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Introduction to the JRL Spring 2022 Issue

Robert K. Martin, editor

As is customary, the Spring issue is non-thematic. I enjoy the way articles find their way to the JRL and serendipitously 'come together' to form a unique, multifaceted conversation. This issue is particularly compelling not only because of the range of subjects it covers, but also because it has generated a lively conversation within the JRL board itself. In fact, as a result of one article in particular by Jason Miller and Dale Lemke, the JRL is convening a panel discussion at the 2022 ARL conference on the nature and practice of ethical research. It is one example of how the JRL and its guild, the Academy of Religious Leadership, benefits from and is nourished by its effort to inform and engage others. I trust that readers will find these articles as beneficial as I have.

The first article in the collection is co-authored by **Sharon Henderson Callahan** and **Jeanette Rodriguez**. Its subject matter is the leadership that Roman Catholic Women Priests exercise within the ministries of *koinonia, leiturgia, kerygma,* and *diakonia* despite the institutional obstacles, punishments, and exclusion they face. Their spirituality integrates vividly the discipline of resistant perseverance with a deeply traditioned, empathetic pastoral vocation. The main purpose of this essay is to show how the Roman Catholic doctrinal restriction of priesthood to males is confronted with the actual, day-to-day fact of priestly ministry by women in all the areas of ministry that constitute the priesthood. The authors write, "Filled with the Spirit and sustained by practices that continue to deepen their spirituality, these female priests … encourage ecumenical collaboration and exchange, while acting as a prophetic witness to the change that is inevitable in a church that responds to the work of G-d in the People of G-d."

Our second article comes by way of the Australian College of Theology which has engaged in a rather unique and effective pedagogy in seminary leadership education: sailing. Author **Tim Foster** narrates the development of Ridley College's sailing

program, situates it squarely within an experiential paradigm of leadership education, argues convincingly for its merits, and even outlines some its curricular components. Foster acknowledges that most seminaries won't be able to offer sailing programs within their practical theology and/or field education. But the challenge he offers is for theological educators to be encouraged by this unique experiential model and to create their own experiential leadership curricula, imaginatively and entrepreneurially drawing upon the resources at their disposal.

The article by **Jason Miller** and **Dale Lemke**, mentioned above, is a qualitative study of the experiences and effects of the COVID-19 pandemic and racial unrest in the last two years upon the lived calling of African American pastors. This study is particularly interesting because the authors write self-consciously with their positionality as White academics in mind. They state explicitly their desire to understand, learn from, and share the experiences of Black leaders with an aim of encouraging White leaders and educators to "learn from and partner well with Black colleagues." Their explicit challenge is for the church to address political division by engaging in racial justice and healing within ecclesial and civic communities. As I said above, the JRL thought this article was not only substantively important, but it would also be instrumental in the ARL's conversations about our research and writing across different identities and social locations, and it was a good example of White folks reflecting on their positionality vis-à-vis their research and publishing objectives.

Patrick Moore's essay on "pastoral dread" lays bare an especially troubling but often hidden and unspoken reality in pastors' experience: *dread* about the integrity of their calling and *anxiety* about their pastoral performance. Drawing incisively from the work of Søren Kierkegaard on the concept of dread as well as upon James Loder's work on transformation, Moore describes the feeling of dread that pastors often experience and links it to the anxiety generated within a performative culture that is obsessed with quantifiable measures of success. He cautions us to refrain from thinking about dread as only a negative force. Rather, if we penetrate its mysterious depths, dread can be a uniquely generative

force leading to transformation, personally and organizationally. Drawing upon his own experience as a pastor and as a beginning contemplative, Moore explains how meditative practices can unleash the positive potential of dread for spiritual and pastoral renewal.

The concluding essay by **Martin Rodriguez** is a solicited continuation of a preceding article that was published in the JRL Autumn 2021 issue. The first essay outlined the main features of Rodriguez' unique vision of relational leadership, which he calls *liderazgo mestizo*. It developed a concept of leadership that brings different – even opposing – cultures together by four activities: storytelling, advocacy, catalyzing transformation, and bridge-building. The second essay develops the concept of *liderazgo mestizo* as a practice that is inherently creative and constructive. Rather than accepting present social norms as definitive or inevitable, leadership should build bridges that bring together cultures and peoples that were once opposed. Rodriguez' vision of relational leadership helps us to follow the Spirit's leading missiologically, as societies continue to fracture from the pressure of ideological oppositions. "Leadership, in this view, is about waking up not only to the indefinable and unmanageable complexities of our neighborhoods, but also to the unmappable complexities of the Holy Spirit's movements among us."

Indeed! May we as well wake up and take up the missiological vocation of *tikkun olam*, the Hebrew imperative of repairing the world.

Call for papers. Do you have an idea for an article that could be published in the JRL? Contact Editor Robert Martin to talk about your idea or submit an essay to rmartin@wesleyseminary.edu.

Call for Book Reviews. Book Review editor Michael Wilson has a list of books to review (receive a free book!), or suggest your own, at mwilson@lancasterseminary.edu. No unsolicited reviews accepted.

Guidelines for articles and book reviews are located at arl-jrl.org.

Gospel Leadership: Roman Catholic Women Priests

Sharon Henderson Callahan
Jeanette Rodriguez

Abstract

In 2002, two Roman Catholic male bishops ordained seven women on a ship cruising the Danube River. Since then, over 350 women have been ordained. This article describes the leadership these women offer faith, local, and institutional communities. Grounded in spirituality, these women choose to disobey church law while remaining culturally Catholic. Outlining the spiritualities these women embody, this article explores contributions within the ministries of Koinonia, Leiturgia, Kerygma, and Diakonia. Quoting the over forty women interviewed and studied, the article next focuses on their ecumenical and Catholic nature. The conclusion highlights their prophetic contribution to the church and the people of G-d.

Introduction

We met in a typical hotel room after a day when we had witnessed the ordination of a woman to the Roman Catholic ecclesial community. We had known the woman we interviewed, Teresa[1],

[1] Each priest is named using her first name. We have permission from most to use their names, and others have asked for confidentiality. We are also aware that some can be identified by readers, and allies may be implicated if too much information is disclosed. There is no current formula of address for these priests. Formally, one would use Rev. and the last name. That becomes quite cumbersome in an article so we have defaulted to first names for the most part. On occasion, we have included last names that identify authors of texts. No other characters have names in the piece, so all named people are ordained Roman Catholic Women Priests (RCWP).

Sharon Henderson Callahan, EdD, is Professor Emerita School of Theology and Ministry, Seattle University.
Jeanette Rodriguez, PhD, is Professor of Theology and Religious Studies and Director of the Institute for Catholic Thought and Culture, Seattle University.

since the 1980s. Callahan served as a pastoral assistant with her in a parish; Rodriguez had taught her at Seattle University, a Jesuit Catholic institution in Seattle, Washington.

Teresa started as a physical education teacher for school children attached to the parish and for older participants at a local senior center. She shifted to working with teenagers and after earning her Master of Divinity she served as a Pastoral Life coordinator in parishes in Washington and Idaho. Throughout her journey she felt called to priesthood and sought every opportunity to argue for ordination of women. For much of that time, she was frustrated and angry having been prevented from fulfilling her G-d-given call to priesthood. Yet, in this room on this night, we began our study with a woman who had found peace and joy.

Teresa is one of forty Roman Catholic Women Priests (RCWP) that appear in this article. Ordained with apostolic succession but illegally according to the Code of Canon Law, these priests serve congregations in Western Europe, Canada, Great Britain, South and North America. While specifically studying the spirituality of these women, the authors identified a shift in leadership that reflects some changes in congregational life since the 1960s.

In total, we interviewed thirty-three Roman Catholic Woman Priests over a two-year period. Employing an ethnographic phenomenological methodology, we: culled nine additional stories from written documents; observed two ordinations, seven Masses, and several web-based liturgies; reviewed the entire archival holdings for this movement housed at Marquette University, a Jesuit research university in Milwaukee, Wisconsin; and visited multiple sites in each of the RCWP regions.

Seeking to identify the spiritual journeys and lives of RCWP, we utilized a semistructured interview process that allowed for follow-up questions to clarify and expand initial answers. Since some of the work has been completed during the COVID-19 pandemic, interviews were at times conducted in person and at times by Zoom, a teleconferencing tool. Both researchers took notes during the recording, and one researcher typed most of the transcripts. All the transcripts and other documents have been entered into NVivo,

an electronic program designed to assist researchers in developing codes and themes from interview transcripts.

Throughout the two-year process we met weekly to discuss our observations, pray over our process and findings, and share notes and insights. As Tim Sensing notes, we exerted extreme care to ensure internal validity of the data, so that we could present reliable and trustworthy findings.[2] Like Mary Clark Moschella, we valued the pastoral practice of the women and their congregants. Our efforts sought to discern the values embedded in their actions as priests. Thus, we studied the ways in which these women and their congregants live and lead in their faith communities.[3]

Throughout the process we sought to lift up the wisdom of the minoritized voices of Roman Catholic women. We embraced the challenge of bringing these voices, insights and ways of knowing to the table of academic, ecclesial, and theological credibility. As Moschella advises: "By moving the focus of our attention to the actual practice of religion in a given setting, pastoral theologians can perceive the situated values and 'traces of God' in that setting. The result will be more respectful, diverse, with particular interpretations of Christian faith and praxis, along with more complex and sensitive expressions of pastoral care."[4] We discovered much more than we anticipated.

This article addresses the Gospel leadership these women currently exercise in the Roman Catholic Church. It starts with the people—the leaders themselves. Studies in leadership during the 1990s and early 2000s considered the connection of leadership with spirituality. We briefly outline the women's spiritual journeys specifically as they affect their leadership. Next, we look at the ways the women embody their call to ministry. Acknowledging that the call is initiated sacramentally in baptism, we explore how that baptismal call to priest, prophet, and leader intensifies as these

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[2] Tim Sensing, *Qualitative Research: A Multi-Methods Approach to Projects for Doctor of Ministry Theses*. (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2011).

[3] Mary Clark Moschella, "Food, Faith, and Formation: A Case Study on the Use of Ethnography in Pastoral Theology and Care," *The Journal of Pastoral Theology* 12(1) (2002): 77.

[4] Moschella, 85.

women demonstrate the four expressions of leadership in the early church: Koinonia, Leiturgia, Kerygma and Diakonia.[5] Finally, we will highlight two types of leadership offering the potential for ecclesial renewal: ecumenical and inter-religious, and prophetic.

Leadership and Spirituality

The Roman Catholic Church remains closed to the ordination of women and married priests. Yet, women have chosen to stay in the church and now some serve as ordained priests. As we learned from those interviewed, this phenomenon quietly as well as publicly creates new leadership strategies and practices. While women-who-become-priests are officially excommunicated and therefore ostracized by the hierarchy, they insist on remaining in the church and reject the effort to discount their apostolic succession and legitimate, if illegal, priesthood. They speak of a direct call from G-d, processes of fostering their spiritual lives, and determination to live as authentic priests in their communities.

Women Leaders With a Deep Connection to G-d

Callahan's doctoral dissertation studied the competencies needed to serve at any level of leadership in the Roman Catholic

[5] These marks are chosen from six marks identified by many denominational sources. The six marks include *Kerygma, Koinonia, Leiturgia, Didache and Martyria*. Archbishop John Bathersby and Rev. Dr. David Rankin outlined the six marks in their joint statement *The Mission of the Church: Report of the National Dialogue Between the Roman Catholic Church and the Uniting Church in Australia* (2002-2008) with final revisions as of (2008):3. These are also emphasized by Idara Otu *Communion Ecclesiology and Social Transformation in African Catholicism Between Vatican Council II and African Synod II, (*Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock Publishers, 2020). Both of these documents reflect earlier notions delineated by Avery Dulles, *Models of the Church,* Expanded Edition. (New York, NY: Doubleday, 1987). Dulles expands these marks as he suggests models of ecclesial communities that emphasize the importance of some marks over others. An internet search finds that ELCA, UMC, as well as Uniting and Anglican churches in Canada, South Africa, Australia, and the U.S. ascribe to these as important areas of ministerial leadership.

Archdiocese of Western Washington.[6] Using a Delphi method to determine consensus among leaders about the qualities of leadership needed in the future, the study found that 99% of the respondents asserted that leaders must demonstrate connection to the Holy. Subsequent articles published in the *Journal of Religious Leadership*[7] documented the concern with spirituality and leadership both in religious and secular scholarship during the 1990s through the beginning of the twenty-first century. The Roman Catholic Women Priests we interviewed described their deep and abiding connection with G-d.

Sandra Schneiders defines the academic discipline of Christian spirituality as studying "the God-human relationship."[8] She further notes that spirituality often encompasses a life of exploring and knowing the transcendent. She maintains that in Christian spirituality, spirituality is necessarily Triune, with a perceived emphasis on the Christ, but clearly embracing a notion of the Holy Spirit. She asserts that "studies in spirituality do not aim to develop a second-order theoretical language about the spiritual life. . .but to investigate the spiritual life as it is and has been concretely lived."[9] Thus, we share our findings related to RCWP spiritual lives using their own words.

Most of our interviewees were very articulate about their connection to the Holy One. For example, Jane spoke of being spiritually aware at three years of age while on her swing in her backyard. Maria, who was raised in a German orphanage during World War II, said that at age eleven she was allowed to watch the sunset and say goodbye to "You" and greet "You" each morning. Those moments filled her with hope each day. Jean spoke of the

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[6] Sharon Henderson Callahan, *A Delphi Study of the Competencies Needed by Leaders of the Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Western Washington Through the Year 2000*, Dissert. Seattle University (1996)364 (UNI No. 9716963).

[7] Sharon Henderson Callahan, "Shifting Images of Church Invite New Leadership Frames," *The Journal of Religious Leadership* 1(1):82.

[8] Sandra Schneiders, "What is Christian Spirituality?" in *The Blackwell Companion to Christian Spirituality*, ed Arthur holder (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, 2005) 16.

[9] Schneiders, 18.

importance of her near-death experience. Having unshakable confidence in G-d's call, she knew deeply that she would live to ordination and was committed to work through the arduous process.

