales Project, funded by the National Catholic Office for the Deaf (NCOD), examined the spirituality of American Deaf people in 1987 and 1988.[24] Several goals of the study were identified. The first goal of the study was to explore the possible existence of a deaf spirituality, how it is developed and nurtured, and how to communicate Deaf spirituality's main features. The second goal was to explore the implications for pastoral workers in Deaf ministry and how to companion Deaf people on their spiritual journey. The third goal was to develop models of spiritual direction, and the last goal was to present the study and its results at a workshop.

The research study's findings have important and practical implications to better understand Deaf spirituality and create a spiritually, culturally, and linguistically appropriate Deaf ministry. Eight elements common to Deaf life experience were observed during the interviews and identified as potential effects on the life and development of a Deaf person and may include any number of the following elements: (a) visual attentiveness, (b) natural bonding, (c) God approves conditionally, (d) God as outside of self, (e) "strangers in a foreign land"—Deaf persons in a hearing church, (f) loneliness, (g) alienation from self, and (h) alienation

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[23] Spiritual Directors International's (SDI) website states that SDI is "a global learning community of people from many faiths and many nations who share a common passion and commitment to the art and contemplative practice of spiritual direction, known as spiritual companionship or spiritual guidance." http://www.sdiworld.org (accessed June 1, 2013).

[24] See William Key, *Eye Centered: A Study on the Spirituality of Deaf People with Implications for Pastoral Ministry* (Silver Spring, MD: National Catholic Office of the Deaf, 1992).

from family.[25] For each of these elements, biblical quotations were suggested, spiritual and pastoral implications outlined, and practical applications for spiritual formation and development recommended.

The summary of the findings highlighted topics such as the importance of the Deaf church, and the Deaf person's relationship to the Church and church involvement. In addition to disseminating research study findings, a pragmatic handbook for pastoral workers in Deaf ministry was produced based on their research findings in addition to their observations and ministry experience.

Dissertation Research on Spirituality of Deaf Persons

A mixed-method dissertation research study investigated the experience of spiritual direction utilizing videophone technology between a spiritual director and spiritual directees, all of whom are Deaf.[26] The interview questionnaire used in the study was designed with four major sections: (a) spirituality and the world of worship, (b) spiritual direction, (c) information and communication technology, and (d) hearing loss/deafness. Twelve experts consented to participate in the content validity analysis of the questionnaire. The content validity index (CVI) was employed to evaluate the content validity of the questionnaire. As a result, the questionnaire was reduced from 81 to 77 items, resulting in a CVI of .99, suggesting a high level of content validity.

Queries regarding social inclusion, social exclusion, and social connectedness were present throughout the questionnaire. Following is a sample of open-ended questions from the first section—Spirituality and the

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[25] Key, 1992.

[26] Nancy A. Delich, "Utilizing Communication Technology in Spiritual Direction: The Deaf Experience" (Doctoral dissertation, 2011), *ProQuest Dissertations and Theses Database* (Order No. 3515936).

World of Worship—where experiences of inclusion, social connectedness, and exclusion were probed.

<u>Spirituality and the World of Worship</u>

Q8. Tell me about your experiences when you have felt a closeness/intimacy with God.

Q9. Tell me about your experiences when you felt God was absent in your life.

Q10. Tell me about your experiences with people who have helped you in your spirituality and/or relationship with God.

Q11. Tell me about your experiences with people who have hindered you in your spirituality and/or relationship with God.

Q12. Tell me of events in your life that have helped you in your spirituality and/or relationship with God.

Q13. Tell me of events in your life that have hindered your spirituality and/or relationship with God.

The spiritual and technological experiences of the spiritual directees and the spiritual director were examined utilizing the content-valid questionnaire. Serving as a preliminary investigation for future research studies involving larger numbers of subjects, the dissertation's four participants ranged in age from 37 to 91 years, were Caucasian, had a severe-to-profound hearing loss, and were raised in the Christian faith. The interviews were conducted via direct videophone to videophone where each of the participants was interviewed in his or her own home. The interviews were recorded with a capture card and images were downloaded into the computer. Each interview was transcribed from sign language into written English, and portraitures were developed for each participant. The questionnaire also guided the heuristic inquiry and development of the spiritual director's portraiture.

Three different qualitative analyses were used in the study: (a) an analytic inductive process, (b) a computer-assisted analysis, and (c) collaborative analysis. Relationship, spirituality, spiritual direction, and communication were four common thematic categories that emerged from the three analyses. All four thematic

categories relate to the concept of social connectedness. Salient themes from the analyses were consolidated into eight major themes under the four thematic categories, supporting the four propositions inherent in the study's theoretical framework.

Findings

The spiritual experiences of the spiritual director and the spiritual directees who are Deaf were as diverse as their communication modalities, choice of communication technologies, and personal life histories. They shared the common challenge of accessing knowledge, information, and language impacting all areas of their lives including their spirituality due to their deafness. The experience of communication as well as

Table 1: *Integrated Thematic Categories and Overarching Themes Across Four Spiritual Directees and Spiritual Director (Delich, 2011)*

Thematic Category	Theme Number and Description
Spirituality	1. Accepting Deafness reflects relationships and communication with God
	2. Nurturing a deeper relationship with God through age and maturity
	3. Reconnecting with God through challenges and crises
Spiritual Direction	4. Rediscovering and awakening of self and relationship with God through spiritual direction
Deafness and Connectivity	5. Welcoming greater inclusion through communication technology, access, and support
	6. Discovery autonomy with advances in communication technology
Deafness and Relationship	7. Acknowledging role of others in participants' relationships with God
	8. Recognizing deafness in relationship with others

communication technology was considered highly central to their sense of social connectedness. Though all of the themes relate to the desire for social connection at various levels, space here allows discussion of only a few of them. Table 1 above summarizes the four thematic categories and the corresponding eight themes.

Theme 1: Accepting Deafness Reflects Relationship with God

Challenges, changes, and transformation towards acceptance and integration of their deafness into their identities marked the participants' spiritual journeys. Theological challenges during spiritual direction sessions to various concepts or demands—perfection, normalcy, virtuous suffering, sinfulness, the pressure to triumph over having less than five senses in order to prove oneself worthy or whole as a human being in the eyes of God and others—can assist the Deaf person in moving toward increased self-acceptance. Additionally, removing the medical model of Deaf people from theology to formulate a liberation theology that allows for full personhood is compatible with the cultural experience of deafness. With such modifications, liberation theology can make room for Deaf and disabled people within their unique life situations.[27] In another study, the acceptance of disability and its influence on identity and self-image was expressed as an essential step leading to spiritual progress.[28] Thus, the potential for social connectedness exists where acceptance is present.

Theme 3: Reconnecting with God Through Challenges and Crises

The decision to reconnect with God through challenges and crises served as fodder for transformation and growth in the participants' spiritual journeys. People

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[27] Both Nancy L. Eiesland, *The Disabled God: Toward a Liberatory Theology of Disability* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1994) and Hannah Lewis, *Deaf Liberation Theology* (Cornwall, UK: Ashgate, 2007) propose a redefinition of liberation theology in order to address the marginalization of disabled and Deaf individuals.

[28] Boni Boswell et al., "Dance of Disability and Spirituality," *Journal of Rehabilitation,* vol. 73, no. 4 (2007), 33-40.

commonly experience some challenges and crises that affect their lives. For those who live with differences, whether it is skin color or the absence of one or more of the five senses, distinctive and perhaps greater challenges present themselves regularly. The study participants' social isolation in the world around them due to communication barriers served as catalysts to propel them on the spiritual path. The potentiality for transformation from the effect of trauma and human existence on the spiritual journey served to reconnect the participants' to God despite society's social exclusion and the resulting lack of social connectedness.[29]

Theme 5: Welcoming Greater Inclusion via Communication Technology, Access, and Support

        Today's interactive technology provides unprecedented access, allowing for increased interaction of Deaf people with each other and their world. For the first time, sign language entered cyberspace through broadband and video technologies where Deaf people can communicate using their own language instead of relying on a third party or the written word.[30] The high level of enthusiasm generated by the participants of the interview questions revealed the highly crucial role of communication in their lives as well as the significant benefits of communication technology. Reflecting on her inability to visit with her grandparents on the telephone as a child, one participant stated that yesterday's insurmountable chasm of communication has been miraculously bridged by today's communication technology. Geographical and communication boundaries have been expanded through communication technology, increasing their sense of social connectedness with other Deaf people as well as the hearing community.

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[29] See Robert Grant, *The Way of the Wound: A Spirituality of Trauma and Transformation* (Oakland: Robert Grant, 1996).
[30] See Irene Leigh's chapter on technology, quoting Bernstein, 146-155.

Theme 7: Acknowledging Role of Others in Participants'
Relationships with God

Human development and faith in a relational and cultural context impacts how the individual participates in and creates his or her world of close relationships, culture, class, and society.[31] The De Sales study indicated that the relationship itself with pastoral workers who could communicate with the Deaf members was most helpful in providing support and acceptance. For the dissertation participants, the role of others exerted both a positive and negative influence on how they viewed and related to God. Recognizing the vital role of human relational experiences with significant others through various stories shared by the participants shed light on the role of others on their faith development and relationship with God. Numerous examples of social exclusion and social connectedness were documented in the participants' portraitures.

Theme 8: Recognizing Deaf Consciousness in Relationship
with Others

The term Deafhood describes the day-to-day endeavors of Deaf people by means of continual inner and outer external dialogue to understand the process of who they are and who they are becoming.[32] The understanding of Deafhood and what it means to be a Deaf person in a Deaf community varies from person to person. The participants' evolving recognition of a Deaf consciousness inevitably began with the onset of their hearing loss. The diverse social, cultural, historical, and political constructs, created by both the deaf and hearing

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[31] See Pamela Cooper-White, *Shared Wisdom: Use of the Self in Pastoral Care and Counseling* (Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg Fortress, 2004).

[32] Ladd, 3. Inspired by Ladd's book, a grassroots movement developed around the concept of Deafhood. Its mission is "to celebrate our unique sign languages and richly diverse culture, one that is easily understood through an ongoing shared exchange of thoughts, feelings, and experiences distinctive to ourselves…" Its website, "Deafhood Discussions," presents sections of Ladd's book in American Sign Language for viewing by the Deaf community. See http://www.deafhood.us/wp/ (accessed August 31, 2013)

communities, had critical bearing on their social and communication life experiences.[33] One participant's fears of communicating with hearing people contrasted with another participant's openness to including hearing people in her social circle, which provides insight into how the time period, location, and self-concept is reflected in their experience of social exclusion and social connectedness. Bridging between the deaf and hearing worlds reflected yet another distinctive quality and nature of another participant's relationships, affecting her conscious sense of belonging as one who belongs to neither the deaf nor the hearing communities. As with any healthy construct of consciousness, so with Deaf consciousness: there is a continuum of expression for varying levels of integration of individual, social, and communication life experiences.

Summary of the Two Studies

Language and culture are two relational features of spirituality that were found among Deaf people.[34] It has been observed that Deaf people generally ignore the denominational tradition of their Christian churches and instead are brought together by linguistic and cultural needs.[35] For example, a Roman Catholic Deaf person may attend a Baptist, Episcopalian, or Methodist church where other Deaf people are present. Deaf people may also be members of more than one church and attend the churches in the area where they live. These studies

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[33] Leigh, 2009.

[34] Charlotte Baker-Shenk, "Breaking the Shackles: Liberation Theology and the Deaf Community," *Sojourner,* vol. 14, no. 3 (1985), 30-32; Frederick C. Schreiber, "What a Deaf Jewish Leader Expects of a Rabbi" in *Deaf World: A Historical Reader and Primary Sourcebook,* ed. Lois Bragg (New York, NY: New York University Press, 2001), 33-27; Broesterhuizen, 2005; Ladd, 2007; Lane, Hoffmeister, and Bahan, 1996; Lewis, 2007; Morris, 2008; and Ian Robertson, *Ephphata: Be Opened. The Sacred Narratives of Deaf People—Cross Cultural Opportunities in Religious Education and Praxis* (September 21, 2007), whose paper was presented at St. Thomas University, Miami, Florida. He is in agreement that language and culture distinguishes the Deaf community from other communities and is reflected in its spirituality.

[35] Morris, 123.

suggest that the Deaf community be viewed through a cultural and linguistic lens where for them, social connectedness is more important than denominational boundaries. In order for religious leaders to provide spiritually-sensitive ministry with Deaf people, recognizing and understanding the potential cultural and linguistic underpinnings of their spirituality is essential for Deaf ministry to be relevant to its members.

Recommendations for Developing Deaf Ministry

The geographic location, the needs and abilities of the local Deaf community, their particular interests, and the availability of trained staff will be reflected in the structure and unique characteristics of the Deaf ministry at any given church. Obstacles include limited seminary training for potential deaf and hard of hearing religious leaders as well as financial resources for hard-to-find qualified sign language interpreters. For hearing religious leaders who aspire to connect with Deaf members, there are three potential models of Deaf ministries. They are interpreted ministries, Deaf congregations within a larger hearing church, and Deaf churches.[36]

Interpreted Ministries

Sign language interpreters may be employed to interpret the worship service and other church activities for Deaf individuals. This first model may or may not include a designated Deaf ministry, which is dependent on the size, needs and abilities of the Deaf population within that region.