As priests, the women use art, music, and drama to evoke emotional and spiritual connection to the Divine Mystery within the congregants. For example, they strive to break free from the dominance of male language to describe the Sacred. Liturgies are rewritten to include multiple names for the Holy in each celebration. One will find: Mother, Father, Holy, G-d, Spirit, Love, Sophia, Wisdom and so many more.[10] Using the Roman sacramentary to pattern their worship, they reject the dominance of male language for humans and for the sacred.[11]

The women priests and their congregants explore the lives of historical women for insight into their spiritual and priestly lives. Thus, they choose to imitate spiritual predecessors such as Hildegard of Bingen, Catherine of Siena, Teresa of Ávila, Thérèse of Lisieux, Mary of Magdala, Our Lady of Guadalupe, and Dorothy Day. While some mention Mary, mother of Jesus, most reject limitations imposed on women through male dominance of Mary's story. Seeking liberation from oppression, these women strive to free themselves from "a traditional theology rooted in a patriarchal anthropology [that] does not have a path for women's emancipation and autonomy."[12]

According to Callahan's doctoral study, parish leaders linked integrity to one's spiritual life.[13] As Schneiders' definition indicates, a person who pursues a spiritual path embraces a life of discipleship. We found the RCWP women recounted long spiritual journeys. Mostly retired or semiretired, these women have, like Teresa, served in multiple volunteer and paid lay ministry positions. They sustained their work with prayer, weekly and daily

[10] Ordination Rites in RCWP Archives at Marquette University, Department of special Collections and University Archives. Series 1. And ARCWP Archives at Marquette University, Department of special Collections and University Archives. Series 3, Box 1.
[11] Mass amended to inclusive language by Rev. Jane Via, Ph.D., J.D.
[12] Ivone Gebara, "Ecofeminism: A Latin American Perspective," *Crosscurrents* 53(1):7.
[13] Callahan, *Delphi*, 364.

Mass attendance, retreats, spiritual direction, spiritual reading, and ongoing education. Most are partnered and their partners work with them to foster Christian community. All have supported their livelihood through employment and support their priestly ministries through retirement benefits or through continued work outside the congregations they serve. They are the tentmaker ministers modeled by Paul, Lydia, and Juno in the early church.

Each of these priests faced a conflict from the time they knew they were called to serve G-d as leaders in a faith community. Most had this or a similar experience as children: Vividly aware of the Holy when they attended Sunday Mass, they witnessed the priest on the altar inviting people to pray, reading the Scriptures and speaking about them to the people, consecrating the elements, and distributing the Eucharist. Like many Catholic kids, these young girls went home and imitated the process using Necco wafers, a type of round, flat, hard candy. They saw themselves as priests and when they told others what they hoped to be, they were universally told that only men could be priests. They were redirected to the vowed religious life as suitable for women. As they grew, a surprising number explored the vowed religious life. Until 2002, however, none found a way to pursue what they knew to be their core call to priesthood.

When the original seven women were ordained in 2002, they sent a message to the Roman Catholic Church around the world. Three bishops of the Church chose to disobey the practice and law (Canon 1024)[14] and to ordain women legitimately in apostolic succession even if not licitly—that is, against the law (*contra legem*).[15] These first RCWP were from Germany and Austria. Two of the Germans, Iris Müeller and Ida Raming, wrote extensively about the theological imperative to ordain women. The seven women included another German, Dagmar Celeste, who lived

[14] *The Code of Canon Law of 1983* in English Translation (New York: HarperCollins Pub, 1983) c.1024.

[15] Iris Müeller and Ida Raming, *Contra Legem—A Matter of Conscience. Our Lifelong Struggle for Human Rights for Women in the Roman-Catholic Church.* Trans. Harry Radday and Linda Maloney (Piscataway, NJ: Transaction Publishers, 2010).

in Ohio and thus became the first ordained American woman. Facing immediate excommunication from the Church, the women rejected the excommunication while claiming total allegiance to the Roman Catholic Church.

The threat of excommunication for daring to break the law loomed large in each of the RCWP spiritual journeys. For decades each woman suffered the pain of knowing G-d called them to something humans denied them. The threat of excommunication warned them that they faced exclusion from the people they had served as volunteers and paid staff in their parishes, loss of income, loss of burial rites in the Church, loss of retirement benefits, and loss of friends and family.

During one visit with a community in Lacey, Washington, Callahan and Rodriguez spoke with congregants. At our table we met again people whom we had educated at the School of Theology and Ministry. We knew these men and women and shared dinner with them. One had been a pastoral associate and a spiritual director for a Benedictine community nearby. She and others said they no longer found their home in the parish communities in which they had raised their children and celebrated their lives.

The women priests and their congregants pursued discipleship in deeply spiritual ways. They met God in sacraments, prayer, nature, and community. They shared spiritual insights through art, poetry, and drama. They suffered limits in opportunity due to their gender, and each priest testified to her personal struggle to accept God's call to the priesthood while distancing herself from the hierarchical church she had spent her life serving.

Four Leadership Ministries of the Early Church

Like ministers in many other ecclesial communities, our representatives of RCWP reflect the historical four marks of ministry in the early church. They facilitate and nurture deep affection (*koinonia*) among members. They preside over and foster collaborative liturgy (*leiturgia*) and sacramental life. As teachers and preachers, they proclaim the Christian message (*kerygma*); and they practice pastoral care and commitment to social justice (*diakonia*).

Koinonia: *All Are Welcome*[16]

During our study we observed several liturgical celebrations conducted by women priests. Attendance at these services ranged from between twenty-five to over 150 participants. The priests and people welcomed everyone. Throughout the celebration of Eucharist, they invited the whole community to read the prayers together. The whole community blessed the bread and wine. All were invited to the table as evidenced in one liturgy of ordination; the priest said: "We have all been blessed and called to this table which is the altar of Jesus Christ. All are welcome to approach this table to receive Communion."[17]

During lunch with congregants in California, one woman stated, "We are the church for those dispossessed by others." Another at the table agreed and indicated that their community welcomed divorced and remarried Catholics, people of all faiths or even no faiths, LBGTQ+, and folks of every economic strata. As we shared lunch provided by the hands of those gathered around the table, we recalled the stories of Jesus at table with tax collectors and sinners.

Jesus, the Spirit, Ruach, G-d as Creator, Love, MotherFather G-d—all are names invoked in addressing the G-d of their shared belief.[18] They believe as Paul instructed in 1 Corinthians 12 that each of them contributes gifts given for the upbuilding of the community. For example, in our conversation, Teresa noted that her main leadership style was that of facilitating gifts. As pastor she paid attention to the people, learned who they were, encouraged them to claim the power of their baptism and their distinctive gifts, and facilitated their use in the communal reign of G-d to which each has been gifted for the edification of the entire Body of Christ (I Corinthians 12:7).

[16] The leadership descriptors in each of the headings are drawn from the Ordination rituals found at Marquette University Department of special Collections and University Archives. Thanks to William Fliss for his outstanding help and careful cataloguing.

[17] Ordination of Chava (Michelle) Redonnet. May 1, 2010. Marquette University Department of special Collections and University Archives. Series 1.

[18] We reviewed 12 ordination liturgies and ten prayer gatherings. We found over 50 names for G-d used throughout the celebrations.

Unlike those surveyed in a recent study by the Barna Group, in which 56% of practicing Christians believe that their calling is a solo journey, the congregants and RCWP claim close communal connection.[19] Those we visited testified to their desire to come together, to celebrate and support each other in their faith lives. While they easily identified obstacles and sufferings that got in their way, they also readily named allies and communities who supported them. Even their journey to ordination required communal sharing directed by spiritual directors and companions. Theirs is a thoroughly relational spiritual path.

As faculty who taught in the School of Theology and Ministry at Seattle University, we came to know exceptional Catholic lay leaders, and a few became women priests. They typically serve small congregations. (Chaves discovered that 75% of all Protestant congregations have seventy-five people or fewer)[20] but they dedicate themselves to fostering rich and vibrant community. Again, Teresa summarized the RCWP commitment to developing *koinonia*: "I do believe that the ministerial priesthood allows for that focus to form community to happen. I think that's part of what I do: my presence in the community really does form community."

Leiturgia: *Come and Rejoice*

The sacramental life of the Roman Catholic Church constitutes a major source of spiritual care. As the early church celebrated baptism and eucharist, it appears that the community gathered, some read from scripture, and some poured water and said the words recorded in 1 Corinthians 11:23-26. As Roman Catholic priests, these women embrace the sacramental—thus liturgical—aspect of their ministries. Each of them spoke of their work in Eucharistic celebrations, anointing of the sick and dying, reconciliation, and

[19] Stephanie Shackelford and Bill Denzel, *You on Purpose* (Barna Group 2021) https://www.barna.com/research/pc-calling/?utm_source=Newsletter&utm_medium accessed 10/2/2021.

[20] Mark Chaves, Mary Ellen Konieczny, Kraig Beyerlein and Emily Barman. "The National Congregations Study, Background, Methods, and Selected Results," *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion*. 38(4) (1999):459-476,468-469. https://www.jstor.org/stable/1387606

baptism. They officiate at weddings and burials. That is the *leiturgia* of the church—the work of the liturgy, the rituals that accompany all aspects of communal life.

Our observations of liturgies included ordinations and weekly Masses. We were struck by the predominance of women at the altar. Each liturgy followed the familiar Roman Catholic rite. Yet, each is creatively expressed in more inclusive ways.[21]

One of the priests we interviewed reflected that she listens carefully to what people say during the prayers of the faithful and the shared homily times. She follows up with individuals after the celebration as a result of her deep listening. Another notes who is there and who is missing, and she makes visits or calls during the week to ensure that people are well and cared for.

Jane Via, a Scripture scholar who taught at San Diego University and a lawyer who served as an assistant district attorney and now a bishop, thought of herself as a teacher. Yet, she reflected, "Much to my amazement it turns out I have some liturgical gifts . . . so I exercised liturgical leadership that I think was very important." She established a liturgical commission that eventually functioned without her input. She translated the rituals from the sacramentary so they would reflect inclusive language and multiple images of G-d. She worked with the song leaders to amend male-only wording so that music, action and preaching all reflected a liturgical wholeness.

While some congregations led by Roman Catholic Women Priests celebrate weekly liturgies, others manage bi-monthly or monthly liturgies. They all commit to using a reworked and more inclusive version of the Roman Catholic Sacramentary to guide their liturgical celebrations.[22] Kathleen describes her commitment to leading and participating in weekly Eucharistic celebrations:

> I think it's more like what Ron Rolheiser writes—it's—the eucharist and sacraments are G-d making love to us. Yeah. Jesus. . .I believe Jesus was already present and

[21] Ordination Liturgies accessed at Marquette University Department of special Collections and University Archives. Series 1.
[22] Via, Jane and Nancy Corran. *Comprehensive Catholic Lectionary*. https://www.inclusivelectionary.org/

> Christ was present in the wheat that was ground. And it's blessed even more by all of us together, gathered to become more of that, and—and by participating—but we're in that eucharistic prayer. It's also us that gets blessed and transformed. It's not the bread and the wine. It's the community gathered. And so you become more of what you eat. And it's also our lives broken and shared. If, you know, you go out to your field hospitals, like Francis calls it, and then you come back, you're kind of broken down, and you share each other and the eucharist as food, as strength for that journey, to go back out.

Kathleen and Diane's community gathers the folks for weekly Eucharist, prayer in a small chapel, and centering prayer at least once a month. They then go out to care for people without homes and share food from their garden. What they do during the liturgy is embodied in everyday life, even as Kathleen stated.

In Ohio, Shannon admits to being a pretty "traditional" ordained minister. She ensures the community of St. Hildegard of Bingen celebrates weekly Mass, liturgy of the hours, weekly Bible study, rosary, and vespers. She wears vestments, and other women and men take on roles of reading, preaching, leading devotionals. Similarly, Juanita confides she is more liturgically centered. She created an altar in her house—the house church that celebrates weekly Eucharist. The community shares prayer, reading, homily, and consecration. Juanita maintains that the ordained priest has the gift of gathering and consecrating just as a doctor has the gift of healing.

Likewise, Maureen speaks about the attention she pays to liturgical work, the result of her training at Jesuit School of Theology in Berkeley, California. Using her background in sacramental theology, she invites others to worship. She asserts that the priest's presence is essential in the liturgical celebration, but simultaneously maintains it is "the community at work in our liturgies." In Colombia, Olga Alvarez, a bishop, asserts she is not in competition with the masculine clergy. Rather "I am a presbyter

serving the Church, announcing with joy the Kingdom of G-d, eradicating sexism, marginalization, inequality, present sins that harm the church."

Kerygma: *A Stole with a Fiery Motive*

Ten women named teaching as their main joy and gift in the leadership that accompanies ordination. Since Peter's first proclamation after Pentecost, people who are ordained claim preaching and teaching the Word of God as central to their call. Pat of Toronto says simply, "My priestly ministry is to first and foremost keep the story of Jesus alive theologically." Teresa speaks about how as people proclaim the readings from sacred Scriptures, one hears the word anew. Diane, Pat, Jean, and others speak about preparing conversation starters and questions to spark shared homilies. They claim their communities enjoy the opportunity to share insights with each other.

Naming teaching as her primary gift, Jane created a full inclusive language translation of the lectionary for all three cycles endorsed by the institutional church.[23] Diane Whalen also claimed teaching as a primary gift. Having spent over thirty years in parish ministry as a director of religious and/or adult education with responsibility for sacramental preparation, Diane participated in a local TEDx conference in Olympia.[24]

Many of these women are highly educated and several have earned doctoral degrees. Shannon, like Diane, emerged from years of religious education experience at the parish level and at the diocesan level. She uses her doctorates to ground her writing and her preaching. She conducts pilgrimages to Bingen's original abbey in Germany. With a PhD in counseling, Donnieu teaches her community to share power and insight. She speaks eloquently about her work in helping members understand their baptismal call as taught through the documents of Vatican II.

[23] Jane Via, and Nancy Corran, *Comprehensive Catholic Lectionary*, https://www.inclusivelectionary.org/

[24] Diane Whalen was a featured speaker on the Olympia Washington TEDx theme of *Point of No Return*, https://www.ted.com/tedx/events/14091

Others share the word through art, music and drama. A university professor, Victoria started with street theater and communal Mass celebrations outside St. Patrick's Cathedral in New York City. She now works to bring people of the Scripture to life through drama, presenting reflections on Mary, Martha and others to faith communities throughout the West Coast. Similarly, Kathy creates quilted art to highlight aspects of liturgical feasts such as Pentecost, or to depict specific women saints as guides for her community. The proclamation of the Word remains core to the function of the priestly vocation for each of these women priests.

Diakonia: *The Basin and the Towel*

Roman Catholic Women Priests have emerged from a long tradition of service through various ministries in the Church. It should be no surprise, then, that most of them see themselves as servant leaders who offer personal outreach and justice leadership. Akin to the early church's decision to call women to the diaconate,[25] the RCWP name diaconal ministries as core to their priesthood: visiting the sick, listening to people and their pain, spiritual counseling, reconciliation, attending demonstrations for justice issues, and championing those who are otherwise ignored by the institutional church.

As priests, the women we interviewed continued their outreach and advocacy after ordination. For example, after Victoria moved to California, she continued her work in parks with those people who would otherwise not be welcome in church buildings. Like her, sociology professor Judy Lee and her partner Judy Beaumont began ministering to people without homes, helping them find homes and more secure future. When they moved their ordained ministries from the Northeast to Florida, they housed people and established a feeding program. In addition, they made multiple trips to Colombia to share their experience and eventually rescued a woman from persecution in Colombia. Now ordained, the woman works specifically with people of African and Latin American descent in Florida.

[25] Phyllis Zagano, *Women: Icons of Christ*, (New York: Paulist Press, 2020) 10.

Other priests have lived in Catholic worker communities and carried lessons of shared responsibility into their priesthoods. Kathleen focused on food sustainability and grew food, taught others to do the same, and her congregation now manages a garden and feeds people each month. She exclaimed that nothing brings her closer to G-d than working with those who are homeless.[26] She and others in their community take their towels and basins to San Francisco area to minister to folks while caring for their feet. Vikki—in Vancouver, British Columbia—continues to work in a Catholic worker house and to share housing with those who are needing some assistance. Their housing and work with the poor in their neighborhood support the work of the congregation and centers their spirituality. One priest works specifically with undocumented Latinx migrant workers. Her parish worships, proclaims the gospel, and feeds and houses several folks throughout the year. She also lobbies for immigration reform. Her name remains hidden to protect the people she serves.

Many priests were nurses and public health professionals before their ordination. As part of their priestly ministry, they continue to reach out to those who are shut in, suffering, or ill. Morag in Great Britain describes her list of people to contact. She acknowledges their isolation during the COVID-19 pandemic and knows from her years of experience as a public health nurse that these people suffer emotionally and psychically as well as spiritually without the connection of someone who cares and can bring the Eucharist. Juanita describes her work during this time as consecrating multiple hosts in her house church and taking them to people to distribute—as those in the earliest Christian communities did.

Joanna simply states, "I'm here for them. If someone is ill, I'll call them. I'll go visit." She also joins protests when the community wants to register support for change for the common good. Marina Theresa agrees. "We visit people. I visit Hispanic people. I celebrate Mass and pray for the sick." Paula notes that she has done anointings and visited several people. She further confides that when she visits in the hospital, several people have "felt disconnected from the

[26] Luc Novovitch, "God's Daughters" documentary film.

church and have held guilt. I have been able to help them see that G-d is so much bigger than what they learned about. And that G-d is so loving and loves them so dearly and wants them to know that."

In the same vein, Rosa states she is available for someone to call her and let her know what has been happening in their lives. She starts by listening. She describes her frame of mind: "I am talking to them really about what G-d is here for. And to help them see [what is possible] in the position they are in." Similarly, Judy simply says, "My happiest days are those when I can reach out to somebody that is broken, totally broken, and help them put themselves back together with G-d's help. And people would say, you do things nobody else could do, and I reply that it is easy, that G-d did it. G-d gave them this chance to become whole."

Clearly, the women priests we studied embody the marks of the early church ministries: *koinonia, leiturgia*, *kerygma*, and *diakonia*. They create communities of care, ritualize important moments and celebrate sacraments, proclaim the Word and teach all who will listen. They continue their practice of serving the poor and suffering.

Leadership for Ecclesial Renewal

We found women priests to be spiritually aware and purposeful about living their Christian commitment in ways that cohere with classic Christian ministry categories. They have recognized and answered a perceived call from G-d to move into ordained ministry. Their stories and leadership match those of men and women from most Christian ecclesial communities. Indeed, it is the very ordinariness of their leadership that is remarkable. At the same time, their leadership reflects courage in the face of great personal and spiritual cost.

Their stories match the call and discipleship stories of countless men and women who have followed Jesus as they perceived his call. They mirror the call and discipleship stories recorded by ordained priests and bishops as well as saints in the Roman Catholic tradition. We are reminded of the late Ken Untener's reflections on the call of

Peter and Andrew, "Like the disciples, I have been called by Jesus, called by name to associate myself with Jesus."[27] It is sadly the case that although Untener's call is endorsed by the hierarchy, the call of women to the priesthood is grounds for excommunication.

The hierarchical Roman Catholic Church has tried to close the door on women living fully into their call. Immediately after Vatican II, women and men anticipated new opportunities for answering their call to priesthood. Rejecting extensive theological and biblical research since that time, the Church remains adamant that women cannot be ordained priests. John Wijngaards reports: "Theologians who express doubts about the official line proclaimed by the Vatican are threatened with dismissal from their teaching posts at Catholic seminaries and colleges. Disagreement with 'teaching authority' is labelled as dissent or even heresy."[28]

As this article demonstrates, attempts to shut down the discussion and action failed. Women, with their silent and often anonymous male priest and bishop allies, work toward transforming the Roman Catholic Church. In the words of Leah Gaskin Fitchue, an ecumenical ally, these women have learned how to "redefine and experience authority as an internal possessive rather than an external mandate."[29] Fitchue further explained that "a woman's greatest sense of self and sense of agency is the quality of the relationship she has with her interior voice."[30]

Women priests are choosing to answer the call to ordination publicly and consistently—the same call they have heard since childhood. As Heifetz and Linsky comment about the dangers for courageous leadership: "leadership is a risky business"[31] and

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[27] *Little Blue Book for Advent and Christmas Seasons 2021-2022*. Based on the Writings of Bishop Ken Untener. Ed Catherine Haven and Nancy Ayotte. (Saginaw, MI: Diocese of Saginaw, 2021). Tuesday, First Week in Advent.
[28] https://ten-commandments.org/opening/ John Wijngaards, *Ten Commandments for Church Reform: Memoirs of a Catholic Priest*, (Lafayette, LA: Acadian House Publishing, 2021)
[29] Leah Gaskin Fitchue, "Inner Journey of a Woman Servant Leader," *In Trust*, (Autumn 2000):7.
[30] Fitchue, 7
[31] Ronald A. Heifetz and Marty Linsky, *Leadership on the Line*, (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2004)11-12.

leaders carefully walk a "razor's edge"[32] that threatens their spiritual existence through excommunication and retribution from the institutional church while simultaneously claiming their agency as a call from G-d. As ordinary leaders of small congregations dedicated to systemic change, ordained women leaders rely on and foster ecumenical and inter-religious allies, and their stance is necessarily prophetic.

Ecumenical Allies

Since the ordination of women in mainline Protestant churches, Vatican officials worried that ecumenical dialogue would suffer. While some discussions at the highest levels may have stalled, the experience on the local levels seems to contradict hierarchical fears. Indeed, the bonding on the local level seems to have fostered a more shared understanding of universal call and participation in Christ's work. At least that is the testimony of the RCWP, their congregants, and their hosts as we connected with them.

Theological education is a good example of the serendipitous ecumenicity of women's journey into priesthood. While Roman Catholic institutions of higher education offered advanced theology degrees, many were in places that remained inaccessible to all women. Thus, many women shared Master of Divinity education with Protestant counterparts. At some moment during their educational experience, most of the women were asked to shift their Christian allegiance from Roman Catholicism to another ecclesial community. Dagmar Celeste describes her experience in being invited to preach and then preside at a United Methodist congregation prior to her graduation. Morag said that Episcopalians and Church of Scotland faculty and colleagues invited her multiple times to join their institutions so she could serve as priest. Indeed, one of our RCWP revealed that in a visit with her bishop prior to her ordination, he suggested she change ecclesial allegiance to prevent excommunication!

Like those identified through the writings of the early church,

[32] Ronald A. Heifetz, *Leadership Without Easy Answers*, (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1994) 127-128.

these RCWP lead small congregations: house churches and partner church buildings. In a sense, catacombed from the institution to which they adhere, they mirror the type of leadership so many women in other ecclesial communities exhibit. By choice, they gather folks who are looking for a place to find community, belief, service. Unlike their ecumenical women peers, however, Roman Catholic women literally freed themselves to live outside the institution. This freedom encourages them to explore options of language, image, and ministry that the institutions may discourage. Unlike many of their ecumenical peers, however, these women are not sentenced to smaller congregations with little pay, smaller retirements, and little hope for advancement. They freely take no compensation for their work. There is no system of advancement in the RCWP experiment of prophetic life alongside the institution.

On the other hand, the pastors of many Protestant churches have risked offending Roman Catholic archbishops by offering those Protestant facilities as places of ordinations and eventual congregations. The RCWP movement is dependent on these ecumenical relationships for worship space, community gathering space, joint efforts in relation to social justice issues, and even shared worship on various occasions. On some occasions, Protestant and Jewish women and men have risked retribution from the Roman Catholic community, as they opened their doors to events that result in automatic excommunication for all the Catholic participants.

Recalling the ecumenical communion she experienced through her long struggle, Teresa commented,

> I continue a relationship with the local Catholic parishes, parish members and our local inter-religious communities. However, there are new relationships and possibilities that manifest themselves because RCWP priesthood and our communities cannot be contained (and not welcomed by those who hold authority and power over the Church) within the traditional and hierarchical institution. We want to be led by Christ
>
> and the Holy Spirit to form communities of inclusion

> and welcome that offer service and companionship to all we encounter.

Each of the women we studied claims similar commitment and attests to ecumenical and in some cases inter-religious support.

Prophetic Leadership

Walter Brueggemann describes prophetic leadership as one that evolves out of deep connection to the community, usually situated in a smaller subcommunity. The community and prophetic spokespersons speak truth to the dominant community. The truth emanates from pain that is experienced and somewhat alleviated through attention to the tradition and renewal of that tradition in a new time. The subcommunity works together to change the oppression of the dominant community.[33]

The RCWP embraces their collective task as prophets within the larger Christian and specifically Roman Catholic Church. Teresa summarizes here what others have said as well,

> Yes, we priests and our communities are prophetic. Our existence challenges the structures of our Church that have oppressed us. We refuse to live in a muted and false sense of our baptism, our confirmation and our Eucharist….There's a sense that somehow we're trying to reform from the outside, but for me I always found that within the structure of the Church, that's where reformation, I think, truly happens.

Indeed, she speaks to the embodied reality of the woman priest even as Ivone Gebara writes about the challenge theologically.

Positing that the shift to full inclusion for women is actually cultural, Gebara argues that all theology needs renewal. Given there is a shift in philosophy, additional understanding of what it is to be human, and a broader notion of multiple cultures within the Christian and Catholic cultures, Gebara suggests that women are trying to deconstruct traditional theology to move beyond

[33] Walter Brueggemann, *Hopeful Imagination: Prophetic Voices in Exile,* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1986).

the hierarchical and sexist structures of our inherited patriarchal religion.[34]

Brueggemann argues that prophetic leadership emerges from those who deeply understand the tradition and have suffered as a result of power and wealth placing oppression in the hands of a few. In the biblical times about which Brueggemann directs his thesis, power resided in the monarchy and priests. In the Roman Catholic Church, however, power resides in the hierarchy. Teresa called for reformation of the hierarchy itself: "I have been and continue to be more inclined to live and work within structures as I call for change and transformation. For me, as a Roman Catholic Woman Priest, I know I am living outside of the traditional, hierarchical structure of the Church but only because of the inability of that traditional and hierarchical structure to live into its own highest good."

Rodriguez and Fortier link tradition and culture. Like Brueggemann, they assert that "traditions pass on a world of meaning."[35] They, like Gebara, place theological traditions in cultural contexts. They distinguish between the process of tradition, that is, the handing on of the tradition, and the product or the content. They are concerned with how "narratives, rituals, and historical and collective memories function as a human wall of resistance to annihilation and a means to ensure survival."[36] What women priests have done challenges the content of the Roman Catholic tradition as well as its process. Together in community they resist the hierarchically claimed power to determine that males only can be ordained for priestly service to G-d and the community.

Early in the RCWP movement, theologians Iris Müeller and Ida Raming named the resistance as *contra legem*. After the amendment to the Code of Canon Law that threatened anyone who talked about ordaining women would be threatened with punishment, they asked themselves: "How can Catholic women free themselves from this spiritual prison made up of definitive

[34] Gebara, 98.
[35] Jeanette Rodriguez, and Ted Fortier. *Cultural Memory. Resistance, Faith and Identity*, (Austin, TX: University of Texas Press, 2007) 9.
[36] Rodriguez, 8.

declarations and prohibitions?"[37] As priests, they write about their own commitment to pursue resistance and claimed a tradition that overruled the authority of the hierarchy. "We committed ourselves to Action Against Current Church Law [Canon 1024]. . . .For us the scripture provided the authoritative guidance 'One must obey God rather than men (Acts 5:29).' "[38] These two women described their ordination as a threshold. "Behind us was a path along which we had tortured ourselves with oppressive church law, against which we had struggled without effect. In front of us was a path free of this burden, but still presenting a very uncertain future. That we had now freed ourselves gave us an uplifted feeling and filled us with joy."[39]

Brueggemann contends that prophets must experience pain, which these women readily attest to enduring. He then argues that out of their pain, in collaboration with a community, they emerge in hope. The stories of the women we interviewed consistently reflected this movement. Indeed, they all ended with what Helen asserted: "no one can excommunicate me from G-d." To a person, they have rejected the excommunication.

At the same time, they offer alternative ways of being church. Their commitment to systemic change results in public websites, multiple articles, books, and their universal willingness to be interviewed and documented. Women priests see themselves as critical yeast for the change in the Church they embody.[40]

The renewed liturgies model in a symbolic way a new openness to recognizing Jesus, as Juanita claims *in persona Christi*. Maria describes her ordination to the diaconate as one of her most important and transforming spiritual experiences. As she lay prostrate before the altar and the Cross, she gave herself totally to G-d and to Jesus as disciple and leader of the Spirit's people. She found herself transported to a unitive and mystical experience. She knew she was not dedicating herself to loyalty to an institution or a

[37] Müeller and Raming, 73.
[38] Müeller and Raming, 75.
[39] Müeller and Raming, 77.
[40] Lederach, John Paul, *The Moral Imagination: the Art and Soul of Building Peace*, (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2005) 91.

male hierarchy. She wasn't taking a vow of obedience to her female bishop. She was dedicating herself to G-d, and the people who came forward to lay hands on her to affirm her role acknowledged this very act of prophetic reform in the Catholic tradition.