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[36] Published by the National Committee on Ministries with Deaf, Late-Deafened, Hard of Hearing, and Deaf-Blind People and the Health and Welfare Ministries Unit of the General Board of Global Ministries of The United Methodist Church, their manual provides education and detailed guidance in establishing Deaf ministries. [N. Kingsley (ed.)] To obtain the manual titled, "Signs of Solidarity: Ministries with People who are Deaf, Late-Deafened, Hard of Hearing, and Deaf-Blind," see the website for further information at http://gbgm-umc.org/disc/deafministries.stm (accessed August 31, 2013).

There are several challenges in this model of interpreted ministries. First, finding the right interpreters is often an arduous task, especially in the religious domain. It is crucial that interpreters be knowledgeable about the religious ideas expressed in the scriptures, hymns, sermons, and other parts of the worship service. They also must know the range of religious signs by the particular denomination and local church. Second, budgetary restrictions may limit the church's ability to hire a qualified interpreter should one be found. As such, a church may choose a volunteer with some signing ability without consulting the Deaf members. Such a decision sends a message to Deaf members that their input and involvement are not encouraged in decision-making. Additionally, the signing volunteer may not provide them with full participation in the life of the church. It is not unusual for Deaf people to follow an interpreter from church to church, because it is often harder to find a qualified interpreter than a church that they enjoy attending.

The Deaf Congregation within a Larger Hearing Church

A director of Deaf ministry who is fluent in sign language and paid a part-time salary by the church serving the Deaf congregation within a larger hearing church is the second model of forming a Deaf ministry. Although there are various ways to organize the Deaf ministry within this model, a typical structure includes conducting the worship service in both voice and sign language at the hearing church. The director plans a variety of services for its members such as religious education, fellowship activities, childcare for Deaf children, and committees for continued operation of the Deaf ministry.

The Deaf Church

Members of the Deaf community often prefer a Deaf church to a Deaf congregation within a larger hearing church. Thus, the third model involves the establishment of a Deaf church. In a Deaf church, Deaf members can assume leadership and design their own worship style based on visual needs as well as the cultural values and

abilities of their local Deaf community. They can act as chairpersons of the various committees and decide what educational programs and outreach ministries the church will provide. The language of the Deaf church tends to reflect the knowledge and skills of the pastor as well as the needs of the Deaf community. Of the three models outlined, the Deaf Church is most associated with social connectedness among members of the Deaf community.[37]

Conclusion

In the Gospel of Mark, Jesus singles out the deaf man, takes him aside, and affirms his worthiness as a child of God. Jesus did more than include this man in his ministry. He socially and physically connected with him through love, acceptance, opportunity, justice, equity, and validation as he privately took him aside. The act of social connectedness became a source of healing. Social connectedness can enable leaders of spiritual communities to consciously practice these principles in relation to all those in their congregation, including Deaf members. Jesus understood the deaf man's communication needs through vision and touch and responded accordingly. In the midst of a community devoted to the social connectedness of all people, perhaps this is one of the ultimate challenges of being Church—of being community. What we do as Church signifies everything about our community. It is not just about talking. It is not just about signing. It is about being, doing, and living the values espoused by our faith.

Be opened.

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[37] Another resource for establishing Deaf ministries can be found at the National Council of Churches of Christ in the U.S.A policy website: No barriers for deaf people in churches at http://www.ncccusa.org/assembly/deaf.htm (accessed June 2012). An article guiding spiritual leaders with families who have deaf children within their congregation is highly recommended and can be found through Teresa B. Blankmeyer et al., "Language Needs of Deaf and Hard-of-Hearing Infants and Children: Information for Spiritual Leaders and Communities." *Journal of Religion, Disability & Health,* vol. 15, No. 3 (2011), 272-295.

MINISTRY AS SPIRITUAL PRACTICE: HOW PASTORS LEARN TO SEE AND RESPOND TO THE 'MORE' OF A SITUATION

EILEEN R. CAMPBELL-REED AND CHRISTIAN SCHAREN

Abstract

Christian ministry in a changing and challenging context requires "pastoral imagination," a capacity to perceive the "more" in a situation and act wisely in response. Case studies from the Learning Pastoral Imagination Project show how ministers learn—through everyday pastoral practice and particular moments of ministry—to engage the "more" in situations by 1) seeing what is actually there, 2) recognizing the theological stakes, 3) knowing how to respond, and 4) responding in ways deeply connected to the community of faith and its participation in God. The dynamic of learning over time is key to understanding ministry as spiritual practice.

Introduction

Christian ministry in a changing and challenging context requires "pastoral imagination," a capacity to perceive the "more" in a situation and to act wisely in response. Pastoral imagination not only sees the empirical realities, but also with eyes of faith perceives the presence and work of God, and what a fitting response allows for participating in God.[1] Cultivating a capacity for perception is fundamental to ministry as a spiritual

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[1] Paul Fiddes, *Participating in God: A Pastoral Doctrine of the Trinity* (London, UK: Darton, Longman and Todd, 2000).

practice.[2] Stories drawn from the Learning Pastoral Imagination Project show the spiritual character of pastoral imagination both in *how* pastors learn to see the "more" and *what* is included in the "more." Pastors learn through everyday practice and particular moments of ministry to engage the "more." By immersing themselves in the situation of ministry, they accumulate multiple cases over time, learning through practice how ministry as a spiritual practice requires taking risks, being overwhelmed, and feeling the disjuncture between knowledge and practice.[3]

Scope of Research

The Learning Pastoral Imagination Project is the first major longitudinal, national, and ecumenical study of ministry in practice.[4] At the heart of our study, we are following fifty pastoral leaders recruited from ten seminaries and now serving a wide variety of ministry contexts. Our primary research method is day-long group interviews. We completed one round of interviews during participants' final year of seminary (2009-2010) and a second round 18-24 months later (2011-2012). We intend to continue interviewing this group, anticipating a next round of interviews when ministers are four to five years beyond graduation (2014-2015). We engage in participant observation in several congregations of study participants and interview groups of lay people in those churches.

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[2] Kathleen A. Cahalan, *Introducing the Practice of Ministry* (Collegeville, MN: The Liturgical Press, 2010), 113-16. Cahalan offers a working definition of spirituality as ways we "strive to be in communion with God…cultivate experience of God's presence…be changed in and through this relationship." Cahalan also argues that ministry is not a form of elite spiritual practice and that vocational ministry is supported by a variety of spiritual practices. Specifically we are developing an idea of spiritual practice in ministry that is an embodied and relational experience of God's presence.

[3] The three common experiences of immersion in the practice of ministry are developed conceptually in Campbell-Reed and Scharen, "'Holy cow! This stuff is real!' From Imagining Ministry to Pastoral Imagination," *Teaching Theology and Religion*, vol. 14, No. 4 (October, 2011).

[4] The LPI Project is generously funded by the Lilly Endowment (Grant # 2008 1196–000).

Participants in the study include primarily ordained but also lay ministers serving in Orthodox, Pentecostal, Evangelical and Mainline Protestant, and Roman Catholic contexts. Nearly equal numbers of men and women live in every region of the United States. The group includes ministers who are African-American, Hispanic, Asian, and Caucasian. The group also includes ministers who are straight, gay, single, partnered, parents, and grandparents. The new ministers range in age from the mid-twenties to the mid-sixties, with a median age of thirty-four.[5] The rich diversity of the participants offers compelling insight into how, in a variety of contexts, ministers learn and embody pastoral imagination.

Pastoral Imagination in the Context of Ministry in America

Major upheavals in the religious landscape in America in the last century set in motion at least three major shifts to Christian ministry and theological education. These shifts require new understandings of the person and work of the pastor, and a renewed sense of ministry as spiritual practice. First among these changes, many pastors no longer learn by the holistic "apprenticeship model" but rather through multiple apprenticeships of knowledge, skill, and character formation present in the professional degree programs of theological education schools.[6] Spiritual attentiveness is no longer caught or taught in a one-to-one relationship with an experienced minister

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[5] The median age of 34 reflects participants' ages at the first interviews with seminarians (2009-10).

[6] Charles R. Foster et al., *Educating Clergy: Teaching Practices and Pastoral Imagination* (San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, 2006). Foster et al., following Sullivan's observation of professional education, argue that educating clergy requires three apprenticeships to prepare ministers for their work: 1) a cognitive apprenticeship to gain necessary knowledge, 2) a practical apprenticeship to learn the requisite skills of ministry; and 3) a "normative apprenticeships of professional identity" 7, 25-26, passim. A number of denominations continue to require a year or more internship work (i.e., Lutheran, Episcopal, and Roman Catholic). Jeffrey L. Tribble, Sr., *Transformative Leadership in the Black Church* (New York: Palgrave, 2005), 32-38, gives an account of mentoring for pastoral leadership in a Christian Methodist Episcopal tradition.

over time, and the pieces of the ministry puzzle remain to be integrated by individual ministers.[7] The second major shift is a response to the first: pastors and theological educators focus less on role and identity and more on practice and prudence, depending on multiple mentors and peers to support their formation for ministry.[8] Recently, theological schools have increased their attention to spiritual formation, yet, the necessary attention to practice and making use of knowledge learned in seminary classrooms often still lacks an integrating impulse that only time immersed in ministry makes possible. The question of *how* this integration occurs is central for our research with ministers. Finally, pastoral ministry is no longer exclusively comprised of ordained men in narrowly defined pastoral roles. Women are serving in greater numbers as pastors, and pastoral ministry has been expanded to include a greater diversity of vocations.[9] The expanded ways of understanding pastoral ministry and the greater number of women entering pastoral vocations change the context in which ministry unfolds over time. These clear shifts in ministry give rise to the concept of pastoral imagination, and they underscore the necessity for research into the concrete trajectories people follow as they become mature pastoral leaders.[10] Together the historic shifts invite a new understanding of *ministry as spiritual practice.* Better understanding of ministry as spiritual practice, grounded

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[7] The ELCA is a major exception among mainline denominations in America as it still requires a full year of pastoral apprenticeship in a congregation as a requirement for ordination.

[8] See Cahalan, *Introducing the Practice of Ministry*, 120-129; and James P. Wind and David J. Wood, *Becoming a Pastor: Reflections on the Transition into Ministry— An Alban Institute Special Report* (Herndon, VA: The Alban Institute, 2008).

[9] Jackson Carroll, *God's Potters: Pastoral Leadership and the Shaping of Congregations* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2006), 7. For 2012 statistics, see Eileen Campbell-Reed, "Baptists in Tension: The Status of Women's Leadership and Ministry, 2012," in *The Review and Expositor* (April, 2013), 49-64.

[10] See Christian Scharen, "Learning Ministry over Time: Embodying Practical Wisdom," in *For Life Abundant: Practical Theology, Theological Education and Christian Ministry,* eds. Dorothy C. Bass and Craig Dykstra (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2008), 265-288.

in concrete experience, offers support for pastoral vocations and also responds to the recent shifts.

Malinda's Story: Showing Ministry as Spiritual Practice

Malinda, twenty-six, didn't spend her early childhood in church.[11] Her parents divorced when she was young, and Malinda spent many weekends with her non-religious mother. Her father did not take her to a Christian church until late elementary school. She says, "I had a pretty unstable childhood, so the times that I did go to church, it was a safe place." She found adults to look up to and a place of belonging in the youth group. Although Malinda "always felt like a Christian," she reached a "point of conversion," late in her childhood. She remembers feeling "depressed and suicidal" and coming to a time when she says, "I really felt like I had to lay down my life before God." Following that experience, Malinda felt like her life was no longer her own, but God's. Her church urged everyone to understand God's calling for their lives, so Malinda says she often prayed, "God, what do you want me to do with my life? Please show me."

As a teenager, Malinda experienced a powerful first-hand encounter with the sacred. After spending a day alone worshiping by a lake, Malinda heard God's voice promising to be present and to help her any time she spoke. Malinda felt very excited by the experience, having felt a tugging toward ministry for a while. This moment confirmed her call to ministry. In the months and years that followed, Malinda struggled with intellectual doubts and initial apathy from her family, as well as a response from her pastor she found disappointing.[12] Yet she

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[11] Names and some non-essential details and characteristics have been changed in the case to provide anonymity.

[12] Malinda's feelings of disappointment and lack of support resonate with recent findings by Sheryl Sandberg (with Nell Scovell) in *Lean In: Women, Work and the Will to Lead* (New York: Knoff, 2013). The book identifies numerous research findings, describing in detail not only an achievement gap between women and men, but also an ambition gap for working women. The cultural expectations for success remain lower for women than men in numerous professions. And women do not see themselves nearly as often as

persistently hung on to the memory of God's voice and presence as a powerful force in her life.

Malinda's pastor advised her first to "make sure you know that your call is from God," and second to have that calling "confirmed in the church," urging her involvement in church and school. Malinda was initially offended by the advice, thinking it a dismissal of her experience. Later, however, she could see the value in it, especially because the pastor found ways to invite her leadership in the church and youth group. After graduating from high school she spent a summer interning at the same church. Malinda says, "I loved every minute of it. I felt at home. I was finally doing ministry."