Rites of women's ordination stand in stark contrast to the current ordination rite of male priests, during which the men prostrate themselves to the bishop and take a vow of obedience to the bishop. Ordination of women is an echo of the divine call to all the gathered, a call to holiness and full participation as the people of G-d. No longer, the ritual declares, does the fullness of faith reside in a single ordained religious leader assigned to a geographic location. Indeed, the faith is ever growing and developing as the people of G-d are pilgrims, disciples, learners of the person of Jesus, his parent, and the spirit that enlivens all.

These moves in language, ritual, and inclusiveness change the culture of the community. As Heifetz asserts:

> The politics of inclusion are not faint-hearted efforts at making everybody happy enough. Inclusion means more than taking peoples' views into account in defining the problem. Inclusion may mean challenging people, hard and steadily, to face new perspectives on familiar problems, to let go of old ideas and ways of life long held sacred. Thus, inclusion does not mean that each party will get its way. Even the most well-crafted efforts at inclusion can rarely prevent the experience of loss by some. As a result, one often cannot shield oneself from the outrage of those parties who must face loss and are unwilling to change.[41]

Women priests and bishops intentionally implement rituals that signal a shift in organizational structures. They are standing firm in the face of hierarchical resistance. Christine and Suzanne, as bishops, speak about intentionally working with and educating

[41] Ronald A. Heitfetz, *Leadership*, 239-40.

male bishops in the church. They claim prophetic obedience and note, in the words of Bishop Patricia Fresen, that the hierarchy can "jail the resistors but not the resistance."[42]

Summary

The majority of women we interviewed and studied lived through Vatican II and embraced its call to discipleship. Each heard a call to ordained priesthood, and for many years attempted to answer the call as described throughout. What they now offer is a type of leadership that rejects hierarchical, patriarchal obedience. Rather, they see themselves as facilitators, educators, and convenors; they accompany the people of G-d on their journeys of faith. These shifts demonstrate different styles of leadership and accountability.

Reform in the Roman Catholic Church takes time. It took 500 years for most of the reforms Luther called for in 1517 to become natural in the Roman Church.[43] These women recognize that reform comes within the organization as well as from outside it. Like leaders described by Helen Markham, these women link spirits and allow for the wonders that only a community of spirits can accomplish. They are committed to balancing individual and communal transformation.[44] They help their people "confront the contradictions in their lives and communities and adjust their values and behavior to accommodate new realities."[45] They offer their communities a "sanctuary to restore a sense of purpose, regain courage and heart."[46] They are full of mission, and free from their own fear of reprisal because they have faced that fear and accepted institutional consequences.

[42] *Pink Smoke Over the Vatican: The voices of these women must be heard*. Directed by Jules Hart. Produced by Eye Goddess Films, 2011.
[43] *The Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification.* Catholic Church's Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity and the Lutheran World Federation. 1999.
[44] Donna Markham, *Spiritlinking Leadership*, (New Jersey: Paulist Press, 1999) ix.
[45] Heifetz, *Leadership,* 127-128.
[46] Ronald A. Heifetz, *Leadership*, 273.

Standing on the shoulders of women and men who have gone before them, these priests "generate courage and the belief that as long as persons are connected and unified in single-minded commitment to the mission that is yet hazy and amorphous, the swirling and fuzzy vista ahead is filled with possibility and potential."[47] Filled with the Spirit and sustained by practices that continue to deepen their spirituality, these female priests conform to the four tasks of the Gospel as delineated in the Acts of the Apostles. The very existence of these female priests encourages ecumenical collaboration and exchange, while acting as a prophetic witness to the change that is inevitable in a church that responds to the work of G-d in the People of G-d. Margaret Mead is quoted as having written, "Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world; indeed, it's the only thing that ever has."

The determination of these women resounds with Jen's words: "I love the Catholic Church. It is who I am. I will never leave."[48]

[47] Markham, 13.
[48] Luc Novovitch, *God's Daughters: Knocking on Vatican's Door*, documentary film (2015) http://Godsdaughters.vhk.tv

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A Classroom on Water: Experiential Leadership Development Through Sailing

TIMOTHY D. FOSTER

Abstract

Despite the significant investment in leadership development, and widespread recognition of its importance to the future of churches, conventional programs fail to affect leader performance. Over the past three decades, experiential learning has emerged as an effective pedagogy that has a particular application to leadership development. Key elements of effective experiential learning include personal reflection, peer-feedback and coaching. However, its use in seminaries is largely confined to field education and internships where one or more of these components are missing. A five-day experiential leadership development through sailing course has been developed at Ridley College (Melbourne) to address the leadership needs of local churches, Christian schools and other not-for profit organizations. Recent experience of the program has demonstrated its potential and helped identify key components for an effective experiential program. While running a program based on sailing will be beyond the reach of most seminaries, this paper offers ideas and impetus to develop experiential leadership programs around other activities.

Introduction

The purpose of this paper is to review an experiential leadership program being offered at Ridley College (Melbourne) and explore the potential of experiential learning for leadership development in seminaries. This program has been developed as part of a wider

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leadership development initiative in response to stakeholder feedback on the poor leadership outcomes of graduates. Ridley College is not alone in this challenge. A consistent finding over many years is that seminaries fail to develop the leadership skills of their students.[1] Skip Bell and Roger Dudley found that among Seventh-day Adventist pastors those possessing a formal theological degree did not score significantly higher on five leadership practices than those without formal training.[2] This finding has been reproduced in other denominations using comparable methodology.[3] Using a qualitative approach McKenna, Yost, and Boyd found that just 8.2% of the senior pastors studied considered formal education to be a key event in their own leadership development.[4] This has been found to be the case also in non-Western contexts.[5] A recent graduate survey of congregational leaders by the Association of Theological Schools (ATS) found that the top three responses to the question "What was not offered, but you wish you could have

[1] Association of Theological Schools-ATS. "The Future Face of Church Leadership: A Snapshot of Today's MDiv Students," *Colloquy* 201 (2011): 34-36; Skip Bell, and Roger L. Dudley, "Leadership Formation in Ministerial Education Part 2: The Impact of Graduate Theological Education on Leadership Development in the Local Pastorate," *Andrews University Seminary Studies* 42(1) (2004): 10; Timothy Drake, *The Impact of Leadership Development Training Experiences on the Development of Senior Pastors' Effectiveness as Leaders in an American, Evangelical Denomination* (Doctoral dissertation, Regent University, 2003); G. M. Hillman, "Leadership Practices and Current Ministry Experience of Master's Level Seminary Students," *Christian Higher Education* 5(2) (2006):141-159; Kristina Lizardy-Hajbi, "Nurturing Leadership Development for the Now and the Next: A Denominational Perspective," *Reflective Practice: Formation and Supervision in Ministry* 38 (2018) 25-38; Valerie A. Miles-Tribble, *Assessing Student Leadership Competencies and Adequacy of Preparation in Seminary Training* (Doctoral dissertation, Walden University, 2015).

[2] Bell and Dudley, 210-211.

[3] Lizardy-Hajbi 2010; Cory D. Hines, *A Study of Pastors, their Leadership and the Results of their Churches* (Doctoral dissertation, Dallas Baptist University, 2012).

[4] Robert B. McKenna, Paul R. Yost, and Tanya N. Boyd, "Leadership Development and Clergy: Understanding the Events and Lessons that Shape Pastoral Leaders," *Journal of Psychology and Theology* 35(3) (2007): 179–189.

[5] Albert Bon-Hock Pua, *Perceptions of Leadership Development in Chinese Churches* (Doctoral dissertation, Trinity Evangelical Divinity School, 2006).

learned, in seminary/theological school?" concerned leadership and management, amounting to 68% of responses.[6]

This problem is not confined to the development of religious leaders, but exists in formal leadership development in corporate contexts despite the significant financial and other resources being applied.[7] Cromwell and Kolb report that only 10-15% of employee training results in long-term transfer of learning to the workplace.[8] In a 2013 survey of 329 organizations by research firm Brandon Hall Group, 75% of respondents described their leadership development programs as ineffective.[9] A 2014 global survey of over one thousand respondents by Delloite found that only 13% of respondents say they do an excellent job developing leaders at all levels.[10] When it comes to developing Millennials, these organizations felt even less prepared with only 5% rating their capacity with this generation as excellent.[11]

With so much concern for leadership development over several decades, why is leadership development so ineffective? The nub of the problem appears to be training design.[12] Programs are pedagogically weak, and "leaders, no matter how talented, often

[6] Judith Lin and Deborah Gin, "What Do Alums Wish They Had Learned in Seminary?" *Colloquy Online* (October 2020).

[7] Charles Hobson, David Strupeck, Andrea Griffin, Jana Szostek and Anna Rominger, "Teaching MBA Students Teamwork and Team Leadership Skills," *American Journal of Business Education* 7(3) (2012): 191–212; Warren Bennis and James O'Toole "How Business Schools Lost Their Way," *Harvard Business Review* 83(5) (2005) 96–121.

[8] Susan E Cromwell and Judith A. Kolb, "An Examination of Work-Environment Support Factors Affecting Transfer of Supervisory Skills Training to the Workplace," *Human Resource Development Quarterly* 15(4) (2004): 449–471.

[9] Laci Loew and David Wentworth, *Leadership: The State of Development Programs* (Delray Beach, FL: Brandon Hall Group, 2013), 10.

[10] Adam Canwell, Heather Stockton, Vishalli Dongrie and Neil Neveras. "Leaders at all Levels, Close the Gap between Hype and Readiness," *Global Human Capital Trends 2014: Engaging a 21st-century Workforce*, Delloite Insights (2014): 25–34.

[11] Cranwell, Stockton, Dongrie and Neveras, 25.

[12] Richard K. Ladyshewsky, "A Strategic Approach for Integrating Theory to Practice in Leadership Development," *Leadership and Organization Development Journal* 28(5) (2007): 426–443; Timothy T Baldwin and J. Kevin Ford, "Transfer of Training: A Review and Directions for Future Research," *Personnel Psychology* 41(1) (1988): 63–105.

struggle to transfer even their most powerful offsite experiences into changed behavior on the front line".[13] One consistent finding is that these programs are content driven and lack integration with leadership practice.[14] Without "contextual anchors" that serve as a basis for grounding the theory abstract leadership principles are unlikely to become embedded. Where these subjects are taught, classroom learning of these key skills is particularly difficult to transfer into practice.[15] For those studying full time, the time gap between learning leadership in seminary and practicing it in church leadership—a period that might span several years—means that lessons have long been forgotten when they are needed. Furthermore, many important leadership capabilities are soft skills that are not readily taught in a classroom setting.

Experiential Learning

Over the past three decades experiential learning has emerged as an effective pedagogy which has a particular application to leadership development. Based on John Dewey's early work bringing experiential learning into traditional education, and heavily influenced by social psychologist Kurt Lewin, the experiential learning model is most closely associated with David Kolb.[16] He conceived of learning as a four-stage cycle, based on the four dimensions of Lewin's model.[17] The first stage begins with the concrete experience, followed by reflection upon that experience. Reflection involves consideration of the process and outcomes, feelings, and current practice. Conclusions are then drawn from

[13] Pierre Gurdjian, Thomas Halbeisen, and Kevin Lane, "Why Leadership Programs Fail", *McKinsey Quarterly* (2014): 3, https://www.mckinsey.com/featured-insights/leadership/why-leadership-development-programs-fail.
[14] Ladyshewsky, 426–427; Jeffrey Pfeffer, and Christina T. Fong, "The End of Business Schools? Less Success than Meets the Eye," *Academy of Management Learning & Education* 1(1) (2002): 78–95.
[15] Henry Mintzberg and Jonathan Gosling, "Educating Managers Beyond Borders," *Academy of Management Learning and Education* 1(1) (2002): 64–76.
[16] John Dewey, *Experience and Education*, Kappa Delta PI Lecture Series (London: Collier-Macmillan Books, 1963 (1938)).
[17] David A. Kolb, Experiential Learning: Experience as the Source of Learning and Development (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall, 1984).

this review and reflection. In the fourth stage the outcomes are developed and applied to a new experience. The cycle then begins again. This four-stage model has subsequently been expanded and developed by others.[18]

Underlying this approach is a constructivist epistemology that recognizes learners actively construct "their own knowledge frameworks using personal experience to structure their rules, concepts, hypotheses and associations."[19] For deep learning to occur new knowledge must be related to existing knowledge frameworks through a process of association, integration, validation, and appropriation. Formal learning environments alone are insufficient to provide the context needed for deep learning because it does not take place purely at an abstract level but through personal experience.[20] Experiential learning allows theoretical concepts to be applied as the situation "recasts the information into a more densely textured form."[21] Experiences provide the moments of truth and clarity that can shift existing frameworks.[22]

[18] Chris Argyris and Donald A. Schön. *Organisational Learning: Theory, Method and Practice* (Reading: Addison Wesley 1996); David Boud and Helen Edwards, "Learning for Practice: Promoting Learning in Clinical and Community Settings," *Educating Beginning Practitioners: Challenges for Health Professional Education* (Elsevier Health Sciences, 1999): 173–179; Roger Greenaway, "A view into the future: the value of other ways of learning and development," in *Other Ways of Learning: The European Institute for Outdoor Adventure Education and Experiential Learning 1996–2006*, eds. P. Becker, and J. Schirp, 347–367. (bsj: Marburg, 2008).

[19] R. Ladyshewsky and J. Ryan. "Peer Coaching and Reflective Practice in Authentic Business Contexts: A Strategy to Enhance Competency in Post-Graduate Business Student," in *Authentic Learning Environments in Higher Education*, eds. T. Herrington and J Herrington, 61–75 (Hershey, Pennsylvania: Idea Publishing Group, 2006), 64.

[20] Biehler, R. F. and J. Snowman, *Psychology Applied to Teaching*, 8th ed. (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co. 1997).

[21] C. Graham, "Conceptual learning processes in physical therapy students," *Physical Therapy*, 76(8) (1996): 856–865, cited in Ladyshewsky, 2007, 3.

[22] Ron Cacioppe, "An Integrated Model and Approach for the Design of Effective Leadership Development Programs," *Leadership and Organization Development Journal* 19(1) (1998): 47.

It has been widely reported that experience has a significant place in leadership development.[23] Yet, despite the number and the force of these claims, there is surprisingly little evidence that experiential learning is more effective than formal instruction in the classroom. For example, Morgan McCall provides no evidence to support the contention that "The primary source of learning to lead, to the extent that leadership can be learned, is experience. The role played by training and other formal programs is relatively modest in comparison to other kinds of experiences."[24] Indeed, Stephen Kaagan considers the preference for experiential learning activities outside the classroom is misleading.[25]

While this is an area that urgently requires further investigation there are some studies pointing toward the particular value of experiential learning. We note that the previously cited study of McKenna, Yost and Boyd, which found that only 8.2% of key lessons in clergy leader development were learned through education, training and seminars, also found that 81.6% of key events came from experiences of some kind.[26] Hillman, when comparing the leadership scores of Dallas Theological Seminary students, found students with ten or more weekly hours in ministry while in seminary scored higher in all five categories of leadership, three of which were statistically significant.[27]

Kaagan observes that, "experiential learning does not have to mean extreme, remote, and costly. It can mean mild, proximate, and inexpensive. Low-intensity experiences provided to participants within the four walls of a classroom can lead to vigorous discussions,

[23] Pua, 211; Pfeffer and Fong, 85; Srikant M. Datar, David A. Garvin and Patrick G. Cullen, "Rethinking the MBA: Business Education at a Crossroads," *Journal of Management Development* 30(5) (2011): 451–462; Kenneth E. Clark and Miriam B Clark, *Choosing to Lead* (Charlotte, NC: Leadership Press Ltd, 1994); Jay A. Conger, *Learning to Lead* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1992); Daniel Goleman, R. Boyatzis and A. McKee, *Primal Leadership: Realizing the Power of Emotional Intelligence* (Boston: Harvard Business School Press, 2002).
[24] Morgan W. McCall Jr, "Leadership Development Through Experience," *Academy of Management Executive* 18(3) (2004): 127.
[25] Stephen S. Kaagan, "Leadership Development: The Heart of the Matter," *International Journal of Educational Management*, 12(2) (1998): 77.
[26] McKenna, Yost and Boyd, 182.
[27] Hillman, 153.

with great potential for leadership learning." [28] To this we could add that it is not the case of either-or. Leadership development can include engagement with leadership theory in the classroom before a facilitated offsite experience, followed by a series of more dynamic classroom discussions.

The promise of experiential learning can be seen when we consider the relationship of self-knowledge to leadership capacity. Some academics and writers in this field have gone as far as suggesting that improving self-knowledge must be the basis for all true leadership development.[29] A comparative strength of experiential learning is that exercising leadership in a structured context offers an abundance of opportunities for such self-knowledge. Many attributes will remain hidden from the self and from others unless situations are sufficiently demanding that they are brought to the surface. Where activities demand risk and struggle, a participant's leadership attributes and flaws become apparent and so the leadership lessons are pointed and relevant. While classrooms can offer moments of personal insight, the power of demanding experiences to surface leadership traits is of particular value.

Reflection and Feedback

The key to effective experiential learning is the learning cycle, in which the learners "engage in direct encounter, then *purposefully* reflect upon, validate, transform, give personal meaning to and seek to integrate their different ways of knowing."[30] As Morgan McCall notes, "People don't automatically learn from experience. They can come away with nothing, the wrong lessons, or only some

[28] Kaagan, 77.

[29] Chinwe Esimai, "Great Leadership Starts with Self-awareness," *Forbes* Feb. 15 (2018), https://www.forbes.com/sites/ellevate/2018/02/15/self-awareness-being-more-of-what-makes-you-great/; Mike Pedler, John Burgoyne, Tom Boydell, *A Manager's Guide to Self Development* (Maidenhead: McGraw-Hill Publishing Company, 1986): 3.

[30] S. Warner Weil, and I. McGill, "A Framework for Making Sense of Experiential Learning," in *Making Sense of Experiential Learning*, eds. S. Warner Weil and I. McGill, (The Society for Research into Higher Education and Open University Press, 1989): 248.

of what they might have learned."[31] There is no obvious meaning to be found in an experience, meaning is made.[32] It follows that learning will be more effective where a reflective process that brings theory and practice together is established.[33] David Bubna-Litic and Suzanne Benn argue that more learner engagement and critical reflection are needed to assist learners in transferring their learning to their work and practice experiences.[34] Fowler states that to be meaningful, "reflection is dependent upon the tools used to aid reflection, the ad hoc or planned nature of the activity and the behavior of the learner in the reflective process."[35] Moving from engagement to making meaning requires intentional opportunities for reflection and feedback.

Personal Reflection

Personal reflection is the key process through which human beings extract knowledge from their experiences.[36] This was captured by Dewey in the core proposition that "experience plus reflection equals learning."[37] Janet Eyler, Dwight Giles and Angela Schmiede suggest that specifically structured reflection is the critical element for students to learn from experiences.[38] According to transformative learning theory, change occurs only when

[31] McCall, 128.
[32] Marilyn Wood Daudelin, "Learning from Experience through Reflection," *Organizational Dynamics* 24(3) (1996): 36–48.
[33] Iain L. Denstenand Judy H. Gray, "Leadership Development and Reflection, What is the Connection?" *The International Journal of Educational Management* 15(3) (2001): 119–124; Joseph Raelin, "A Model of Work-Based Learning," *Organization Science* 8(6) (1997): 563–578.
[34] David Bubna-Litic and Suzanne Benn, "The MBA at the Crossroads, Design Issues for the Future," *Journal of the Australian and New Zealand Academy of Management* 9(3) (2003): 25–35.
[35] John Fowler, "Experiential Learning and its Facilitation," *Nurse Education Today* 28(4) (2008): 432.
[36] Tara J Fenwick, "Tidying the Territory: Questioning Terms and Purposes in Work-Learning Research," *Journal of Workplace Learning* 18(5) (2006): 265–278.
[37] Fowler, 427.
[38] Janet Eyler, Dwight E. Giles, and Angela Schmiede, *A Practitioner's Guide to Reflection in Service-Learning: Student Voices and Reflections* (Nashville, TN: Vanderbilt University, 1996).

there is critical reflection on experiences, including recognizing, acknowledging and processing feelings and emotions.[39] Therefore, moving from engagement to meaning-making requires intentional opportunities for reflection. Reflection makes tacit knowledge explicit. Through deliberately reviewing their thoughts and actions, students gain a deeper understanding of the leadership and learning episodes they experience.[40]

The importance of reflection goes beyond the meaning and self-understanding that it promotes and becomes a vital leadership skill in itself.[41] Reflective practice becomes "a life-long habit of the mind, a habit that is characteristic of highly skilled professionals."[42] When this activity becomes habitual it promotes continuous learning that means leaders adapt their leadership to the situation, recognize where their natural approach is not working, and continue to grow.

The kind of reflection activities that might be offered include journals in which students record their thoughts, observations, or questions.[43] Personal journals offer an unstructured way for students to reflect on their experiences, while directed writings provide more targeted reflection. The process makes thoughts visible and concrete, allowing participants to interact with, elaborate on, and expand ideas.[44]

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[39] Edward W. Taylor, "Fostering Transformative Learning in the Adult Education Classroom: A Review of Empirical Studies" *The Canadian Journal of the Study of Adult Education* 14 (2000): 1–28.
[40] Densten, and Gray, 119–120; K. W Seibert & M. W. Daudelin, *The Role of Reflection in Managerial Learning: Theory, Research, and Practice* (Westport, CT: Quorum, 1999); S. D. Brookfield, *Becoming a Critically Reflective Teacher* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1995): 8.
[41] Densten, and Gray, 120–121.
[42] Kathy L. Guthrie and Laura Osteen, eds. *Developing Students' Leadership Capacity*, New Directions for Student Services 140 (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2012): 1976.
[43] Cheryl Riley-Douchet and Sharon Wilson, "A Three-step Method of Self-reflection Using Reflective Journal Writing," *Journal of Advanced Nursing* 25(5) (1997): 964–968.
[44] Sandra Kerka, *Journal Writing and Adult Learning* (ERIC Digest 174, Columbus, OH 1996): 3.

Peer Feedback

Quinton and Smallbone found that peer feedback offers individuals an additional experiential base for reflection, while Ladyshewsky and Ryan consider peer coaching vital to the experiential learning process.[45] Cacioppe creates an integrated model for leadership development in which he notes that the peer-feedback process can be an excellent way for team members to develop one another because it is very personal, constructive and deals with the key issues each person feels.[46]

If learning from feedback is to be effective facilitation must set clear ground rules, provide a formal structure, and allow adequate time. Participants need to take feedback in a nondefensive way, and those offering feedback must be encouraged to offer specific examples to support their insights. It is possible for this feedback to be mediated by the facilitator who summarizes and presents written feedback from peers to the individual.

Coaching

Experiential learning contexts that allow for real-time coaching have significant benefits for the learner. Coaching encourages participants to reflect deeper, and to make conclusions about the situated experience and set goals for reapplication. Coaching provides immediate feedback which captures the context, emotions, and other dynamics of a situation so that every element is on view. The coach can present an alternative approach or solution to a problem that may be implemented immediately, and its execution and effectiveness assessed in real time. These can provide important reference points for later feedback.

A great deal of learning occurs through transference—from one human being watching another. While a classroom teacher may be an excellent leader, conventional learning contexts typically

[45] Sarah Quinton and Teresa Smallbone, "Feeding Forward: Using Feedback to Promote Student Reflection and Learning—A Teaching Model," *Innovations in Education and Teaching International* 47(1) (2010): 125–135. Ladyshewsky and Ryan, 426.
[46] Cacioppe, 50.

provide only limited opportunities for their leadership attributes to become visible to the students. However, in directing a complex and intensive experience over a period of some days the coach of an experiential learning exercise is able to model thinking, behavior and interpersonal skill for the participants. While wanting to allow the leadership of the participants to emerge, the coach will invariably demonstrate leadership as they conduct the experience, set expectations, manage group dynamics, and engage with participants.[47]

Experiential Learning Through Field Education

A significant challenge for experiential learning is finding leadership experiences that will provide the opportunity for structured reflection, peer feedback and real-time coaching. As McCall reflects, "While experience is at the heart of development, not all experiences are created equal."[48] Experiential learning may involve on-the-job training whereby an emerging leader is given extra responsibility and carries that out under the supervision of a mentor. In the seminary context this is typically provided through pastoral internships, supervised field education, and student placements. As Hillman notes, "Educators see internships as helping to overcome the inability to create real-world learning experiences in the formal classroom setting."[49] Within the Roman Catholic context, the *Program of Priestly Formation* stipulates the necessity of leadership development, noting that such learning will take place mainly in the parish.[50]

Field education has much to commend it. In surveys conducted in the 1990s by the ATS of graduating seminary students it was found that 82.9% of master's-level students found their internship experience important for their development.[51] Within the field of social work the 2008 Educational Policy and Accreditation

[47] Cacioppe, 50–51.
[48] McCall, 127.
[49] Hillman, 142.
[50] Mark Fischer, "Preparing Seminarians for Pastoral Leadership," *Seminary Journal* 26(3) (2010): 5–17.
[51] Association of Theological Schools-ATS, 7.

Standards of the Council on Social Work Education elevated field education to the status of being the profession's signature pedagogy.[52] Hillman compared the LPI: Self scores of master's-level students at Dallas Theological Seminary who were active in significant paid or volunteer ministry leadership while enrolled with those who were not active in significant paid or volunteer ministry leadership while enrolled. It was discovered in this study that current ministry experience was a significant factor in higher leadership scores.[53]

While studies on field education demonstrate that the programs are valued for developing competencies in preaching, pastoral care and liturgy, leadership development does not figure strongly. Hillman's study, cited above, is potentially valuable as being one of the few to focus on the relationship between field education and leadership development. However, the demarcation of the two groups was crude and undermines the usefulness of the data. Those receiving no internship were included with those receiving up to nine hours as constituting those "not active in significant ministry." Many would consider a nine-hour placement to be significant. Further, the nature of the experience not identified or discussed. For example, if much of the internship is focused on preaching and service leading then the actual leader development may be minimal. No consideration was given to the quality of supervision, whether formalized reflection took place or the level of engagement beyond time spent. The experience of internship is doubtless of value in leadership development but is highly dependent on contextual factors such as the quality of supervision, the type of tasks and the capacity for reflection. In particular the capacity of the senior leaders to observe and provide feedback cannot be assumed. The senior leader is a pastor and not an educator and does not necessarily employ the pedagogical tools that effectively promote leadership development. The experience is often unstructured, lacks formal reflective elements and limited peer-feedback loops. As this is

[52] Julianne Wayne, Marion Bogo and Miriam Raskin, "Field Education as The Signature Pedagogy of Social Work Education," *Journal of Social Work Education* 46(3) (2010): 327–339.
[53] Hillman, 153–154.

completed during, and often in addition to, other responsibilities, inadequate time is set aside for the personal reflection that is so vital to learning. Field education also demands hundreds of hours a year, which, if credit is offered, comes at the expense of other courses.

Experiential Leadership Development Through Sailing

Given the preceding discussion, in particular the importance of leadership development in seminaries, the promise of experiential learning and the limitation of much current practice, the challenge for this educator was to find and develop a suitable leadership development experience. It was in the context of crewing on racing yachts that a new possibility emerged as I wrestled with these questions in my own seminary context. Experience of the leadership of a variety of skippers demonstrated that sailing was a powerful context for quickly exposing the leadership style and capability of the skipper and their effect on the crew and performance.

It soon became clear that sailing demands a long list of competencies that have obvious relevance for church leaders. There are several analogies between sailing and leadership. The boat is the church. The crew is the ministry team. The ocean, with the weather, represents the wider culture. There are multiple points that are analogous to leadership in the real world, and the context is sufficiently complex to reproduce the demands faced in ministry. Unlike simulation exercises, sailing presented real-world challenges in which leadership decisions had genuine implications.