In college Malinda studied classics, making preparation for seminary her highest priority. In her senior year she wrote a capstone thesis about predestination, wrestling with the thorniest concept of her Reformed tradition. Malinda says she did not fully untangle the arguments or "reconcile it intellectually," yet she found writing the thesis liberating. Eventually a trip to Israel during seminary allowed her to witness first hand "the gracious character of God for his [sic] people Israel." She saw God's mercy even in "the midst of war" and felt God's presence was "palpable." She says the trip opened her to "a loving encounter with the God who acts with mercy and graciousness towards all his children rather than of a God I needed to understand and question." She felt first hand "God's love for people even when they have messed up." Regarding her own faith tradition, Malinda felt as if "God brought me back…and it was not my own doing."

A powerful confirmation for ministry came for Malinda in her second year of seminary when she

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desiring or achieving success in the workplace. Another study finds the ambitions of young women are "converging" with those of men, and both are seeking workplaces that "accommodate personal and family values as part of the way they accomplish their work." See "Millennials and the Corporate World Executive Summary" http://www.bentley.edu/centers/center-for-women-and-business/millennials-and-corporate-world (accessed July 24, 2013)

returned to preach at her home congregation. Earlier that summer she began learning in Clinical Pastoral Education how ministry requires slowing down, focusing on the moment, and really being present with people. She brought this learning into the pulpit when she preached for her home congregation. Malinda recalls, "It all came together, and I preached a really good sermon and afterwards people said, 'This is what you were meant to be doing.'"

The summer after Malinda graduated from seminary, a small, rural church in the Southern U.S. called her as pastor. She is the only full-time staff person in a congregation that has employed a succession of pastors serving brief tenures. When she started, Malinda asked church leaders about a job description. The reply was: "No, the pastor does whatever they want." In her first year, Malinda learned that the congregation had very little knowledge or confidence about their own leadership abilities, expecting she would do most of the work, and fearing she would soon depart for a bigger congregation. Everyone in the congregation wanted her to visit, yet she often learned about church family illnesses and deaths after the fact and second-hand. She hoped for a first call with "lots of systems in place" she could learn from, but what she found were few, if any, working systems for ministry. The conflicting expectations created a set of double-binds for Malinda.[13]

Malinda tackled the challenges head on. She dove into the relationships and everyday work of ministry, taking risks and owning her responsibility for the work. She decided to create a training event for the Church Council, adapting a class project on church polity (she said, with irony in her voice, "*Something* came in handy from seminary!"). At times she was overwhelmed by her situation, and saw herself on a "steep learning curve."

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[13] Christie Cozad Neuger, *Counseling Women: A Narrative Pastoral Approach* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 2000), 45, discusses the problem of "double-binds" like the one Malinda faced in the incommensurable expectations from her congregation.

For instance a death in the church matriarch's extended family only came to Malinda's attention four days after the funeral. Another family member told her, "You know, the family's really upset that you didn't go visit them." Malinda replied, "For what?" She felt stunned to learn: "They had been mad at me for a week-and-a-half for something that I had no idea that I was supposed to do." The next day she spent five hours with the family. From being pulled up short, Malinda recovered and began a process of honing the skills of perception and attention she needed for the work of ministry.[14] In cultivating her practice of ministry, Malinda learned both from immersion in everyday tasks and skills and also through "learning things by messing up."

The "Rerun Sermon Series"

About nine months into her call, Malinda realized just how much dissonance she was feeling between the demands of the practice of ministry and the amount and kind of knowledge and know-how she needed to do the work well. "It's hard enough to try to figure how to do a budget and the day-to-day tasks." But Malinda also wanted more knowledge and know-how for pastoral counseling. She felt inspired to offer a "Sermon Favorites Series" in the summer to make time for additional reading and learning about ministry basics and also for visiting everyone in the congregation.

Seeing a Situation

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[14] Deborah Kerdeman, "Self-Understanding as a Focus of Teaching and Learning" in *Education and Practice: Upholding the Integrity of Teaching and Learning,* eds. Joseph Dunne and Pádraig Hogan (London: Blackwell, 2004), 144-58. Kerdeman observes that being "pulled up short" is a "deep recognition [which] confronts the fundamental limits of what human beings know and can do," (154). In "The Unfolding Pastoral Imagination" we contrast the different responses to being pulled up short in the experience of a new minister versus a much more seasoned pastor. Feeling unsure about how to respond to a parishioner's critique and apparent anger is expected for new pastors and appropriate responses can only be learned over time within the practice itself.

Initially Malinda thought a month would be enough time to step away from weekly sermon preparation and allow time for more reading and visiting, as well as greater attention to her sermon delivery. The choir director liked the idea and encouraged her to extend the series for the summer. That was more time than she imagined, but Malinda took the idea to the Church Council. They approved it enthusiastically.

In response to her sense of being overwhelmed by what she did not know, Malinda took responsibility for her learning and took a risk in trying something novel in the congregation and for herself. At the same time, Malinda's perceptive capacity to see the "more" of the situation was still developing, which contributed to her missing some of the situation and not being able yet to imagine the full range of consequences of choosing to spend the summer this way. Her hope was to bring together knowledge and know-how to make greater use of the knowledge in pastoral care and preaching. In other words, Malinda saw what she needed and improvised a plan. She sought approval and found welcome for the idea.

As the summer went along, Malinda noticed two seemingly unrelated things. First, she was surprised how attendance remained high: the plan seemed to be working. However, she also noticed the absence of one prominent and well-connected leader, the church matriarch's adult daughter. Malinda learned that Maureen was coming to Sunday school and then departing before worship. Malinda knew "something was up."

Maureen was also in training as a lay pastor and involved with the regional governing body. One day mid-summer, Malinda decided to find out what was up so she spoke to Maureen to say she had been missing her. Maureen told her she had been visiting other churches as part of her regional committee work. A few weeks later at a regional meeting, Malinda asked how the church visiting was going. Maureen replied, "Well, I've just been visiting other churches while you've been doing your sermon rerun series." When she said this Malinda noticed

that Maureen's face and body communicated a great deal of anger. Malinda's initial response was, "Oh, okay," because she felt uncertain how to respond.[15] At that very moment the meeting reconvened, giving Malinda longer to think about her next response.

Between these two meetings, Malinda noticed other things were stirred up in the Church Council. Maureen's husband Duke, and her mother Janice, the church matriarch, were members of the Council. As the first year anniversary of Malinda's call to the church approached, she wanted some congregational feedback, and suggested to the Church Council they do an evaluation. Before taking her first call to ministry, Malinda noted, "It's funny how you might not necessarily have a sense of how you're doing unless you get feedback. You might preach this great sermon, but if nobody ever tells you what they think, then you don't really know. It's funny how dependent our jobs are on other people telling us how we're doing." Again Malinda's instincts were right on target. She knew she needed evaluation in order to improve, but her inability to perceive the "more" in the congregation was not developed enough to avoid this situation going in directions she did not welcome.[16]

Malinda only imagined a few open-ended questions for the evaluation, allowing members to offer their thoughts. However, Duke was in charge of evaluations, and he created a detailed questionnaire with more than 45 Likert-scale questions and space for additional

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[15] Learning to make use of skills and knowledge requires an ability and willingness to be "pulled up short," emphasizing "not proficiency and power, but proclivity for self-questing and doubt." Moments like this one in Malinda's experience put her in a place of learning from uncertainty. See Kerdeman, "Self-Understanding as a Focus of Teaching and Learning," 144.

[16] See Scott Cormode, "Cultivated Instincts," http://leadership.fuller.edu/Leadership/Classes/CF565/Wk01-03/Cultivated_Instincts.aspx (accessed June 25, 2013). See also Scott Cormode, "Constructing Faithful Action: Inculcating a Method for Reflective Ministry," *Journal of Religious Leadership* vol. 3, No. 2 (2003): 221-276. He argues for a process of theological education that cultivates "instincts for ministry" and nurtures in new ministers an "ability to sense where and when to take the next step," 65.

comments. The first item was "preaches a weekly sermon." Another item was "integrally involved in planning Vacation Bible School," an expectation which surprised Malinda. When she saw the evaluation in an email the next week, Malinda recognized aspects of the pastor's job that had been topics of rumors. Still other items were pasted in from a committee member's "mechanical engineer evaluation." Despite initially hearing church members say, "No, the pastor does whatever they want," there was more to the story. Only much later did Malinda come to see how the evaluation reflected the original advertisement for her job.

Improvising a response and taking a risk with preaching as part of the pastoral life led Malinda to a new situation with more overwhelming and even greater disjuncture between knowledge and practice, and with higher stakes for the outcome of her choices and action. As the situation emerged, a combination of factors slowly took shape in Malinda's perception. There was "more" to the situation than the individual stories. Malinda saw the feelings of her parishioners—on their faces and in their absence. She perceived the overly long evaluation form, and the emphasis on particular questions, as attempts to tell her more. And there was more at stake in the situation than her own learning. She began to make connections and "to read between the lines and see what people are really saying."

Recognizing Theological and Spiritual Stakes

In the space that opened up for Malinda to "read between the lines" she was cultivating her sense of perception about what was at stake theologically and spiritually in the situation. Thinking back over the year, Malinda could also see the theological and spiritual importance of different aspects of the situation for herself and the congregation. During the first year of ministry, Malinda was accumulating a storehouse of four kinds of knowledge: about herself, the church context, relationships of power, and ritual practices of ministry. Each of these, and their combined depth of knowing,

opened up the kind of pastoral imagination that ministry as spiritual practice requires.

Malinda could see that she needed more and different knowledge, and she needed to put it into use in relational and embodied ways she had only imagined in seminary, but had not yet tried in pastoral practice.[17] First of all, Malinda's self-knowledge expanded in that year, moving her to the edges of her pastoral skills and knowledge, helping her learn through "messing up," and giving her many opportunities to respond when she found herself surprised. Through asking for and receiving feedback at various points in her first year, Malinda expanded her capacity to see the "more," and she demonstrated a kind of humility needed for seeing with "eyes of faith."[18] As Malinda learned to see the "more" in each of these ways, her budding pastoral imagination was shaping her ministry as spiritual practice.

Second, in the church context, Malinda identified many theological and spiritual aspects of the situation both leading to and unfolding at the point of her conflict with the Council. The lack of a pastoral job description, the history of the congregation, and its tenuousness of trust for their pastors, as well as a lack of shared

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[17] Previously we have argued for understanding ministry as a kind of skilled knowing that is embodied and relational: "both muscular and neurological, but not conscious." Both *phronesis* and *habitus* offer conceptual frameworks for articulating the kind of situated knowing required for pastors to become adept at their work, such that their "use of knowledge about being a pastor moves to the background and appears integrated and even natural." See "'Holy cow! This stuff is real!' From Imagining Ministry to Pastoral Imagination," 326-27.

[18] See Craig Dykstra, "Pastoral and Ecclesial Imagination," in *For Life Abundant: Practical Theology, Theological Education and Christian Ministry*, eds. Dorothy C. Bass and Craig Dykstra (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2008), 59. Dykstra says, "Through eyes of faith, pastors come to see the abundance that is before them and that surrounds them already. Through eyes of faith, they can see what gifts they have been given in the people who, however flawed, are the members of their congregations. Likewise, through eyes of faith, the members of congregations come to see the abundance that is before them and surrounding them, too. And, through those eyes, they can recognize what gifts they have been given in the people who, however flawed, have become their pastors."

partnership in ministry were all at stake in the situation. The relational connections and unfolding stories of Janice, Maureen, and Duke also seemed to be shaped by "more" than was immediately evident, things that would take time to become clear. She misperceived the message "the pastor does whatever they want" as the end rather than the beginning of a congregational story and expectation. Malinda also drew on a larger pool of wisdom from her tradition to understand her situation: "So the evaluation form comes up and meanwhile, in the back of my mind, I'm thinking maybe this is why pastors only have Council members evaluate them one-on-one, or there's normally a personnel or staff team. Maybe this is why you don't have congregational feedback." Malinda began to perceive how trust between pastor and congregation as well as faithfulness to calling and tradition were important aspects of the situation.

Third, the central family who led the Council shaped dynamics of power in the congregation. Long-term underlying layers of history between the congregation and its pastors played a key role as well. Church members had come to expect little in the way of longevity, believing Malinda, like the others before her, "would go off and get a big church." At the same time, they expected a great deal from the pastors regarding the daily and weekly work of the church. For example, when the women of the church planned a special event they insisted on finding a time when Malinda could attend. As they planned, Malinda realized she had a scheduling conflict with an out-of-town wedding. She told the women, "I don't have to be there. You all can have it without me." She was trying to avoid the pastor-centered assumption that she had to attend every event. They replied, "No, no. We don't want any of that. We can just do it again next year." Then one woman commented, "But you might not be here next time." Malinda looked at the woman and asked, "Well, what makes you think I won't be here next time?" And she said, "Because the last time it took us eleven years to get around to thinking about it again, and you won't be here in eleven years." Malinda described a sense

within the comments: "It's a mentality of we're not good enough for somebody to stay."

Malinda's questions about the history of the congregation revealed that previous pastors had experienced "burn out," something she was feeling also, because she "was doing everything for them." Spiritually and theologically this accumulated history of dependency and tenuous connections with previous pastors raised questions for Malinda about the faith community's need for forgiveness and reconciliation, and how a sense of belonging and partnership might be cultivated.