One of the challenges of experiential learning is providing a context where adequate observation can be achieved. Sailing on a yacht offers a context where participants can be placed under constant supervision from a qualified leadership coach. This enables the coach to provide immediate feedback, encourage different approaches and set specific developmental challenges in real time. Feedback can be provided and further practice undertaken at other points in the program. A skipper can be instructed to be more encouraging, and the effect discussed. After the events of the day have concluded feedback can be provided and participants can complete their own personal reflection exercises. At the conclusion

of the program each participant might be provided with a one-on-one coaching session in which leadership development goals are developed. Appropriate follow-up will then ensure these new skills continue to be applied.

Initial research determined that a program was already being run by the Goizueta Business School at Emory University in Atlanta, Georgia. Selected students participate in the Goizueta Advanced Leadership Academy (GALA), which features a capstone challenge of sailing in the Bahamas.[54] Over seven days students learn to sail and undertake a series of activities that are largely centered around competing with fellow students in other boats. Daily briefings and debriefings provide opportunities for reflection. This offered a helpful stimulus to craft a program for students at Ridley College.

After developing "Experiential Leadership Development," and having it approved by the Australian College of Theology, a detailed program was created. Rather than simply sailing from point A to point B, which appeared to be the main activity in the GALA program, a more deliberate and intentional series of activities would be provided over a five-day period. Each would take into account the level of sailing skill that would have been reached, with earlier activities requiring no experience. Activities were related to particular leadership competencies and relevant theories. Plenty of time would be given over to debriefing at the conclusion of each activity, with questions developed to guide the coaches.

To provide a theoretical foundation for learning, the existing online leadership course was cannibalized to create a twelve-hour introduction that covered leadership styles, power, self-awareness, team roles, and other topics. Assessment was developed to provide structure for journaling and accountability for pre-intensive study. A final assignment would draw the threads together as students reflected on learning, identified key strengths and weaknesses, and outlined a plan for development.

[54] See https://www.emorybusiness.com/2015/04/27/mbas-use-sailing-to-learn-about-working-in-high-performance-teams.

Sample Activities

Crisis? What Crisis?

Purpose: To explore the dimensions of crisis management and to test leadership and decision-making under pressure.

Leadership Topics: Crisis management, Decision-making.

Theoretical Models: Rational, Vroom-Yetton decision, Intuitive, Recognition-primed decision-making model.

Activity: COVID-2029 has struck. With half the crew needing to be nursed through the disease the designated leader must sail the crew to safety. Throughout the forty-minute exercise some tough decisions will have to be made as new discoveries come to light.

Blind Helmsman

Purpose: To explore communication, collaboration, and team dynamics.

Leadership Topics: Teamwork and team roles, Communication.

Theoretical Models: Shannon-Weaver Communication Model

Activity: The skipper must sail the boat with a blindfolded helmsman and partially disabled crew.

Fender Retrieval Exercise

Purpose: An introductory activity requiring no sailing skills that helps identify the appropriateness of five leadership styles and assess their effect on team performance.

Leadership Topics: Leadership Styles

Theoretical Models: Lewin's Leadership Styles; Hersey and Blanchard Situational Leadership.

Activity: With the boat under motor and being steered by the coach the team need to retrieve a fender from the water under

the direction of their designated leader. The leader will be given a leadership style they will adopt. This is repeated five times with a different style each time.

Navigation Rally

Purpose: Allow participants to explore team roles and the relationship of positional power and leadership styles. Highlights how leadership styles affect collaboration and decision-making.

Leadership Topics: Teamwork and team roles, Collaborative decision-making

Theoretical Model: Belbin's Team Roles

Activity: Decide on a strategy to accumulate the most points in ninety minutes and chart a course to your waypoints. Three people will lead the boat for a thirty-minute period. Which leadership styles will emerge and how does that affect decisions, morale and engagement?

Reflection on Learning Activities

The first iteration of the course took place in February 2020, just before COVID-19 hit our shores. Eight students, half from our online program, spent the week on two yachts with evening accommodation in a rented cottage on shore. A second program was run in December 2021 with ten students. In both instances this author coached on one boat, and an experienced lay leader coached the other.

The potential of this approach was immediately obvious. Initial student concerns that their complete lack of sailing experience would be an obstacle were allayed as they developed basic competencies, including helming the boat over just one day. The leadership style and ability of each individual quickly became apparent with the activities giving visibility to their strengths and weaknesses. During the debriefing the effect of each person's leadership was highlighted, and frank feedback was given.

Three examples illustrate the power and potential of this approach. In the Blind Helmsman activity, a student skipper perceived the presence of other boats as a hazard. This generated tension and anxiety as she struggled under pressure to guide the blindfolded helmsman out of danger with a partially disabled crew and on a difficult point of sailing. In the subsequent debriefing she was able to recount her own struggles with stress in ministry to children in a large church and reflect on how her response during the activity mirrors her response in ministry. During the reflection it became apparent that when under stress in ministry, just like in the exercise, she fails to look to the team for support because she was laboring under the preconception that to do so was a sign that she lacked expertise as a leader. It was a moment of deep insight and learning that will build her resilience and help her find joy in ministry.

A quiet, demure student led the Nautical Orienteering exercise that required a complex process of team decision-making. As a democratic leader he sought ideas and engagement from others, but bigger personalities soon dominated the group, and he lost all control over the process or authority over the decisions. This became a powerful teaching moment for him and for the team as we explored the consequences of a leadership vacuum. We were able to explore the idea that even a democratic leader needs to be firmly in control of the process to ensure everyone is engaged and for a good group decision can be found. On being told he needed to be "more present" he reflected that he had been told that by his manager at a nongovernmental organization but was not sure what he needed to do.

On the boat he sought ideas on how he could be more present and several were offered by the coach and his peers. He was then able to apply these ideas when leading another activity later in the week demonstrating a process known as double-loop learning.[55]

The designated student leader of the Bucket Challenge was engaging his team in finding a solution under deadline pressure. It

[55] Sharon J. Korth, "Single and double-loop learning: Exploring potential influence of cognitive style," *Organization Development Journal* 18(3) (2000): 87

was observed that a woman attempted to provide her ideas but the leader did not engage with her. This was raised by the coach during the debrief, who invited the woman to recount the experience and its effect on her. This was an important lesson for the male student regarding how he engages with and values the contribution of women and how he might be perceived by them.

One aim of the program was to develop the capacity of students to become reflective practitioners so they could incorporate this type of learning consistently in their leadership. At the start of the program, they were inducted into Kolb's Experiential Learning Model. It was utilized and explicitly referenced during several of the debrief sessions and at the conclusion of the week. As the process was repeated over the course of the week it began to instill in students the habit of reflective practice. Post-experience assignments provided an important opportunity for further reflection based on journals kept during the week and ways to consider application of the leadership lessons to their context.

There were many other equally significant learning moments during the week. Generally, students contributed openly in the debriefs and did not hesitate to give feedback. They also learned to receive it well and were able to take what they learned in one activity into the next. However, we have not yet implemented a robust means of evaluating the effectiveness of the program. The Ridley Centre for Leadership has a Leader 360 Assessment, which measures leadership across forty-two competencies in five domains.[56] Future iterations of this program will have students undertake this assessment prior to attending the program as a baseline, and will test some six months after. The data, along with qualitative data derived from structured interviews, will provide some basis for identifying not only general improvement, but which capabilities in particular are developed.

Broader Applicability

There are obvious barriers to a seminary in developing an experiential program based on sailing. To be done well it requires

[56] See https://www.leadership.ridley.edu.au/leader-360-survey.

personnel with skills in leadership education, coaching, and sailing. Sailing is expensive, and regulatory demands make it even more so. There are perceptions, especially by university boards and potential participants, that the sport is unsafe. Some potential participants will be unsure they have the skills to sail and be concerned about the physical demands of the sport.

While these problems might be surmountable, the more important implication of this case study is that a sustained program of experiential learning has significant potential for leadership development in seminaries. There are contexts other than sailing that could be used to develop programs much like this one. Indeed, the activities in this program, such as the "Bucket Challenge," were not dependent on sailing or require being near the water. Outdoor education has been used as a basis for experiential learning; with intentionality and imagination, and in a reiterative program of action and reflection sustained over time, meaningful activities could be curated that have the same effect as those described here.

What is required for an effective, reiterative learning program is a series of activities in which leadership is demanded, where leadership is visible, and which can be linked to aspects of leadership theory. Creating an environment of honesty, frankness and mutual support is essential. Shorter activities of under an hour's duration with plenty of time for reflection and reimagining leadership will contribute to effectiveness. A framework to assist students to journal and process what they have learned are critical. There appears to be specific value in an intensive, residential context that provides a strongly relational environment, greater immersion and focus, and more opportunity for spontaneous and informal learning.

Conclusion

Leadership development continues to be a particular challenge to seminaries. The classroom learning model used to great effect in courses on the Bible and theology is extremely limited in its capacity to develop leadership. Experiential learning has been shown to have some effect on developing leadership capabilities. However, it has been deployed fairly narrowly through field education or internships. While these have some value, they have

significant limitations. They certainly do not provide the intensity or frequency of learning moments that have been experienced in more intentional programs such as the one reviewed here. Nor do they offer the level of visibility into leadership capacity or the opportunity for peer feedback that we have observed.

We do not expect that offering experiential leadership development through sailing is within the capability of most seminaries. However, the experience recounted here, along with the underlying theoretical basis that we have explored may provide some ideas and impetus for those seeking to be more effective in leadership development. Perhaps readers will consider how they can use their own passions, environment, and context to develop experiential learning that will make a lasting effect on the leadership capacity of their students.

Hardships, Growth, and Hope: The Experience of Black Pastoral Leaders During a Season of Social Unrest and COVID-19 Quarantine

Jason A. Miller
Dale L. Lemke

Abstract

This qualitative study explored the perceived effect of the COVID-19 pandemic and George Floyd protests on the leadership experiences and sense of lived calling for nineteen African American pastors in the United States. The findings paint a picture of loss and hardship for Black communities and their pastors but also point to leadership resilience and growth. The pastors in this study also challenge the church in North America to overcome political division by becoming a learning community that engages issues of racial justice and plays a healing role in their communities. The article seeks to highlight the voices and experiences of Black pastors, but also considers the positionality and reflections of the authors as White researchers.

African American pastors and their churches are emerging from a unique historical season in which they faced the challenges and pain of the COVID-19 pandemic and a season of racial unrest and protest. As a global pandemic, COVID-19 hit US urban centers particularly hard with minority communities bearing much of the impact. At the time this study concluded in February 2021, over 500,000 people in the US had died from COVID-19 with

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a disproportionately high number of deaths among Indigenous, Black, and Pacific Islander Americans.[1]

Amid the COVID-19 quarantine, the African American community also experienced a rekindled fire of rage and outcry over the taking of George Floyd's life at the hands of a Minneapolis police officer. This vivid demonstration of racial injustice fostered protest, civil disobedience, and unrest throughout the United States and impacted communities, congregations, and pastoral leaders around the nation. The collision of these two phenomena created specific challenges and opportunities for African American pastors, and the purpose of this study was to listen to the personal and professional experiences of these leaders to share their experience and elicit principles for effective pastoral leadership and living out one's calling during a season of hardship.

As researchers living in greater Minneapolis and Los Angeles, we were compelled to understand more deeply the challenges faced by our African American colleagues and brothers and sisters in Christ and to know how they are leading during this season. We were motivated by a desire to understand, learn from, and share their experiences with Black leaders seeking to live into their callings and White leaders seeking to learn from and partner well with Black colleagues. We interviewed pastors from a broad spectrum of gender, age, regional, theological, and political perspectives. Research findings paint a broad picture of loss and hardship for Black communities and their pastors, while also pointing to leadership resilience and growth. The pastors in this study also challenge the church in North America to overcome political

[1] L. Holmes Jr., M. Enwere, J. Williams, B. Ogundele, P. Chavan, T. Piccoli, C. Chinaka, C. Comeaux, L. Pelaez, O. Okundaye, L. Stalnaker, F. Kalle, K. Deepika, G. Philipcien, M. Poleon, G. Ogungbade, H. Elmi, V. John and K. W. Dabney. "Black-White Risk Differentials in COVID-19 (SARS-COV2) Transmission, Mortality and Case Fatality in the United States: Translational Epidemiologic Perspective and Challenges," *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health* 17(12) (2020): 4322. APM Research Lab. *The Color of Coronavirus: COVID-19 Deaths by Race and Ethnicity in the U.S.* (AMP Research Lab, 2021).

division by becoming a learning community that recognizes the need to engage in issues of racial justice and play a healing role in their communities.

This study sought to investigate the research question: How do the personal, spiritual, and institutional experiences of African American pastoral leaders during the COVID-19 pandemic and George Floyd protests affect their sense of being able to live out their callings? The need for this study primarily relates to the importance of understanding the experiences of Black pastors during COVID-19 and the racial unrest of 2020-21. Miller and Glanz specifically recommended further research to listen to the personal and professional experiences of Black pastors during COVID-19.[2] In addition, Lemke's investigation of lived callings points to the need to further understand the ways hardships may contribute to calling clarity.[3] This study sought to provide a nuanced exploration of the ways in which Black pastors processed their sense of calling as it relates to the twin hardships of COVID-19 and racial unrest.

Background Literature

Work as Calling Theory (WCT) provided a framework within vocational psychology for exploring the lived callings of African American pastors.[4] WCT suggests that perceived callings must be enacted or lived out for people to experience work satisfaction and individual well-being. Organizational support, network capital, and prior life experiences have been found to predict elements of lived callings such as entrepreneurial intention, agency perspective,

[2] J. Miller and J. Glanz. "Learning from the Personal Experiences of Pastoral Leaders During the Covid-19 Quarantine," *Christian Education Journal,* 18(3) (2021): 500.

[3] D. L. Lemke. "Perceptions of Career Agency and Career Calling in Mid-career: A Qualitative Investigation," *Journal of Career Assessment* 29(2) (2021): 239.

[4] R. D. Duffy, B. J. Dik, R. P. Douglas, J. W. England, and B. L. Velez. "Work as a Calling: A Theoretical Model," *Journal of Counseling Psychology* 65(4) (2018): 423.

and agency behavior.[5] Reyes specifically argues that social networks play a critical role in helping marginalized individuals overcome structural challenges to living out their callings.[6] Other researchers further caution that organizational subcultures that entail inherent gender or racial bias can either limit personal agency or fuel agentic behavior.[7]

Lemke's investigation found that calling is a dynamic lived experience in which hardships foster resilience and growth in living a calling.[8] He further suggests that calling is a future-oriented concept that emphasizes spiritual formation and lifelong growth in clarity and confidence.[9] The current study sought to understand whether hardships related to COVID-19 and racial injustice served to clarify and promote the lived callings of African American pastors or diminish their sense of well-being due to a lack of agency or lack of access to opportunity to live out their callings. This study explored perceived connections between lived callings and life hardships.