Fourth, through the first year Malinda was immersed in the everyday ritual practices of preaching, giving care, teaching and training the Council and congregation, leading in worship, administrative tasks, and participating in communal life. She saw gaps in her pastoral knowledge and know-how.[19] For example it took time to recognize how to "discern what is important and unimportant" and how to "develop some good boundaries with my congregation" regarding responses with e-mails and phone calls. Malinda was learning in that first year to "live in the moments" where she found herself. Setting a schedule is "a fine line to walk," says Malinda, "because if I'm too lax, then I end up writing sermons on my day off." She began to aim for a schedule with "flexible room" in it. She recognized how Sunday mornings at the back of the church brought people shaking her hand,

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[19] Describing Malinda's dilemma exactly, Bonnie Miller-McLemore says to theological educators: "Those who come into the classroom must leave better prepared to do something, whether that be to listen, worship, preach, lead, form, teach, oversee, convert, transform, or pursue justice. They need theological know-how. They need more than just the capacity to '*think* theologically' (the focus of plenty of books on reflective practice and the heart of many treatises on practical theology), but also the capacity to '*practice* theology' by putting theology into action through one's body on the ground." See "Practical Theology and Pedagogy: Embodying Theological Know-How" in *For Life Abundant: Practical Theology, Theological Education and Christian Ministry*, eds. Dorothy C. Bass and Craig Dykstra (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2008), 173.

telling her what was going on in their lives, and setting her week's schedule.

Her perception of the situation was not merely an accumulation of complex knowledge about theological and spiritual stakes of the situation. Her pastoral imagination was also an increasing ability to see in and through all that she knew, to what mattered most for responding to the situation at hand. The biggest test of this kind of situated, embodied, and accumulated knowledge came at the end of Malinda's first year in the conflict over her job-evaluation. The situation forced her to make multiple responses to the Council and congregation.

Knowing How to Respond

One week in particular required Malinda to act quickly and make multiple responses in the moment. It began with an email on a Saturday from Duke asking if she would approve the evaluation form so he could hand it out at church the next day. She had the presence of mind to respond immediately by suggesting it would be a better process to have it approved by the Council. By the next morning, having slept on it, she gave Duke a firm "no." She had sent the evaluation to some friends to check it out with them, and heard back the response, "Not even Jesus himself could live up to some of these things!" It felt particularly wrong to Malinda to approve such a detailed evaluation when she had no job description. Pondering her plight, she wondered if this kind of situation shows why it is important to have a personnel team for the pastor!

Early the next week, in preparation for the Council meeting, Duke sent out the evaluation to the Council, and also to other family members and church members (an Elder later told Malinda). When she arrived at the Council meeting, half the Council was out sick. Only Duke, his mother-in-law Janice, and the clerk were present. She recalls feeling like "it was just them and me." Yet just here, her theological bedrock—a belief in God's presence in the midst of whatever is going on—

supported her desire to seek a way through the situation. She resigned herself to the circumstances, thinking they would just go ahead with the evaluation questionnaire. She did, after all, believe that feedback was important for ministry! She recalls saying to herself, "I asked for it. It's my own fault. I got myself into this. I'll just suck it up this year and if they're horrible, they're horrible." She expressed concern about not having a job description and having to live up to expectations she knew nothing about, which Duke "promised to mention as he handed them out."

In the midst of the meeting, and to Malinda's surprise, Duke offered to give feedback on the spot. Malinda responded, "I hope you feel like you can come to me and give me feedback at any time. Yes, I would love some feedback." He then told her the "Rerun Sermon Series" was a failure, and some people were looking at other churches. Malinda had a wide range of positive comments in her recent memory resulting from visits to members' homes (part of the point of the series). She drew upon the strength of these good conversations to remind the Council they approved "Sermon Favorites Series." She began to realize when members of Duke's family "come to Council and say things like, 'people are leaving, everyone's upset,' it means one person in their family." In this case, the one important member of the family was Duke's wife, Maureen. Malinda felt this insight came slowly, but was crucial for her ability to hear feedback and respond. The next day, the Council clerk called her to check up on her, having felt badly about the tenor of the meeting.

They agreed on Rally Day a few weeks hence to hand out the survey. However, Duke was on the steps of the church the very next Sunday handing the evaluation out to everyone after the service. All surveys were to be returned to him, so he could write a summary report for the Council. Malinda worried the reports could be misunderstood by Council. Yet she felt strangely calm knowing this clash had given her the opportunity to understand some of the key dynamics in the

congregation. She responded to them in such a way to both establish her own authority and keep in relationship with those—Duke's family included—whom she felt in conflict with through these weeks. Exactly here, in the first major crisis of her ministry, Malinda stayed relationally connected: to God, to her critics, to the wider congregation, and to friends and supporters beyond the local scene. These connections, and her humble spirit of learning with and from her practice in ministry, opened her to what one might call a careful vulnerability offered with hope of deepened relationship over time, and the possibility of shared ministry.

Responding to the Community as Participation in God

As Malinda reflected about the whole summer and the sermon series, she asked herself, "Did I discern this wrong?" And yet she says, "Throughout the process I had some confirmation every single week that the sermon I was preaching that week was the exact right sermon. . . I was worried that I wouldn't be able to get into the sermon because it would be old, but I felt like every week I could climb back in and really mean what I was saying, and it was a great experience. I think I grew as a preacher in learning how I deliver sermons, and I got to read. I got to visit more. I had some great things come out of visitations for people that weren't really involved in church and now feel like they have a connection. Lots of good things came out of it." Yet, following a week of the unfolding drama around the evaluations, Malinda was saying to herself, "Wow, maybe I really did screw this up. Maybe I really did discern this wrong."

During the late weeks of the summer, Malinda made good use of her peer connections in a regional support group for new pastors, and with other friends, to vent some of her experience and hear the confirmation, "No, you're not crazy. It wasn't you." This collegial feedback loop allowed Malinda to come to the Council meeting without bringing the self-doubt and anxiety of the situation. Instead she says, "I got to say what's deeply, truly hidden way down in my heart." What she said to the

council that night—after they offered their feedback to her—was this: "Seminary does not train you to be a pastor; it trains you how to think theologically. You have to tell me how to be your pastor. I don't know that. You have to tell me what you need from me as your pastor." Saying this directly to them was "a great moment." It also allowed the Council members to "let their guard down…and be vulnerable."

Malinda's asking of the Council directly for help in becoming their pastor led to more honest feedback from them as well. One said, "The sermon series isn't working, [because] for most of the members of the church, the sermon is the highlight of their week." In the moment Malinda explained away the comment to herself as a social desire "to be with friends and family and have fellowship." She also imagined it was "some other minister or somebody else inspiring them." But after going home and thinking about it, she was "willing to let in the incredible compliment" and the grace they were offering: the sermon is the highlight of the week for some. Malinda says it taught her "to look for the good in things and to read between the lines to see what people are really saying."

In late childhood, Malinda experienced laying down her life for God so that it was not hers alone. Her sense of participation in God's love, reconciliation, and purpose came powerfully in that moment when she was worshipping alone at the lake and felt God's call to ministry and promise of presence. Now that the reality of that vocational call was emerging in practice, Malinda's sense of belonging and participation in God was also expanding. She could see herself with increasing honesty and humility, and could accept the grace, the "compliments" about her preaching, which were offered to her. She was willing to do her own processing with other pastors and mentors who could hear her worries, and offer enough assurance to help her take greater risk in being vulnerable with her Council and congregation.

In her appropriate vulnerability, naming the community's work of helping her learn to be their pastor,

Malinda also invited greater vulnerability from the Council. Rather than extending a crisis, pastor and people were able for one "great moment" to see and hear each other with more partnership and less dependency. She was strengthening the congregation's leaders by inviting them into a greater sense of belonging, which eventually led to shifting roles on the Council where gifts and skills matched more adequately with the jobs each person was doing. And it opened the way for greater shared responsibility for worship, pastoral care, and the overall life and work of the community of faith.

Malinda could see the spiritual and theological possibilities of her situation rather than just the deficit of church leaders who were overly critical of her performance. She had learned through small failures and "messing up" during her first year, which helped prepare her to face the bigger crisis. In the months that followed this incident, she began to speak increasingly about the need to "envision the work and relationship with the pastor" rather than focus on "job performance." This eventually helped the Council adopt a more meaningful description of her work and embrace their work of teaching Malinda to be their pastor.

Conclusions

If Malinda had seen and acted only from of the deficit of the church leaders' critique, she might have embodied a number of problematic responses. First, she could have given into her anger, felt unjustly accused, or retaliated. Had she done this, the crisis would have escalated and perhaps unraveled the possibility of good ministry in this congregation. Second, she could have taken in the criticism, allowing it to deflate her confidence and damage her self-image. Had she done this, she might have withdrawn from engagement, an equally problematic response in relation to the hope for her ongoing faithful ministry in their midst. Instead, Malinda did not overreact in either direction—she describes developing a "hard but permeable shell" for dealing with these sorts of challenges. Her even keel allows her to recognize the

implicit expectations rooted in the history of the congregation: a double-binding message that pastors leave *and* pastors do all the work of the church. By staying connected to the members and the processes of the church, she does not fall into the trap of reproducing the same story, or give in to negative dynamics threatening to undermine her ministry leadership.

Instead, Malinda effectively engages in ministry with her congregation with honesty and humility. In the spaces where Malinda took responsibility and risk for her own learning, felt overwhelmed by her situation, and experienced a disjuncture between knowledge and practice, she increasingly found ways to stay connected with parishioners, to learn from her missteps and times when she was pulled up short, and to improvise her leadership. She drew upon her deep understanding of God's presence in her life in order to lead her congregation toward more vulnerable engagement and participation in the communal life and practices of God.

Malinda grew in her capacity to recognize the "more" of the situations in her first year of ministry, and this growth made all the difference. Ministry as spiritual practice, in Malinda's case, includes attending to and learning from: the character of her own life (humility), her new context (faithful participation), the dynamics of power (belonging and partnership), and the ritual practices of ministry (significance of practice over time). Malinda's deepened knowledge of these aspects of ministry expands her capacity for pastoral imagination and shows the character of ministry as a spiritual practice. Malinda says, "It is interesting to reflect back on how God is working." Indeed, in a crucial moment at the end of her first year of ministry, she was able to open herself in vulnerability to the congregation's leadership, allowing God to turn a moment of impasse into a moment of grace.

Integrative Decision-making For Christian Leaders: Prudence, Organizational Theory, and Discernment Practices

Paul Kaak, Gary Lemaster, and Rob Muthiah

Abstract

Good Christian decision-making needs to be multifaceted. The approach to faith-based decision-making set forth in this essay incorporates three elements and recommends their integrated application for church leaders. We begin by drawing on the insights of Aristotle and Aquinas in relation to the virtue of prudence and its relevance for decision-making. Second, we work with resources from organizational theory, in particular models for decision-making from Charles Kepner, Benjamin Tregoe, and Victor Vroom. Finally, we draw upon the church's discernment traditions and describe congregational practices that might be embraced in relation to decision-making. We suggest that such an integrative approach offers the best possibility for making thoughtful, God-honoring decisions.

Introduction

How should church leaders make decisions? Some pastors emphasize waiting on the Lord for wisdom and guidance regarding a decision, an idea that has deep scriptural roots. Prayerfully seeking God's guidance is crucial, but at times it has been taken to a passive extreme which may reflect poor stewardship of additional resources God has made available for us. Other pastors, following decades of development in organizational and leadership studies, emphasize analytical processes and strategies that have emerged from that corpus of literature. While this approach has many strengths, it often leaves God completely out of the conversation. Still

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other pastors work on instinct or intuition. Such an approach can draw significantly on one's experience and gifts, but fails to benefit from probing the complexity of a situation.

Rather than settling for a single approach, we suggest that good Christian decision-making needs to be multifaceted. We need to draw on our faith tradition and also draw on ideas that have emerged from the thinking and research capabilities with which God has endowed humans. As Craig Van Gelder notes, "Relying primarily on one method, whether it is in relation to biblical teaching or scientific explanation, is no longer viable, if it ever was."[1] Van Gelder calls for an integrative approach, and this paper seeks to respond to that call.

Our approach to faith-based decision-making incorporates three elements and recommends their integrated application for church decision-makers. We begin by drawing on the Greek philosopher Aristotle and the Catholic philosopher Thomas Aquinas and their insights on virtues. We will focus specifically on the virtue of prudence and how it relates to decision-making. Second, we will work with resources from organizational theory, in particular models for decision-making from Charles Kepner, Benjamin Tregoe, and Victor Vroom. Finally, we draw upon the church's discernment traditions and describe congregational practices that might be embraced in relation to decision-making. We suggest that such an integrative approach offers the best possibility for making thoughtful, God-honoring decisions.

Moral Practice: The Classic/Christian Virtue of Prudence

Christian leaders are expected to be virtuous (1 Tim. 3; Jam. 2). The scriptural language of holiness (1 Thes. 2:10; Tit. 1:8), righteousness (2 Tim. 2:22), and godliness (1 Tim. 6:11) has a legitimate link to the ancient Greek

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[1] Craig Van Gelder, *The Ministry of the Missional Church: A Community Led by the Spirit* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2007), 97.

idea of virtuousness.[2] The revival of Aristotelian virtue in the 13th century writings of Thomas Aquinas illustrates the possibility of a thoughtful integration of Aristotelian and Christian thought. Aquinas' work on virtue is both a redemption of Aristotle's work in the *Nicomachean Ethics* and an advancement of it from a theological perspective.

The virtue of prudence (*phronesis*, or "practical wisdom") is of particular interest here because it has to do with decision-making. Prudence points to the wisdom that leads to a good decision as well as the appropriate actions that follow. It is considered by both Aristotle and Aquinas to be central to the overall development of the virtuous person.[3] Thomist philosopher Joseph Pieper says, "The fact is that nothing less than the whole ordered structure of the Occidental Christian view of man [sic] rests upon the pre-eminence of prudence over the other virtues."[4] C.S. Lewis sums up the idea as "practical common sense, taking the trouble to think out what you are doing and what is likely to come of it."[5]

The Old Testament contains ideas that are similar to Aristotelian prudence. In the Hebrew Scriptures, it is the word *wisdom* that typically is applied in this way. (Although *phronesis* itself is found a number of times in the LXX translation of Proverbs.) Wise King Solomon was being prudent when he made a judgment regarding the infant and the question of the two mothers. Solomon drew on wisdom to make a just decision and followed through with the appropriate action. In the New

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[2] One reason the Greek term *arete* (excellence, or virtue) is not frequently used in the New Testament is that the Aristotelean idea of excellence made the person the measure of him/herself. A person who is functioning and flourishing *as a person* is a virtuous person. Paul wouldn't disagree (Col. 3, esp. v. 10) but he would suggest that the Christian person has a different measure – Christ (Rom. 5:15-19) – and a different aim: the glory of God (Phil. 1:9-11).

[3] Linda Trinkaus Zagzebski, *Virtues of the Mind: An Inquiry into the Nature of Virtue and the Ethical Foundations of Knowledge* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 212-213.

[4] Joseph Pieper, *The Four Cardinal Virtues* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1966), 3.

[5] C.S. Lewis, *The Complete C.S. Lewis Signature Classics [Mere Christianity]* (New York: HarperCollins, 2002), 70.

Testament, prudence is akin to what Paul calls "the belt of truth" in Ephesians 6:14, which symbolizes the capacity to see things truthfully and to then apply other aspects of the spiritual armor as appropriate.

Angela McKay, in her work on the moral philosophy of Aquinas, catalogs the stages toward making a prudent decision this way:

> First, the individual must take counsel, or consider the various courses of action open to him [sic]. Second, he must come to a judgment about the correct course of action. Finally, he must apply this judgment in action by issuing an imperative about what is to be done.[6]

Ideally these "stages" are less procedural and more intuitive. Furthermore, they are never generic. As Aristotle says, "practical wisdom [does not] deal only with universals. It must also be familiar with particulars, since it is concerned with action and action has to do with particulars."[7] Furthermore, it is the role of prudence to let the agent know what virtues are needed, how much of them are needed, and the timing in which they should be applied.[8]

In speaking of what it takes for a clergyperson to acquire a "pastoral imagination," Campbell-Reed and Scharen say, "To develop prudence for pastoral leadership, such that the sights, sounds, feelings and relational character of the situation effectively tell us

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[6] Angela M. McKay, "The Infused and Acquired Virtues in Aquinas' Moral Philosophy" (Dissertation at University of Notre Dame, 2004), 97. This process is very similar to what contemporary leadership scholars Tichy and Bennis refer to in their book, *Judgment: How Winning Leaders Make Great Calls* as (1) Pre: What happens before the leader makes the decision; (2) The Call: What the leader does as he or she makes the decision that helps it turn out to be the right one; (3) Execution: What the leader must oversee to make sure the call produces the desired results (2007), 20. Their framework offers helpful details for what typically happens for leaders at each of these stages (42). Notably, neither Aristotle nor Aquinas are cited by Tichy and Bennis.

[7] Aristotle, *Nichomachean Ethics* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall, Inc. 1999), 157.

[8] Important, but not described here, is Aristotle's famous doctrine of the mean as found in the *Nichomachean Ethics*.

what to do, we need time and opportunity to experience the practice of ministry itself."[9] This assertion is also true for the church's entire leadership team consisting of both ordained and non-ordained individuals. Everyone needs time to develop this virtue since it is required for good decisions, individually and collectively.

The prudence of Christians (reflecting a major Thomistic innovation on Aristotelian doctrine) is buttressed by the theological virtues of faith, hope, and love. Aristotle's aim—the excellent human—is not a sufficient *telos* for the believer whose commitment also includes reflecting the way of Christ. This is one way that Aquinas takes his readers beyond Aristotle. Prudence for Christians is directed toward service of God and the community, not only toward becoming an excellent human.

For prudence to take a robustly Christian form, another feature should be acknowledged. In his book *Pagan Virtues*, John Casey notes, "The man [sic] of practical wisdom cannot be imagined to exist outside a tradition….Intelligent goodness does not spring fully disarmed from nowhere, but requires the support of a tradition of human life."[10] In their commentary on Casey, Hauerwas and Pinches note:

> Practical wisdom cannot be had without a cross-generational community in which a tradition of practices is passed on, sustained, and modified…. Traditionally *justice* is the virtue which orders and sustains the community of virtue.…Casey sets about to describe the sort of community in which justice is possible. It is, essentially, a community of friendship.[11]

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[9] Ellen R. Campbell-Reed and Christian Scharen, "The Unfolding of Pastoral Imagination: Prudence as Key to Learning Ministry," in *Reflective Practice: Formation and Supervision in Ministry*, 32 (2012), 102.

[10] John Casey, *Pagan Virtues: An Essay in Ethics* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1990), 170.

[11] Stanley Hauerwas and Charles Pinches, *Christians among the Virtues: Theological Conversations with Ancient and Modern Ethics* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1997), 96.

Prudent friendship is the way in which the tradition is passed on and sustained.

This focus on friendship is found in Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics*.[12] Such a community, or in New Testament language, *koinonia*, or the family of God, consists of spiritual brothers and sisters. Aristotle offers a further benefit, beyond simple friendship: "We may also get some sort of training in virtue or excellence from living together with good men[sic]."[13] Campbell-Reed and Scharen offer reinforcement: "Learning the knowledge and skills required for making wise judgments is best accomplished alongside mentors and peers who can share in the deliberative learning."[14] Mature prudence requires friendship.

While this shared deliberative learning occurs in the presence of virtuous friends, it occurs, as Casey notes, within a tradition. In fact, what is right is determined within the reality of three traditions, or narratives: 1) the grand narrative of the Kingdom of God, 2) a particular doctrinal or denominational narrative, and 3) the local narrative of a family of believers. To get at a good decision—to lead prudently—congregational leaders will need to honor these stories and perhaps critique them. In the midst of his complex outworking of this idea, Don Browning explains:

> In Aristotle, practical reason has the capacity to review rationally the history of ends supplied by our virtue-shaped passions and determine their relative and lasting value. When reflective review finds these tradition-shaped ends lacking, practical reason can supply a more adequate rational principle that mediates between the extremes,

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[12] Christians can embrace only a partial application of Aristotle's concept of virtuous friendships. For a Christian critique of Aristotle on this point, see Hauerwas and Pinches, Chapter 5, "Friendship and Fragility."

[13] Aristotle, 11.

[14] Campbell-Reed and Scharen, 103.

thereby guiding us in a more satisfactory total direction.[15]

Prudent leadership in the church locates meaning in the stories that inform the decision-making process. These leaders also need to make use of those stories in a fair-minded way, allowing for both the sustainability of their core identity and the possibility for self-correction.

Jim Collins says that great organizations "*first* got the right people on the bus (and the wrong people off the bus) and *then* figured out where to drive it."[16] The people of God are not exempt from this wisdom. Prudent persons are needed in church leadership. The process of decision-making does not begin once everyone arrives at the meeting; it begins with people who find pleasure in what is good and who are actively developing the virtue of prudence in their lives.

Rational Practice: A Thinking Pattern for Making Choices

A rational process has a legitimate link to prudence. Although the aim is to get past a process *per se* and to become a prudent person (recall the goal of "expertise" or virtue as "second nature"), a rational process results in two benefits: (1) it brings all those in leadership—those who are well-developed in virtue and those still developing—into agreement about how to proceed, and (2) it provides a way to both engage the congregation and report back to them regarding how decisional due-diligence was carried out in the challenge under consideration.

We believe that when Christian leaders gather as a community of friends, their approach to decision-making should be grounded in virtue. Their approach should be intuitive, spiritual, and intelligent: art and science. Finding integration requires constant effort. What role

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[15] Dan S. Browning, *A Fundamental Practical Theology* (Minneapolis: Augsberg Fortress Press, 1996), 176.

[16] Jim Collins, *Good to Great: Why Some Companies Make the Leap and Others Don't* (New York: HarperCollins, 2001), 41.

does strategy play in the decision-making process? Are there proven processes that enhance this aspect of decision-making without violating the way of Jesus?

A strategic leadership move is deciding how broadly to have others involved in a decision process. How does a leader know when to approach a decision individually, or alternatively, when to involve a larger group in a decision process? The work of Victor Vroom is helpful in sorting through this issue.

Vroom is a seminal theorist on decision-making processes.[17] He suggests that when leading this process, an orienting activity for the leader is to assess the extent to which other members should be involved. Vroom argues that "there are situations where decisiveness on the part of the leader is welcomed to a far greater degree than the opportunity to participate in the process."[18] The diagram (Figure 1) below shows a continuum of individual-group involvement in a decision process.[19]

Vroom explains that situational factors guide the approach the leader should take to group involvement in a decision. A leader appropriately makes a decision him/herself (left end of the chart) when the leader assesses that "I have the knowledge, commitment without involvement is likely, time is valuable, interaction is difficult or impossible."[20] As the significance of the decision or the possibility of dissimilarity in opinions increases, a leader moves toward the right of the continuum. The point is that an effective leader will carefully consider these factors when deciding the level of involvement of her constituents or group members. Some decisions are clearly the purview and responsibility of the leader. Other more complex decisions require

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[17] Victor Vroom, *Leadership and Decision Making* (Pittsburgh, PA: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1973). For a condensed look at his work, see Victor H. Vroom, "Educating Managers for Decision Making and Leadership," in *Management Decision* 41, 10 (2003). Other works include Vroom, 2003; Jago and Vroom, 1980; Vroom & Jago, 1974.

[18] Vroom (2003) 970. Diagram used with permission of Victor Vroom.

[19] Diagram used with permission of Victor Vroom.

[20] Vroom (2003) 970.

broader involvement. We argue that prudent leaders will not default to their preferred decision approach but consider options at hand such as the Vroom model in order to evaluate the particular situation and determine the extent to which others should be involved in the decision.

Figure 1:
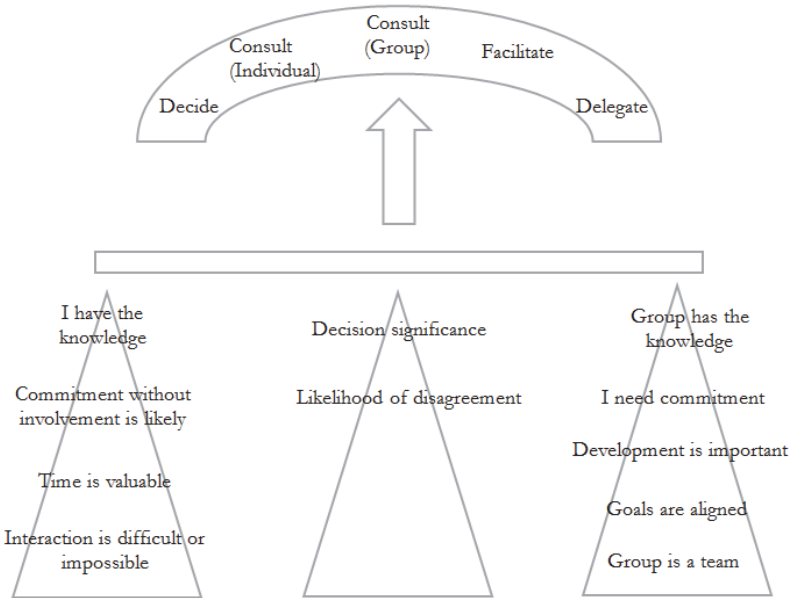
The social scientists Charles Kepner and Benjamin Tregoe provide further tools for making prudent decisions, particularly in relation to Vroom's "facilitate" and "consult" options above, which are called for when more than one person is involved. By examining the thinking processes of both proficient and poor managers, Kepner and Tregoe identified four basic patterns of thinking:[21]

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[21] Charles Kepner and Benjamin Tregoe, *The New Rational Manager: An Updated Edition for a New World* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton Research Press, 2006), 9-15. This work provides a detailed description of all four of the thinking patterns identified by Kepner and Tregoe and will be helpful to those who want content beyond what is provided here.