Leadership theorists also suggest that intentional leadership may be able to transform moments of crisis into systemic change, rapid innovation and problem solving, increased resiliency, and

[5] E. Niehaus and K. O'Meara. "Invisible but Essential: The Role of Professional Networks in Promoting Faculty Agency in Career Advancement," *Innovative Higher Education* 40(2) (2015): 159. L. R. Tolentino, V. Sedoglavich, V. N. Lu, P. R. J. J. Garcia, and S. L. D. Restubog. "The Role of Career Adaptability in Predicting Entrepreneurial Intentions: A Moderated Mediation Model," *Journal of Vocational Behavior* 85(3) (2014): 403.

[6] P. B. Reyes. *The Purpose Gap: Empowering Communities of Color to Find Meaning and Thrive*, (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2021), 6.

[7] F. Afiouni and C. M. Karam. "The Formative Role of Contextual Hardships in Women's Career Calling," *Journal of Vocational Behavior* 114 (2019): 69. P. Miller and C. Callender. "Black Leaders Matter: Agency, Progression and the Sustainability of BME School Leadership in England," *Journal for Multicultural Education* 12(2) (2018): 183.

[8] Lemke, "Perceptions of Career Agency," 239.

[9] D. L. Lemke. "Vocation and Lifelong Spiritual Formation: A Christian Integrative Perspective on Calling in Mid-career," *Christian Education Journal* 17(2) (2020): 301.

new levels of cooperation, even among rivals.[10] Psychologists have found that times of self-reflection correlate with increased well-being.[11] Similarly, self-awareness has been shown to increase capacity in day-to-day functioning within one's leadership role.[12] This study sought to further understand the role of self-awareness and self-reflection in helping African American pastors navigate the challenges of COVID-19 and the demands for racial justice in America.

Research Method

Practical Theology and Qualitative Design

Using principles of practical theological interpretation from Richard Osmer, we sought to be spiritually present with and listen to the interpretive reflections of nineteen African American pastoral leaders as they shared their stories of loss and hope during this season of crisis.[13] The descriptive nature of our research, with its emphasis on the inner experiences and perceptions of African American pastors, led us to adopt a formal qualitative research strategy.[14] After receiving institutional review board approval, we

[10] M. Langan-Riekhof, A. Avanni, and A. Janetti. *Sometimes the World Needs a Crisis: Turning Challenges into Opportunities.* The Brookings Institute (April 10, 2017). https://www.brookings.edu/research/sometimes-the-world-needs-a-crisis-turning-challenges-into-opportunities

[11] A. Susman-Stillman, S. Lim, A. Meuwissen, and C. Watson. "Reflective Supervision/Consultation and Early Childhood Professionals' Well-being: A Qualitative Analysis of Supervisors' Perspectives," *Early Education and Development*, 31(7) (2020): 1151. M. Yuen and J. A. D. Datu. "Meaning in Life, Connectedness, Academic Self-efficacy, and Personal Self-efficacy: A Winning Combination," *School Psychology International* 42(1) (2021): 79.

[12] O. Boe and T. Holth. "Self-awareness in Military Officers with a High Degree of Developmental Leadership," *Procedia Economics and Finance* 26 (2015): 833. R. M. Randall, L. Kwong, T. Kuivila, B. Levine and M. Kogan. "Building Physicians with Self-awareness," *Physician Leadership Journal* 4(3)(2017): 40.

[13] R. R. Osmer. *Practical Theology: An Introduction,* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans, 2008), 1.

[14] Additional information related to the qualitative research design including participant demographics, interview protocol, data analysis, thematic findings, limitations, and recommendations for future research are available from the researchers at dllemke@unwsp.edu or Jason.a.miller@biola.edu.

interviewed a diverse group of nineteen Black pastors from across the United States. Interviewees included male (n = 14) and female (n = 5) pastors across the following age groupings: 20-29 (n = 1), 30-39 (n = 2), 40-49 (n = 5), and 50-60 (n = 8), and over 60 (n = 3). Pastoral roles included senior pastor (n = 10), assistant/associate pastor (n = 8), and one chaplain who was heavily involved in the local church. The comparison congregation sizes for those serving in pastoral roles included: 1-299 (n = 6), 300-999 (n = 7), and over 1,000 (n = 5). Six interviews were conducted before the November 2020 election and thirteen were conducted in the two months following the election.

Semistructured virtual interviews averaging seventy-four minutes were conducted using questions designed to help us listen to and describe perspectives on leadership health and career calling during this season of racial unrest and COVID-19 quarantine.[15] Interviews were digitally recorded, transcribed, and then analyzed using grounded theory methodology.[16] While initially identifying ninety-six potential codes, we narrowed, merged, and examined relationships between these codes to identify a final list of five overarching themes and fifteen categorical subthemes that emerged from our conversations. Only those themes and categories mentioned by at least ten sources or 50% of our interviewees are reported here.[17] Primary themes with total number of interview sources and occurrences or references are reported in Table 1. Categorical subthemes are presented in the findings below.

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[15] M. B. Miles, A. M. Huberman, and J. Saldana. *Qualitative Data Analysis: A Methods Sourcebook,* 3rd ed., (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 2014).

[16] J. Corbin and A. Strauss. *Basics of Qualitative Research: Techniques and Procedures for Developing Grounded Theory,* 4th ed., (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 2015). U. Flick. *An Introduction to Qualitative Research*, 4th ed., Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 2009). K. Charmaz, K. *Constructing Grounded Theory,* 2nd ed., (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 2014). J. W. Creswell and C. N. Poth. *Qualitative Inquiry and Research Design: Choosing Among Five Approaches,* 4th ed., (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 2018).

[17] C. E. Hill, S. Knox, B. J. Thompson, E. N. Williams, S. A. Hess, and N. Ladany. "Consensual Qualitative Research: An Update," *Journal of Counseling Psychology* 52(2) (2005): 196.

TABLE 1. *Themes Emerging from the Data Analysis*

1. Losses Through Hardships	(17 Sources, 83 References)
2. Growth Through Hardships	(19 Sources, 101 References)
3. Leading in Hardship	(18 Sources, 62 References)
4. Need to Engage Racial Justice	(17 Sources, 67 References
5. The Church's Role in Healing	(18 Sources, 64 References)

Researchers and Reflexivity

Our primary vision as researchers was to highlight the voices and experiences of our interviewees. We are aware, to the extent that we can be, of the significant dynamics involved when White researchers seek to research and report on Black experiences. As the primary researchers for this study, the authors are both White middle-aged men with ministry experience in Los Angeles, Pittsburgh, and Tokyo. One of us currently serves as a university educator and the other as an associate director for a nonprofit organization dedicated to human flourishing. We share a common vision for the health and growth of leaders in the ministry. An element of this vision is to see multiethnic churches and their leaders flourish.

Miller's previous research underscored a particular need to understand the unique experiences of African American pastors during the pandemic.[18] While we felt compelled in this study to learn from and tell the story of our Black brothers and sisters as they ministered during a season of racial and social unrest in our nation, we wrestled with whether or not our Whiteness might impact our effectiveness as researchers. Despite our concerns, a number of minority colleagues expressed interest in our study and encouraged us to move ahead.

As researchers, we questioned whether our social privilege as White researchers might create a barrier to recruiting pastors or engaging them in open conversations about their experiences. While we faced initial recruitment challenges, interviewees affirmed our conversations and graciously recommended others to us. As we engaged in conversations about calling and hardship, we recognized that some of our questions were framed from our own perspective,

[18] Miller and Glanz, 500.

and we needed to adapt and provide space for pastors to interpret and respond to our questions in a way that allowed them to both describe and interpret their experiences for us.

We also regularly engaged in self-reflection as researchers to confirm findings and to examine and evaluate potential bias in our analysis and reporting. Two minority colleagues along with peer reviewers for this journal reviewed a draft of this manuscript and provided feedback challenging us to address more clearly ongoing challenges to racial justice and our social location as White researchers.

Through this process, our appreciation for the fact these are not racially neutral conversations was deepened, and we grew in our conviction that a posture of humility was essential. We discovered that the mutual expression of humility by interviewees who took the risk to open up about their joys and sorrows and by researchers as we sought to receive and steward those stories became a key element of our method of practical theology.

As researchers living in greater Minneapolis and Los Angeles, we were initially compelled by a desire to understand, learn from, and share the experiences African American pastors as they sought to lead during this season of pandemic and racial injustice. In the fall of 2020, we became increasingly aware that the politicization of race and pandemic response were polarizing our nation and surfacing in our organizational and religious circles. Serving in predominantly White institutions with many right-leaning constituents, we were troubled by the ease with which the Black struggle against systemic racial injustice appeared to be dismissed and scapegoated through conversations that remained theoretical and demonstrated a lack of awareness regarding the lived experiences of our Black brothers and sisters in ministry. We grew in our conviction regarding the need to humanize these discussions and ground them in practical theological interpretation.

As we conducted interviews, we became increasingly convinced the pastors were sharing stories and addressing key themes that needed to be shared with a broader audience. In all presentations of our findings, we emphasized the voice and experiences of these pastoral leaders. As a result, the thematic findings reported below

emphasize the actual reflections of the pastors, without much input or interpretation, except to contextualize and summarize emergent themes. Following the presentation of each theme, practical implications and researcher self-reflections are provided. We sought to highlight the experiences and pastoral reflections of interviewees in a way that allows the reader to understand and weigh the significance of each theme. The separate discussion of implications and researcher self-reflections provides a secondary space for us to share openly about our own experiences and reflections without deflecting from the significance of what our interviewees had to say. The article concludes with a summary of practical implications for leaders who seek to address these important themes.

Theme One: Losses Through Hardship

In this study, thematic analysis began at the conceptual level in phase one, but concepts were then organized inductively around broader categories and then most broadly around themes in phases two and three. Final data analysis resulted in the identification of five main themes: (a) losses through hardship, (b) growth through hardship, (c) leading in hardship, (d) the need to engage racial justice, and (e) the church's role in healing. These five themes were supported by fifteen underlying categorical subthemes. Key implications and researcher reflections are highlighted at the end of each theme.

Reporting of Interview Findings

The unique toll of COVID-19 and the continued toll of racial injustice as experienced through the George Floyd protests were a significant theme of this study. The depth and scope of loss and hardship were discussed by seventeen of the nineteen leaders in this study. These losses include subthemes such as the effect of COVID-19 on the Black community, personal fear, sadness, and questions, and a Black sense of isolation.

Impact of COVID-19 on the Black Community. COVID-19 was a difficult experience for everyone in 2020, but sixteen of the pastoral leaders in this study specifically discussed the impact of the pandemic on the Black community. Brandon noted, "Everybody

who's Black knows somebody who's died from COVID. We are a grieving community. We see too much death to begin with, we've seen even more." Regarding the sheer numbers, Mikayla recalled receiving ten to twelve calls per day regarding infected members of the community. Garon lamented, "It was devastating.… We've unfortunately had seven people who are members of our congregation pass away from COVID-19. I think it's up to thirty people who are connected to our congregation. …At one point, I was doing a funeral a week." Anthony recounted seventeen personal losses in his community. Pastors in the Northeast were particularly impacted as COVID-19 ravaged their region, especially during the early months of the pandemic. Briana asserted:

> I will tell you, every pastor who lives [in my area], we went through hell. …We received phone calls and it never stopped ringing. …You almost got neurotic when you heard a phone call. …It was rough, my brother. It was a rough time. It was testing for all of us. …It was testing emotionally. It was testing us physically. It was testing spiritually.

As if the deaths themselves were not difficult enough, these leaders had to navigate the secondary loss of not being able to properly honor and bury loved ones. Darnell recalled going to the home of a beloved community member who had passed away to find the wife and son alone. Normally, the house "would have been cluttered with people coming and going," he said. Anthony reflected, "It's been hard in this season of COVID because there wasn't that normal interpersonal skin on skin, flesh on flesh. I'm hugging you and loving you. …That's been the hardest part because where I wanted to be near, I could not be near."

These leaders also discussed secondary effects of COVID-19. Angel described an increase in gun violence during the pandemic. Gabriel discussed how a local bank pulled a loan for a church building project because they believed giving would be too low for the church to sustain the payment. Brandon wrestled with increased personal and financial needs in his community and

the added weight of helping people connect with social services. Amari lamented watching children without access to necessary educational tools and equipment face challenges in moving "forward progressively and aggressively while watching students that don't look like them have all the materials, all the equipment."

Personal Fear, Sadness, and Questions. In addition to the hardship and loss surrounding COVID-19, twelve pastors highlighted an ongoing sense of fear, sadness and concern for personal safety following the murder of George Floyd. Anthony expressed frustration that preventive tactics are not powerful enough to prevent racial bias. Webster specifically commented on the psychological distress of sharing similar features to Mr. Floyd and Eric Garner. He reflected, "This could be a situation that I could find myself in. …There's no way to sit with those kinds of questions, even as a person of faith, and not be shaken by them." Amari recounted his wife's concern for his well-being, "You know this George Floyd situation? That could be my husband. Ahmad Aubrey? That could be my husband."

Pastors also expressed concern for the safety of family and friends who might find themselves in similar positions. Angel expressed, "It's a lot of fear and anxiety to be a mom and having a Black child. …My husband gets pulled over and he's treated like crap." Malik recollected, "My son got in his car. Twenty-five minutes after leaving his grandparent's house, he got pulled over for speeding. And the last thing on my mind at that moment was my insurance is going up. The only thing going through my mind…was that he live." He continues, "I'm having to constantly think through how do I prepare my sons and my daughter."

Black Sense of Isolation. Twelve pastors expressly described the Black lived experience in terms of being unseen or directly ignored by majority White America. They identified feelings of sadness and numbness when considering the George Floyd murder and the overarching narrative surrounding the value of Black lives. Darnell reflected, "One of the most difficult times in all of this was watching George Floyd die. And I don't like to picture it because it's gruesome, it's gruesome." Anthony lamented, "We've seen video footage of an Eric Garner of George Floyd. Literally in that

moment they're crying out for help and there is no help." Jeremiah and Anthony described "a deep sense of sadness." Angel called it "disheartening." Yashawn summarized, "For me, I would say that I am angry about those things and at the same time numb." Garon said that he was tired.