1) Situation Appraisal: *What's going on here?*
2) Problem Analysis: *Why did this happen?*
3) Decision Analysis: *What course of action should be taken?*
4) Potential Problem Analysis: *What lies ahead?*

Here, we will focus on the third of the four patterns: decision analysis. The members of the team carry out a rational decision process involving four considerations:

- There is recognition that a choice must be made.
- There is consideration of the specific factors that must be satisfied if the choice is to succeed.
- There is a decision about what kind of action will best satisfy these factors.
- There is consideration of what risks may be attached to our final choice of action that could jeopardize its safety and success.[22]

Essentially this process involves the development of specific criteria that are used to evaluate different options and includes the assessment of potential risks to the final choice. With language that correlates with Aristotle's view of prudence, Kepner and Tregoe say, "Good decision-making, like good problem solving, depends heavily on experience and judgment."[23] But for these thinkers, prudence is not enough. They continue, "It is within the framework of *systematic procedure* that experience and judgment produce successful results and a reputation for managerial excellence." These concepts are relevant not only to the business world, but also to organizational settings such as the church and other religious institutions.

Kepner and Tregoe's perspective is compatible with the Christian commitment to truth, relational harmony, and the value of order. As Kepner and Tregoe assert,

> When people are provided with a common approach to decision-making, they find they can indeed work as a team. There is more sharing of relevant information. Differing positions are more

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[22] Kepner and Tregoe, 78.
[23] Kepner and Tregoe, 79. Original italics.

successfully reconciled because the process of decision-making is less biased. Inevitably, the quality of decision-making improves.[24]

They claim that this process has a unifying dynamic within a team and enhances collaboration. These are certainly aspects we desire in our congregations also.

Using a systematic approach like this one can be a powerful tool to support decision-making. But it is just that: a tool. The *process* does not make a decision; prudent leaders, and members of a congregation, still make the final decision, hopeful that their work reflects the will of God.

Discernment Practice: Making Space to Notice the Movement of God's Spirit

Finally, practices of discernment offer ways constantly to remind the decision makers that the Holy Spirit must be given frequent opportunity to guide and speak into the process. Christ promises us the abiding presence of the Spirit and promises that the Spirit will move in our midst (John 14:17; 26). This means that we have more than just our rational faculties to draw upon in the discernment process. However, the ways of the Spirit are something of a mystery, and so the question of how we might proceed along with the Spirit is a legitimate one.

For some, naming the presence of the Spirit may seem to state the obvious, but too often when the presence of the Spirit is not named, it is forgotten or ignored. As congregational leaders invoke the presence of the Spirit at the start of, or during, meetings, an awareness is fostered among the participants regarding the role of the Spirit in the meeting, and the community is invited to open to the Spirit's moving.

Part of the commission of spiritual leaders is to "discern what is the will of God" (Rom. 12:2). This is a rather intimidating charge, fraught with interminable questioning about the nature of God's specific will.

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[24] Kepner and Tregoe, 77.

Neither avoidance nor the other extreme of complete certitude regarding God's desires will serve us well. In spite of the premise of some virtue philosophers that prudence leads to the single right decision, the operative view of the present authors is that God's gracious will is seldom reduced to a single option. Here, therefore, the language of finding God's will is taken to indicate a sphere of action or a range of possibilities that fall within God's will rather than the identification of one and only one correct answer to a decision question. This vantage point offers prudent deciders the appropriate constraints provided by their narratives along with the creative freedom found when there are multiple ways to respond to a challenge. We receive guidance for the discernment process from the Jerusalem Council's process in Acts 15.[25] Paul, Barnabas, and some others went up to Jerusalem to discuss a problem that had cropped up (the relation of salvation and circumcision). The issue was thrown open for all to debate (vv. 6-7). After a number of others had spoken, Peter takes his turn to be heard (vv. 7-11). Then Paul and Barnabas take their turn, during which "the whole assembly kept silence" (v. 12). After they speak, James takes his turn to speak and calls on the others to listen while he does so (v. 13). We see here two characteristics of Spirit-led communal discernment: 1) *all* are invited to have voice in the gathering, and 2) those who are *not* speaking need to *listen* to what another brother or sister is saying.[26]

The decision is written down in a letter that is to be delivered to Antioch by Paul and Barnabas. The letter describes the decision that has been made: "For it has seemed good to the Holy Spirit and to us to impose on you no further burden than these essentials..." (v. 28).

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[25] John Howard Yoder, *Body Politics: Five Practices of the Christian Community before the Watching World* (Nashville: Discipleship Resources, 1992), 62-63. See also Luke Timothy Johnson, *Scripture and Discernment: Decision Making in the Church* (Nashville, Abingdon Press, 1996), 108.

[26] These same characteristics are part of the life of the church in Corinth as seen in 1 Cor. 14.

This describes a decision that was *not* made exclusively by James. It was a decision guided by the Holy Spirit ("it seemed good to the Holy Spirit") and made by the group ("it seemed good…to us"). The decision that James had reached was then not one that he autocratically decreed, but one that was consented to by the others who were present and one that was held up to the evaluation of the Holy Spirit.

This opening to the Spirit's input is a third characteristic of Spirit-led communal discernment. As the council members in Acts 15 sought to make a decision, they allowed all to speak, listened to each other and held the decision up to be confirmed by the Holy Spirit.

The skill of listening is characteristic of the prudent person. Because prudent persons are committed to receiving the gift of counsel, they will therefore seek to listen well to others as part of good deliberation. And as one leading a discernment process, a prudent person will guide the process so that others listen well too.

Discernment Practice 1: Discovery Questions

How might the three characteristics of discernment described above emerge in concrete practices? Here we will describe three discernment practices for consideration: Discovery Questions, silence in the agenda, and Dwelling in the Word.

The Quaker tradition has long made use of the "Clearness Committee" in relation to personal discernment. Here we will explore how guidelines for the functioning of a Clearness Committee might be used for communal discernment as well.[27]

The basic process of a Clearness Committee involves a person gathering together a few trusted friends and explaining to them the issue for discernment. The task of the friends is to ask open, honest questions with the hope that these questions will help the individual to discover

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[27] A detailed description of the Clearness Committee process can be found in Parker J. Palmer, *A Hidden Wholeness: The Journey toward an Undivided Life* (San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, 2004), 134-148.

and follow the light of the Spirit. Before speaking, the friends are to ask themselves what questions might be most helpful in helping the focal person discern the moving of the Spirit in relation to the stated issue. The questions they ask are to be genuine questions to which the questioners truly cannot anticipate the answer. Opinions couched as questions are ruled out, so language such as, "Have you ever thought about…?" or, "I wonder if it would good for you to…?" is not used. The factual aspects may be explored with questions such as, "What is most interesting to you about this job opportunity?" or, "How might this impact your sphere of influence and service?" The emotional dimensions might be explored with questions such as, "If you imagine yourself lying awake at night thinking about this, what feelings do you imagine having?" or, "As you pour over the scenery of this decision, are there any particular locations at which you feel joy?"

The focus person may take as much silence as she needs to consider the question before responding. She is invited to answer as openly as she feels comfortable answering, or to not answer a question if she feels uncomfortable doing so for any reason. In responding, the focus person should refrain from lengthy answers; this allows time for deepening rounds of questions.

The pacing of the process is crucial. The questions are not to be asked in a rapid-fire manner. After the focus person responds, time should be given for silent reflection before the next question is posed. The pace should be gentle and attentive. A good moderator can help the group slow down as needed.

When the agreed-upon ending time nears, the moderator may ask the focus person if she would like to suspend the questions-only rule and to have the group mirror back what they have heard the focus person saying. Again, the participants are to refrain from advice or psychoanalysis; even in this optional move away from questions, the focus is still on helping the friend herself to discover or see the Spirit's moving.

While the Clearness Committee process is a communal one, it is focused on an *individual's* decision. What might it look like to apply elements of the Clearness Committee to a *group's* decision-making process? Here is an experimental suggestion for use in a church board context of what we shall call Discovery Questions.[28]

When a board chooses to use Discovery Questions, they identify the first step as choosing a moderator for the process. This might be the chair of the board, but it could also be another board member who is particularly gifted at guiding silence. The purpose of the Discovery Questions should be explained: this questioning process is intended to help the group attend to the moving of the Spirit in their midst. This is not the time to work through a logical decision tree or to focus on rationality alone— that can come before or after (it comes after in this paper—see below).

The moderator begins by setting a timeframe and briefly describing the focus issue. She then invites any member of the group to offer a question for the whole group to ponder. The purpose of the question should be to help the group pay attention to how the Spirit might be leading in relation to the focus issue. All questions should be minimally directive and should be questions for which the questioner genuinely cannot predict the answer. As Parker Palmer suggests in relation to a different practice, "Here we are governed by that simple countercultural rule, 'No fixing, no saving, no advising, no setting each other straight.'"[29] The moderator should also ask for a gentle pace of asking questions to allow space for plenty of reflective silence.

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[28] Palmer describes what he calls a "circle of trust" which has similarities to a Clearness Committee, but is intended to help all participants (not just a focus person) move toward deeper transformation and understanding (114-128). The circle of trust differs from what we are proposing because, like the Clearness Committee, it also focuses on each individual's journey; our focus is on how a group might approach issues that face the community as a whole.

[29] Palmer, 114.

As any are so moved, they are invited to respond to a question that has been offered. There is no assumption, however, that all will be so moved. The responses should be thoughtful, but not lengthy. As with the asking of questions, the group should seek to embrace a slow rhythm of responses. A rapid-fire style of response that is appropriate for some settings is put aside here.

When a group is new to the process, they might be given sample questions, such as:

- "What are the deepest things that get triggered in you in relation to this issue?"
- "When you dream of the best possible future for our congregation, how might this issue fit in that?"
- "What makes you saddest in relation to this issue?"
- "What makes you most hopeful as you consider this issue?"
- "What stories from scripture, whether directly related or not to our issue, come to mind right now?"

In a manner similar to the Clearness Committee process, when the agreed-upon ending time nears, the moderator may choose to suspend the question/answer structure and ask the group to share, as they feel prompted by the Spirit, what they felt and observed during the process. Then the meeting is drawn to a close or the meeting moves on to another phase.

This process contains the characteristics of Spirit-led discernment set forth above: everyone is given an opportunity to speak, all are asked to listen deeply, and the leading of the Holy Spirit is sought.

Discernment Practice 2: Silence in the Agenda

Another receptacle for the work of the Spirit may be created by scheduling silence into the agenda for a meeting. Often an elders' board feels tight on time; meeting agendas are crammed full, and even then some items are tabled until the next meeting. Adding five, ten, or fifteen minutes of silence to the agenda can seem inefficient. Why not just have everyone commit to silent prayer on his or her own before and after they gather so

that we can maximize the productivity from the time we have together? Prayer prior to and subsequent to a meeting is definitely to be encouraged, but silent prayer *within* the meeting may uniquely shape the whole meeting time.

Prayers at the start and end of a meeting are commonly included, but often these become perfunctory prayers that are viewed as bookends to the *real* business at hand. By scheduling a period of silent prayer into the agenda, the chairperson communicates that the whole of what they are doing is to be intertwined with a prayerful openness to the Spirit.

Charles Olsen offers a number of questions that may be helpful to reflect upon as part of a time of prayerful silence in an elders' meeting:

> Am I closing myself off from information that we need to make this decision? Whom do I need to forgive to be more fully present here? What is an image of God that needs to come to bear on this setting? How does the scripture that we read shed light on us now? Am I operating in a need-to-win or need-to-save-face mode? How would servant leaders make this decision?[30]

These questions help to connect the work at hand to the resources of our faith.

After the period of scheduled silence, the chairperson might ask if anyone would like to offer a reflection related to the time of silence, or she might simply ask God to add God's blessing to the time of silence and then move on to the next item on the agenda or return to the conversation that was in progress.

The practice of scheduling silence into the agenda has some interesting connections to Ron Heifetz' work on leadership. As mentioned above, some members of the elders' board may resist the idea of having silence

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[30] Charles M. Olsen, *Transforming Church Boards into Communities of Spiritual Leaders* (Washington, D.C.: Alban Institute, 1995), 22. Original italics. This book has a number of other excellent ideas related to connecting the work of an elders' board to the work of the Holy Spirit.

scheduled into the agenda. This is where Heifetz's idea of holding steady is important—the leader may need to persist with putting this in the agenda even if others are impatient with it.[31]

Another connection is seen in the parallel between the scheduling of silence into the agenda and Heifetz's encouragement for leaders to occasionally go to the balcony. By this, Heifetz means that leaders need to create space to reflect on what is going on around them.[32] That space could range from a few seconds to an extended retreat. When the chairperson schedules silence into the agenda, she is creating an opportunity for the members to go to the balcony, from where they might more clearly see how the Spirit is present and guiding. The chairperson might helpfully offer this time for silent prayer even when it is *not* scheduled into the agenda if she senses that time to go to the balcony would be particularly helpful at that moment.

A third parallel is found in relation to what Heifetz refers to as pacing the work.[33] People can only take on so much emotional distress at one time, and so a leader may need to slow down the work so that others involved don't get overwhelmed to the point that they just give up. People need time to process and adjust. In a small way, scheduled silence in a meeting is an act of slowing things down, pacing the work. Members of the elders' board may find this time beneficial in processing and catching up emotionally with where the discussion is going.

Discernment Practice 3: Dwelling in the Word

A third receptacle we offer for the work of the Spirit is the process of Dwelling in the Word, a process that has been helpfully included in the agenda of elders'

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[31] Ronald A. Heifetz and Martin Linsky, *Leadership on the Line: Staying Alive through the Dangers of Leading* (Boston, MA: Harvard Business School Press, 2002), 141-146.

[32] Ronald A. Heifetz, *Leadership without Easy Answers* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1994), 252-253, and Heifetz and Linsky (2002), chapter 3.

[33] Heifetz (1994), 241-246, and Heifetz and Linsky (2002), 116-120.

board meetings, congregational meetings, and judicatory meetings.

Dwelling in the Word involves spending time with the same biblical text as part of multiple meetings over a period of months or years. It is a process that can be used in congregational meetings, leadership meetings, seminary classes, church business meetings, and conference or denominational gatherings. The process can be done in as little as ten minutes. Or, in daylong or multi-day gatherings, an hour or more can be used for Dwelling in the Word. While the process is most often placed at the beginning of the gathering, it can also be meaningfully scheduled into the middle of a group's time together.

Prior to the meeting, the leader selects a Bible passage for the process. When the process begins, Bibles or copies of the selected passage are distributed to all in attendance. Then the selected passage is read out loud. After sitting in silent reflection on the passage for a few minutes, people are asked to pair up. One suggestion made by Ellison and Keifert is to have people pair up with the person they know least in the group.[34] Participants may also be asked to simply pair up with a person next to them. Prompting questions for reflection are then offered, such as:

- What caught your attention in this passage?
- Where was a memory or connection triggered?
- What might the Holy Spirit be saying through this passage for our congregation or for you personally?

Before participants begin sharing in pairs, they are alerted that after the initial reflection time each will be asked to share with others what their partners said. With this process in mind, participants listen more actively and often re-state to their partners what they've heard to make sure they have a good understanding. This listening is significant in at least three ways. First, it invites a

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[34] Pat Taylor Ellison and Patrick R. Keifert, *Dwelling in the Word* (St. Paul, MN: Church Innovations Institute, 2008).

person to be open to how the Spirit may be speaking through the other. Second, the speaking and listening act helps to weave the relational fabric of the community. It is a shared activity, a communal venture. Third, as an exercise in listening, it develops the ability to listen more fully even beyond the time of Dwelling in the Word. As participants move into other segments of the gathering, they do so having practiced listening to each other and are more likely to continue with a listening posture.

After 6-8 minutes (or longer if the setting allows), the pairs are brought back together. If the group is smaller than 10-12 people, members can report back to the whole group highlights of what their partners shared. In larger groups, people can be asked to join with other pairs to form groups of 6 or 8 and then in that context share what their partners said. This segment may take 8-10 minutes, or again, longer if time allows. If multiple groups are used for the reporting-back segment, the moderator alerts the groups when two minutes remain in the sharing time so the groups can be sure that all get to share, that everyone is heard. Then the moderator wraps up the time of Dwelling in the Word and leads into the next part of the meeting.

This approach to scripture is not focused on the use of text-critical methods, though those methods are valuable. Dwelling in the Word focuses on imagining, wondering, mulling, and listening. Participants are not expected to come up with "right" answers. Rather, they are to be open to what the Spirit might want to say to them individually and communally at this point in time. Dwelling in the Word invites the Spirit to help participants see and feel connections between the text and their context. It seeks to connect the vision and ethics of Jesus with a specific people in a specific place. It draws on a different part of the mind than do text-critical methods and seeks emotional and situational engagement with the text.

The purpose of Dwelling in the Word is not to find specific answers to the issue at hand. The process is unlikely to provide a specific answer to the budget issue

faced by the elders' board described above. But the process is formative in several relevant ways.

First, by attending to scripture in the midst of a meeting, the group members are reminded of the Christian nature of what they are doing. They are reminded to draw on the resources of their faith as they move through the decision process. God is explicitly brought into the process by the attention to the Word.

Second, Dwelling in the Word invites *every* participant to say something as part of the process. It communicates that *everyone* has something of value to offer to the group. The invitation for all to speak is a way of embodying the first characteristic of Spirit-led communal discernment described above.

Third, Dwelling in the Word provides training in listening. Because the group is instructed to report back on what they heard their *partners* say, each person is encouraged to listen closely to another. This is an embodiment of the second characteristic of Spirit-led discernment described above. And by practicing the art of listening here, the participants are trained to listen better to one another in other parts of the meeting.

Finally, Dwelling in the Word is predicated on the idea that the Spirit will indeed speak to us while attending to the same text over the course of multiple meetings. Even after Dwelling in the Word on multiple occasions, participants report that new insights still emerge for them from the passage. What the Spirit wants to communicate is not exhausted via a single reading of the text. The process of ongoing discovery orients us to expect that the Spirit may help us to see unimagined possibilities in relation to even the current decision upon which the elders' board is focused.

This third practice of Dwelling in the Word, like the others, includes the three characteristics of Spirit-led discernment found in Acts 15 and 1 Cor. 14: all are invited to speak, everyone is to listen carefully, and the explicit leading of the Spirit is invoked.

Conclusion

The specific proposals above regarding decision-making theory and discernment practices might well be developed along different lines. Prudent leaders might substitute different organizational theories in the constellation of decision-shaping factors. Other practices may be equally helpful in opening up space for the Spirit to be involved in decision-making. The goal in this article is not to identify the *best* way in relation to each, but to show how attention to each area increases the likelihood that the decisions made by congregations will be good, faithful, and—over the long term life of the community—fruitful.

Congregational leaders have the responsibility of helping those they lead to pay attention to these multiple dimensions of decision-making, rather than flattening out the process. When facing adaptive challenges, ideal congregational decision-making will be multifaceted. This requires virtuous people who use their God-given rational capacities while continuing to draw deeply from the Christian tradition. Embracing such an approach will serve congregations well as they seek to live into their calling.

BOOK REVIEW
HOW TO LEAD IN CHURCH CONFLICT:
HEALING UNGRIEVED LOSS
BY: K. BRYNOLF LYON AND DAN P. MOSELEY
NASHVILLE: ABINGDON PRESS, 2012
157 PP. PAPERBACK
ISBN 978-1-4267-4233-0

K. Brynolf Lyon and Dan. P. Moesely join several other contemporary authors who explore the essential link between loss, grief, and conflict as they affect the leadership and mission of a local church. The urgent claim Lyon and Moesley unpack in *How to Lead in Church Conflict: Healing Ungrieved Loss* is that conflict is the very essence of life in ministry and, therefore, ministry leadership is fundamentally the capacity to process conflict, especially the detritus of unacknowledged loss entangled with other congregational dynamics. Utilizing the fruits of psychological and psychoanalytic research and practice, this book provides an important lens and set of frames for leaders to approach, understand, and move ahead through conflict toward fulfilling the mission of the church. A welcome clarification made in the text is that the resources provided are to help in a way forward, rather than the step-by-step how-to that is indicated by a popular reading of the title.

The core emotional functions and health of the congregation are surveyed utilizing three case studies. The key is both to affirm that congregations have the capacity to utilize certain levels of grief and conflict as energy to move forward. Yet, it is at the point when grief is not metabolized in the emotional functioning of the congregation that the organism finds itself off-centered and its capacity challenged to the point of debilitating conflict. Within an analysis of intrapsychic, interpersonal, intragroup and intergroup conflict, the primary resource of the extension of Edwin Friedman's family systems theory by Larry Hirschorn is applied in the important claiming of the leadership role. The text outlines a careful

walk through the role of misdirected as well as appropriate use of grief and aggression within the leader and members/groups within the congregation. Calling on the work of Heinz Kohut, Melanie Klein and others, the attempt is to provide a framework for understanding how "askew" can be put "aright" in the complex reality of a local congregation as well as the importance to this project of the leader claiming their role and acknowledging their fruitful immersion within the context. This pushes at the popular appropriation of Friedman's family systems which defines effective leadership as a non-anxious presence.

Locating this resource within the study of leadership will find its strengths as well as the need to relate it to its contemporaries rather than leave it to stand on its own. Although the text calls conflict the essence and focus of life in ministry and church leadership, it focuses mainly on the emotional life and formation of the congregation as influenced by ungrieved loss. In a cultural climate in which change and loss are experienced more rapidly and more widely, this is an important consideration. However, the liturgical practices (widely defined) and worship liturgies described as spiritual rituals toward moving the congregation to a greater capacity to acknowledge and metabolize grief seem to address the psychoanalytic and psychological spiritual lens outlined in the text and do not explore much beyond that scope. Looking to two contemporary authors who also deal with the issues of grief and loss in its affect on church life will give some indication of conversation partners for the Lyon and Moseley work. Kenneth McFayden's *Strategic Leadership for a Change: Facing Our Losses, Finding Our Future* lodges the grieving process due to change in the central administrative leadership functions of developing a dynamic vision and renewed missional identity. McFayden urges strategic thinking as key to moving ahead beyond the impasse that grief can create. With the resources of Lyon and Moseley in conversation with McFayden there is a dynamic missional urgency and administrative responsibility for visionary leadership as

well as a deeply pastoral, formational, and healing attention to pervasive grief in the process. In addition, I would urge the newly released text by Deborah van Deusen Hunsinger and Theresa F. Latini's *Transforming Church Conflict: Compassionate Church Leadership in Action* as a second conversation partner. They also center on unresolved grief as a source of congregational conflict, seeking to congregational transformation through a renewed and active koinonia. Through the sacred and intentional dialogue of this ecclesial form there is a methodology for the reconstruction of congregational and missional identity. All three of these works rely on the secular foundations of Ronald Heifetz and Marty Linsky, but they bring pastoral psychoanalysis, spiritual formation, missional leadership and ecclesiastical forms to deal with the inhibiting experience of unresolved grief and the conflict which ensues. Taken together, these are rich resources for the formation of pastoral as well as lay leaders and their immersion in the life of the congregation toward effective ministry for the future.

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BOOK REVIEW

CROSSROADS: AN EXPLORATION OF THE EMERGING-MISSIONAL CONVERSATION WITH A SPECIAL FOCUS ON 'MISSIONAL LEADERSHIP' AND ITS CHALLENGES FOR THEOLOGICAL EDUCATION

BY: ROBERT DOORNENBAL
DELFT: EBURON ACADEMIC PUBLISHER, 2012
420 PP. PAPERBACK
ISBN: 978-90-5972-623-9

Robert Doornenbal's published dissertation here offers the discipline of religious leadership a multi-layered resource for what its title names—the emerging-missional conversation, its implications for practical ecclesiology and theological education, and its contributions to both leader education and leadership education. *Crossroads* aims "to stimulate conversations" and "the forging of 'rhetorical relationships' about innovative forms of (church) leadership and leader education across different streams, denominations, and subcultures with the church worldwide" (p. 9, 368). I would assign this as required reading for advanced leadership courses, to receive its conceptual contributions, and for any practical-theological doctoral student, to receive its instruction in crafting a published dissertation for contribution to a discipline. For these contexts, Doornenbal's work provides much in its explicit contributions to the field *and* in its implicit paradoxes across high-literate/digital-oral tensions in emergent/scholarship worlds.

Crossroads offers a good read, as these kinds of volumes go. It is exceedingly precise in terms, with exhaustive citations of argument support and orientation in interdisciplinary leadership studies. Its presentation is formidable, with clear prose about its adaptive challenge, context of studies, definition of problem, objectives, research questions, and methodological decisions. The bibliography alone is a work of art—50 pages in length.

Part A—chapters 2-6—offers description and preliminary analysis of the "Characteristics of the Emerging-Missional Conversation (EMC) and its Discourses." Historical-theological roots of the Emerging Church Movement are brought into conversation with the Missional Church Movement before engaging thematic lenses for both through 'paradigms,' 'post-modern/post-Christian,' 'metaphors,' and 'complexity theory.' This section marks the most clearly "literature-review" portion of the work, establishing the academic patrimony of what is to come. Part B—chapters 7-8—moves the exploration into leadership, specifically Emerging-Missional Views on Leadership and Envisioning Mission: Reflections on a Definition of Missional Leadership. Sourcework here is also primarily writings within the Emergent-Missional milieu (169). Relying on the definition(s) of leadership in the EMC as analytical goad into a coherent framework of questions (227), Part C—chapters 9-11—focuses energies on leader education as 'Transformational' (9), 'Mainline, Reformed, and Evangelical' (10), and '*Semper Reformanda*' via theological education (11). This section offers the fruits of empirical inquiry into three theological faculties of the Lowlands, namely the Protestant Theological University in Kampen, Leiden and Utrecht; the Theological University in Kampen and the Evangelical Theological Faculty in Leuven, Belgium. Chapter 12 pulls the study together with direct-summary answers to each research question. This is one of the most pleasurable, straightforward published dissertations I have had opportunity to read.

Does it offer a compelling and creative contribution in religious leadership studies? Yes and no. Those seeking support for continued research into emergent and missional leadership today have a marvelous colleague in Robert Doornenbal and legitimate support for order into complex and organic phenomena, guided by articulated and suggested future research questions. This is a *safe* piece of scholarship—dependable, well-supported, persuasive in its breadth of attentions and focused depth.

It is more summary and compilation, however, than provocation to insight into emergent or missional innovations. That said, Doornenbal's stated aim is to stimulate conversations and 'rhetorical relationships' across diverse streams worldwide: a grand goal, but feasibly offered in a well-written, published dissertation, in English. I felt closer proximity grow between the EMC and connections in the Netherlands—a 'rhetorical relationship' encouraged, as I have little interaction with Dutch scholarship otherwise.

The ironies and paradoxes of such a dissertation fascinated me. The volume is clearly for conceptual contribution, so it was crystal clear about what it was *not*: *not* research on actual practices available for ethnographic investigation, *not* on "the role and function of digital networks, nor…what individuals are experiencing in these networks or churches" (7). Direct contribution and challenge in emergent and missional innovations, however, lie precisely *there*—practices, digital networks. Blog-writings were included as source-writings for investigation, but only with clear-caveats, i.e., suspicion. Each paradox was navigated well, while leaving the reader bemused at the challenges of rigorous literate inquiry into primarily relational-practiced phenomena under study. I also wondered about the practiced objectivity presumed in such scholarly genre. Extensive attention is given to the historical-theological roots of the Emergent Movement, which is then nicely—a bit *too* nicely—grafted into the Missional Church Movement to make "the EMC Conversation." Is it a conversation when framed in this way?

The final chapter gives excellent summation of research findings, worth starting all kinds of conversations in leadership studies and theological education. As a seminary educator, I valued the return to purpose, vision, objectives in theological education. I didn't learn anything new in the summation there, but I commend Doornenbal for his rigorous and exhaustive work and recommend this volume highly. It's not within *his* domain to change the irrepressibly arguable reality:

high literacy in specifically European dress may not be the best tool to learn most fully from Emergent or Missional leaders today.

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BOOK REVIEW
GLOBAL VOICES:
READING THE BIBLE IN THE MAJORITY WORLD
EDITED BY: CRAIG KEENER AND M. DANIEL CARROLL R.
PEABODY, MA: HENDRICKSON, 2013
123 PP. PAPERBACK
ISBN: 978-1-61970-009-3

The rapid growth of Christianity in the Global South, coupled with international migration and globalization, has resulted in a significant contemporary Christian diaspora. Christians of other cultures are commonly observed in our communities, and in our churches. These realities offer both challenge and opportunity for both biblical scholars and church leaders in an increasingly multicultural society.

Global Voices helps us take up this challenge by increasing awareness and appreciation of non-Western biblical interpretation. The book consists of a forward by Edwin M. Yamauchi, an introduction by co-editors Craig Keener and M. Daniel Carroll R., and five pairs of essays by culturally diverse authors. The first of each pair presents biblical interpretation of Old or New Testament texts flavored by the worldview of the author. A brief response follows each primary essay. Each author closes with a helpful bibliography for further reading.

M. Daniel Carroll (Rodas) opens with: "Reading the Bible through Other Lenses: New Vistas from a Hispanic Diaspora Perspective." Carroll argues that the time has come for Western biblical scholarship to engage multiethnic readings of the Bible. He offers a methodological framework for this engagement and provides several examples of how such an approach can surface new insights on the First Testament. In "Response: A Biblical Warrant and an Eschatological Vision," K. K. Yeo affirms Carroll and goes on to offer a two-fold rationale for multi-cultural readings: (1) the biblical mandate to love one's neighbors, and (2) the

eschatological vision of every nation, tongue, and tribe worshipping at the throne in the New Creation.

In the second essay, "Neither Tamil Nor Sinhalese: Reading Galatians in Sri Lanka," David A. DeSilva contends that social location impacts ability to understand and respond to Scripture; that readings informed by multiple social locations provide a more holistic understanding of the text than is possible from a single location. He offers a Sri Lankan reading of Galatians 3:23-4:11 in example. In "Response: What does Sri Lanka Have to Do with Galatia?" Nijay Gupta agrees with DeSilva, affirming that the meaning of a text cannot be determined from a single position; that the more social locations brought to bear in the interpretation of a text, the greater likelihood of illuminating its meaning.

Barbara M. Leung Lai is the third primary contributor with "Word Becoming Flesh [On Appropriation]: Engaging Daniel as a Survival Manual." Lai argues that in addition to the typical external factors that impact self-identity (race and ethnicity, gender, culture, and social location), factors of situation, context, and one's lived experience impact the perspective of the reader. In example, she offers a perspectival reading of Daniel. Chloe Sun, in "Response: Reflections on Self and Survival," affirms Lai while questioning how far she takes the example in Daniel. Sun goes on to posit that Daniel may be relevant to readers in other situations as well, such as first-generation immigrants in a new land.

In the fourth offering, "Reading Ephesians 6:10-18 in the Light of African Pentecostal Spirituality," J. Ayodeji Adewuya demonstrates how some significant differences in African and North American spiritualities impact biblical interpretation. To illustrate his point, Adewuya presents an understanding of "principalities and powers" from the standpoint of an African Pentecostal. In "Response: Moral Standing as a Community or Individual Exorcism in Ephesians 6:10-20?" Daniel Darko challenges Western evangelical scholarship: (1) to take more seriously the biblical worldview of the spiritual

world, (2) to more fully assess how Western worldview impacts biblical interpretation, and (3) to strive to engage the non-Western worldviews embraced by a growing number of immigrant churches in the West.

The final major essay, by Grant LeMarquand, is "The Bible as Specimen, Talisman, and Dragoman in Africa: A look at Some African uses of the Psalms and 1 Corinthians 12-14." LeMarquand argues (1) that Africans have an aversion to approaching the Scriptures as specimen because this tends to reduce the Bible to an archaeological artifact, (2) that viewing the Bible as a talisman (an object useful in averting evil and bringing good luck) is not uncommon, and (3) that the Bible as dragoman (interpreter or guide) is embraced by the majority of African Bible readers. In "Response: Promises and Questions of Reading the Bible in Africa," Osvaldo Padilla asks for greater clarity on some of LeMarquand's points even as he affirms the bulk of the essay.

I anticipated a final chapter of summary and reflection, but was left wanting. Even so, this sampling of biblical interpretation done through a variety of cultural lenses was both enlightening and inspiring. *Global Voices* is a good on-ramp for biblical scholars who desire to familiarize themselves with global interpretation of Scripture. Christian leaders of all kinds will benefit from increased exposure to multi-cultural understandings of Scripture, as more and more they will be called to lead multi-cultural teams, ministries, and churches.

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BOOK REVIEW
SPIRITUALITY AND GROWTH ON THE LEADERSHIP PATH: AN ABECEDARY
BY: DEBORAH J. HAYNES
EUGENE, OREGON: PICKWICK PUBLICATIONS
100 PP. PAPERBACK
ISBN: 978-1-62032-227-7

Deborah Haynes offers her book, *Spirituality and Growth on the Leadership Path,* as a source of nurture and inspiration for fellow practitioners. The subtitle, *An Abecedary,* is intended to spark curiosity and refers to the structure of the book: twenty-four short articles in alphabetical order dealing with a variety of subjects around the themes of spirituality and growth. Speaking as a professor of art and art history with a Ph.D. in the study of religion from Harvard Divinity School and as a leadership practitioner with thirty years of experience, Haynes focuses on the inner, spiritual work of leadership that provides the compass for the day-to-day mundane tasks in which a leader engages.

Haynes thinks about the leadership "path" in a Taoist sense: "a way to move, literally, but also a way of life" (xiii). This leadership path can be conceptualized "both as a place or stage in personal development, and as a series of actions that one takes" (36). It is both movement and a state of being. In this context, leadership is "a calling to serve within the community, to use one's skills, aptitudes, and vision for the greater good and to sacrifice other more personal goals, if only for a discrete period of time" (35).

Haynes shares lessons from her journey on this path, speaking from a deeply experiential viewpoint. She offers insights from her years as an administrative leader in the academy and in non-profit organizations, lessons that cannot be found in a textbook or manual. Clearly an avid learner from life experience, Haynes offers the distilled wisdom of a thoughtful administrative practitioner. Recurring through the text are stories "from the

chronicles of experience," stories that illustrate a particular principle or demonstrate that principle lived out in a specific leadership situation.

Another source of experiential learning comes from Haynes' personal spiritual journey. Haynes refers to spirituality as that which "points toward the beyond, however we conceive it, and to our deepest core values" and offers "rich resources for reconceptualizing leadership" (xiii). Gently critical of those who have "mistakenly understood God in reified form," Haynes displays a view of spirituality in which there is "no reified absolute other or ultimate reality" but in which reality as experienced is "sacred, fluid, and luminous" (77).

Haynes' Buddhist practice is reflected in the recurring themes of the impermanence of life, mindful attentiveness to the moment, and the interconnectedness of all things. Threaded throughout this text, these themes speak to the nature of the task of leadership and the inner path walked by the person in that role. "The power of developing this awareness of impermanence," writes Haynes, "is that it makes us more compassionate toward ourselves and others" (24) because we know that all conditions will change. The practice of mindfulness suggests a discipline of "listening, thinking, and examining one's experience" (40) which fosters respectful inquiry. Ultimately, for Haynes, all things in the universe are interconnected and interdependent. "We grow in our ability to lead others," she writes, "through deep understanding that each person holds their own contradictions and confusions in tension with their capacity for clarity—all of which are the result of a life lived in distinctive ways simultaneously related with my own" (45).

Another expression of experiential learning is Haynes' liberal use of metaphors and models drawn from life, particularly from nature and from her garden. The cycle of growth and death is reflective of the value of impermanence but also of continued hope and development. Haynes likens the inner work of a leader to that of a gardener carefully preparing and tending the

ground. She suggests that the metaphor of a garden may be generative for a person inheriting a leadership position. Drawing from her experience in her home garden, Haynes suggests a leader approach their context in this manner: "Wait. Watch. Ask yourself what it should become. Then, dig" (21).

Haynes offers insight from practice, pragmatic instruction, and philosophical reflection. Not only is she a practitioner, she expects to be speaking to fellow practitioners. The metaphorical and the prosaic travel harmoniously hand in hand throughout this text just as the inner spiritual work and the outward pragmatic work of the leader are complementary parts of the journey on the leadership path.

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BOOK REVIEW

PURSUING GOD'S WILL TOGETHER:
A DISCERNMENT PRACTICE FOR LEADERSHIP GROUPS
BY: RUTH HALEY BARTON
DOWNERS GROVE, IL: INTERVARSITY PRESS, 2012
248 PP. PAPERBACK
ISBN 978-0-8308-6978-7

How does a community of followers find God's will together? Do people vote democratically? Do they look to the leader to make the decision? Do they throw the "urim and thummin" to find the answer? Do they let the most powerful, influential leaders of the group decide? Finding God's will together is a challenge in Christian leadership settings.

Ruth Haley Barton, director of the Transforming Center in Wheaton, IL, gives the reader a vivid illustration of a spiritual discerning community that will challenge the practices of many local congregations in the US, many of which have bought into the decision-making models of the business and cultural world. The constitution and by-laws of congregations and leadership groups have ensured that decisions are made with order and wisdom. Yet within those decisions, many congregations struggle with moving to consensus or leaving faithful members who disagree with the majority with hurt feelings, broken hearts, and divisive political agendas.

The book defines discernment as "an ever-increasing capacity to 'see' or discern the works of God in the midst of the human situation so that we can align ourselves with whatever it is that God is doing"(20). Barton helps the reader discover in Part One how to become a community of discernment, and in Part Two how to practice the principles of discernment. The book tells the story of the leadership team of Grace Church and their search for a new process of discernment that would

lead to transformation rather than additional busyness and activity.

Barton rightly begins with the recognition that community discernment begins with leaders attending to their own spiritual foundations. The first three chapters explore what discernment is and how leaders must transition their own spiritual practices to set an environment for community discernment. The book weaves personal reflection questions with each chapter and concludes with a community practice that helps the group move toward a discerning process. Each chapter also concludes with a thoughtful closing prayer.

In chapters 4-7, Barton examines the community connection to discernment. In addition to theoretical reflection, she leads the reader again to reflect and practice the principles she espouses. Chapters 6 and 7 focus on specific spiritual practices like fixed hours of prayer and truth telling and how the adoption of these practices can transform the nature of the group and establish a trusting environment.

Chapter 8 concludes Barton's discussion of "how to become a community of discernment" with a focus on making a group covenant. The process outlined in this chapter offers helpful insights about group development for many types of groups.

Barton moves into the "community practice" section of the book in chapters 8-11. The process includes four steps:

- Get Ready – develop a careful statement of the key discernment issue and people who need to be involved. Barton acknowledges that not every issue needs this type of discernment process. Leaders must decide on what those key issues are.
- Get Set – engage in prayers of indifference, wisdom, and quiet trust.
- Go – work out of the agenda and listening process for the meeting, including different levels of agreements for members
- Do It!

I was captured by the practices and thoughts of this book. Barton's ideas would be revolutionary for many groups. Whether a group in our culture would have the patience to enter such a detailed discernment practice is difficult to ascertain. Some personalities might also be put off with such reflection and practice. With a recognition that people come with different personality tendencies, are there some spiritual practices that would relate better to them based on their God-given strengths? For example, how could a leader help persons who are very detailed, task-driven persons find spiritual practices that help them slow down and find peace in the midst of their proclivity to action? We have become so engrained with busyness and activity in our culture. The dream is worthy to create this type of culture in churches and leadership organizations. Will practitioners be patient enough to see this concept through to the end?

An individual leader is able to read and study this book and learn some important transformational principles about community spiritual development. This book, though, would be best studied in a leadership group context so that everyone could share these transformation concepts together. The Transforming Center website has free downloadable resources and videos to help with a group study of this resource.

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