Gabriel suggested that this sense of isolation and hopelessness is rooted in ongoing offenses against and a lack of support for the Black community. Amari expressed feelings of isolation when a fellow White youth pastor suggested that unarmed Whites are just as likely as unarmed Blacks to be killed. Samuel expressed disappointment when White board members from his board did not attend a march for social justice organized by himself and other Black pastors. He expressed frustration that they were paralyzed by a concern not to be associated with Black Lives Matter. Malik discussed the challenge of working within predominantly White churches. He reflected, "It's been a painful place. There's been some real joys, but to speak really honestly, there's been some parts where it's like I've had more issues within White evangelicals than I have had with unbelievers. It's really kind of a confusing."

Despite the sense of isolation, the pastors described some small cracks of hope connected to some of White America's response to George Floyd's murder. Brandon acknowledged, "You've had a reckoning on race where suddenly for the first time you have more White folks marching saying Black lives matter than Black folks." Garon adds, "What is inspiring is to see more people caring and more people reaching out and more people wanting to partner. … Predominantly White churches…reaching out to see how we could partner…which has not always been the case." Elijah cautions, however, that sometimes these movements to rally behind justice have only lasted "for a moment."

Reflections on Interview Findings

While there is a strong message of growth and learning, it is important to recognize the profound loss reported by these Black pastors. Even though these leaders and their communities may be used to hardship, the impact of COVID-19 on their communities was devastating and highlighted once again concerns about

systemic injustice. The murder of George Floyd and subsequent social unrest generated hope for a broader awareness of the problem at hand, but it also resurfaced a sense of fear, sadness, and isolation. In addition, political fracturing related to these hardships created frustration and concern that underlying problems may not be addressed. This study clearly shows the depth of emotional pain experienced in the African American community and highlights the need for those outside of their community to listen and seek to understand. The unique sense of loss in the African American community is similarly reported in other studies.[19] As researchers, we were compelled to share these expressions of loss because of their depth and pervasiveness, but also to establish a foundational context for other findings. We personally realized that the loss reported here went far beyond what we have experienced during this season.

Theme Two: Growth Through Hardship

Reporting of Interview Findings

While there has been significant loss and hardship experienced by the leaders in this study, all nineteen pastors on over one hundred occasions discussed how this season has fostered growth. Brandon reflects, "I understand this year, looking back on it now, I see some hidden blessings. …We have to take it on faith as somehow or another God is at work in this." Five subthemes describe the ways in which these pastors experienced growth through hardship.

COVID-19 Gains. Despite the challenges of this season, thirteen pastors described positive gains during the pandemic. Some experienced gains in their family. Webster noted, "I think it has slowed me down and made me more mindful of the huge responsibility of just being present and serving my wife and kids as well." Amari similarly commented, "In some ways, [it's] been good for my family to slow down and be able to be present with

[19] Holmes et al., 4322. R. K. Wadhera, P. Wadhera, P. Gaba, J. F. Figueroa, K. E. Joynt Maddox, R. W. Yeh, and C. Shen. "Variation in COVID-19 Hospitalizations and Deaths across New York City Boroughs," *JAMA*, 323(21) (2020): 2192.

each other in a different kind of way." Jada added, "I think, for the family, it brought the unit back together with an opportunity to grow even more."

Several pastors also discussed the role that the pandemic played in fostering social justice awareness. Anthony suggested that COVID-19 created space for White America to engage the injustice of George Floyd's murder. Brandon noted, "COVID had everybody home to see it and to stare at it. And enough White Americans were willing to go, 'Oh my God, is this really who America is?'" Jeremiah described how the combination of COVID-19 quarantine and social justice awareness created opportunities for him to participate in virtual events across the nation.

COVID-19 and George Floyd Forces Need for Personal Health Check. Eleven pastors reflected on the cost of the past year and the need to recharge. Anthony intonates, "You know, I live by saying, You don't know what you don't know. …so I'm going to get myself checked out. Just make sure I'm doing good as I continue to minister to people." Malik emphasized the fatigue that he and other pastors brought into September, the typical timeframe for launching the ministry year. He observed that several pastors in his region, "were exhausted…tired…capped." Brianna concluded, "I need to take time for me. There was a time my body really fell apart. And the Lord said this to me, 'You have an inexhaustible capacity to care and I'm going to diminish it.' And the Lord is right, which he always is."

Hardships Fostered Spiritual Growth. Twelve pastoral leaders described how this season of hardship created opportunities for spiritual growth. This was in part due to being afforded time with God. Jada notes, "I've been provided the opportunity and I think it's a godsend and a blessing to spend more time with him." Jeremiah added, "I think there clearly has been more time to ponder, to be more reflective." Mikayla pondered:

> I think we were pushed back to going before God and seeking his face and saying, God, what is it you want? What are you trying to tell us? What is it you want us to learn from this? What do we need to do? How do

> we move forward from here? And I think we grew in prayer because of it.

Elijah added that he had "never leaned so much on Scripture."

Admitting the challenges of the pandemic and social unrest also created a climate for spiritual growth. Darnell articulated, "The more I see it [COVID-19] ravaging society, the more I think I want to be closer and deeper with God." Whitney added, "I don't know what to do with this many people and lock down…I'm going to allow God to help me." Anthony summarized, "We as a people tend to draw closer to Christ in a moment like this. …I feel closer to him because I know that he is the sustainer of my life."

Hardships Fostered Calling Awareness and Growth. Thirteen pastors distinctly described an increase in their sense of calling during this time of hardship and loss. Their sense of calling not only kept them grounded, but it was also confirmed and grew. Whitney reflected, "[This crisis] lets me know that I'm where I'm supposed to be, doing what I'm supposed to be doing." Garon similarly noted," I think this is what solidifies it even more. This is what I'm called to do, I couldn't imagine doing anything else during this season in time." Gabriel asserted, "My sense of calling has been validated since the COVID season."

Pastors discussed their ongoing call to teach the word of God and minister to the community of faith, but they also highlighted a deepened appreciation for how they were called to foster change within their communities and further social justice. Anthony reflected, "What I have seen in this season is that God has called me to be a unifier of people and churches." Darnell described a compulsion to create change. Garon explained, "This is what I'm called to do…my passion and desire to share the gospel, but then also to see transformation take place within our communities." Yashawn reflected:

> I think for me, the events of the last year and a half have really solidified my calling as somebody who needs to be on the front lines in what is this kind of battle for the hearts of humans. …I know that it is my job to be

> about bringing forward justice in the lives of the poor and of racially marginalized groups. My calling is to be about making sure that the gospel is brought to bear in those lives.

Makayla discussed the need for one's calling to be responsive to present issues. She asserted that it is a "dangerous thing is to have a calling and be irrelevant."

Hardships Fostered Community Engagement. Fourteen pastors described how the obstacles of 2020 created space for churches to meet the needs of those around them. Several leaders praised the generosity of their congregations in providing food to those in their communities. Zion described the broadening reach of their food distribution ministry beyond homeless or low income families. Whitney reflected, "We learned how to minister outside the church." Pastors also described congregational efforts to care for their neighbors and attend to social justice concerns in their community. Jeremiah's congregation hosted panel discussions on race for their community. Brianna helped lead marches in protest of George Floyd's murder. Angel described a prayer ministry in the community that focused on the rise in gun violence. Whether the needs were physical, emotional, or spiritual, individual, or communal, the pastors in this study described growth in community engagement. Webster summarized, "We're a stronger, healthier church in some ways than we were this time last year. … We're serving our community in ways that we simply were not doing a year ago."

Reflections on Interview Findings

As Scripture teaches in James 1:2-4, God uses hardships in the lives of leaders to prompt personal, spiritual, and leadership growth. Leaders are whole beings and these pastors described how the pandemic created space to focus on their families and take inventory of their entire well-being. Hardships also seem to have a way of confirming and clarifying a leader's sense of calling. This season of social unrest specifically caused the leaders in this study

to reflect anew on the pastoral calling to engage one's congregation in addressing issues of justice. Even though living out that calling in a politically fractured climate was challenging, these leaders grew in their clarity and conviction about the importance of pursuing justice.

Hardships also mobilized local congregations to engage their community in broad acts of service. An essential leadership trait is the ability to respond to hardship with a learning attitude, clarified vision, and commitment to unleash followers to address the challenges in their midst. In Scripture, Jesus Christ himself modeled clarity of calling in the midst of hardship, and he challenged his disciples to stay on mission despite the hardships and persecution that they would face. As researchers, we were inspired by the holistic perspective expressed by these pastors. We are concerned that readers listen well before dismissing the importance of social justice in the pastoral callings of these leaders or in their own lives.

Theme Three: Leading in Hardship

Reporting of Interview Findings

Eighteen pastors described how the season of pandemic and social unrest impacted their leadership. They specifically reflected on how past issues influenced their current leadership choices, how scripture served as an anchor for their leadership, how they had to start rethinking what "church" is, and how collaboration is essential moving forward.

Leading from Personal Experience. Eleven pastors described the ways in which their previous experience helped them lead during the time of pandemic and protest. For some, COVID-19 was simply another challenge. Gabriel commended, "Covid is just another added stressor to an already long laundry list of stressors that are going on." In some cases, previous challenges meant that a support structure was already in place. Samuel, Makayla, and Brandon specifically described the benefit of having systems in place to stream worship services.

Several pastors acknowledged the importance of having been previously involved in race conversations. Several asserted that these

were not new conversations in their faith communities. Jeremiah reflected, "When Floyd happened and when just this worldwide response happened, it was, 'Okay, we already have people in place to kind of handle this.'" Garon summarized, "It's not new and it wasn't difficult to talk about…because it's something we had been engaged with." Angel added, "I would say that we were already… protesting…advocating for parents and family members…doing funerals…advocacy work. It was just a different crisis, but the same work." Webster pointed out that it was the pastors who had not already been leading in this conversation who were most likely to feel pushback.

Scripture as an Anchor of Leadership. Fourteen pastors specifically discussed the need to turn to God's word as an anchor for their leadership. Samuel asserted, "I think you for sure have to go to the text. I feel like you can just become a talking head. … You're supposed to be equipping the saints with the truth." Caleb discussed "…looking more to Scripture" to understand "what are the principles" because "I'm more of a Christian than I am an American." Numerous pastors simply quoted sections of Scripture throughout their interview. Reflecting on James 1:19, Amari challenged, "Be quick to listen, slow to speak, slow to become angry. That's been my theme. Almost like my mantra." Angel quoted 1 Peter 5:7, "Cast all your fears on him because he cares for you." Malik walked through the narrative of Scripture to describe how God's people face crisis in Genesis, Numbers, Acts, 1 Corinthians, etc. He commented, "I've always had a love for God's word and I'm grateful. I tell people I'm handcuffed to the text and I make no bones about it and I'm not ashamed of it." Yashawn described the importance of turning to Scripture to understand how God would have us deal with social injustice today. He concluded, "The truth has not changed. What's good has not changed. Jesus has not changed."

Forcing Questions about What Church is in the Present and Future. Although these pastors found themselves leaning on God's word and adapting to current challenges, fourteen of them discussed the ways in which recent hardships raised explicit questions about the what the church might look like moving forward. Darnell noted, "To the

wider church, the question is, is it building a theater to perform or is it a place to care for the sick?" Anthony added, "We were allowed to sleep in an age of the megachurch, the entertainment ministry, the four walls focus, you come to us. …What COVID forced the church overall to do, you had to rethink what church was." Malik reflected, "It's made the church have to pivot and think of doing ministry differently. Even just reframing things that we often say. That church is not a building, it's people. And that we gather to be the church scattered. So, in ways, churches have had to rethink how they do ministry." Whitney indicated that this might involve doing more ministry outside of the church walls. Amari suggested that this season is a call for the church to press into becoming a truly diverse community.

Opportunity and Need for Relationships and Collaboration. Ten pastors discussed the increased sense of need to collaborate with other leaders. Samuel recollected, "I had pastors calling me, asking me, 'Hey, can we come and use your pulpit, stage, and camera to do our service because we don't have that in place here?'" Reflecting on the importance of conversing and processing with other leaders, Elijah commented, "It's sometimes all you have is your own thoughts. Being around a group of people who can help you process those thoughts is extremely helpful." Makayla's church learned that they could use their resources to help other churches care for members who were struggling with COVID-19. While some collaboration emerged, Webster expressed frustration at the barriers he sometimes encountered in partnering with corporate or secular nonprofit organizations.

Reflections on Interview Findings

Leading during times of hardship caused these pastors to examine their leadership values and perspectives. First, the pastors leaned on Scripture as their primary source of wisdom and stability. During a controversial season, these pastors understood the importance of Scripture in their private and public leadership. Second, they drew upon personal experiences of previous hardship to help them lead during this time of crisis. Many acknowledged that the hardships related to COVID-19 and the social unrest

following the murder of George Floyd were not new. Leaders do well to draw upon their own experiences and the experiences of others to lead during times of hardship. Third, they allowed current hardships to challenge their perspectives on the best way to lead. This season raised important questions about the nature of the church for these pastors. Several questioned passive approaches to church life and called for greater engagement. Pastoral leaders during this time are faced with important questions regarding how to clarify the core purposes of the church and lead congregations to live into those purposes. Finally, times of hardship caused these pastors to recognize the importance of and need to collaborate with others. As researchers, we listened to pastors who had great certainty about the authority of Scripture and a deep desire to adapt their leadership to meet the demands of their current context. Emphasizing leadership clarity and collaboration is a clear message for all religious leaders regardless of denominational or political affiliation.

Theme Four: Need to Engage Racial Justice

Reporting of Interview Findings

As a fourth theme, seventeen pastors on sixty-seven occasions discussed the need to engage racial justice. Four subthemes paint a picture of what these pastors perceive to involve political division in the church, a lingering lack of racial awareness, and a need for the White church in particular to learn. Although this theme presents a challenge to greater engagement, it is important to note that these pastors also hold a clear conviction that the local church can play an important role in spiritual, physical, and racial healing, which is the subject of theme five.

Political Division in the Church. Even though there were no interview questions directly related to politics, eleven pastors discussed the ways they perceived that COVID-19 and racial unrest following the murder of George Floyd inflamed a political divide in the church. Samuel specifically described the challenge of pastoring a church comprised of White evangelicals, Black liberals, and Hispanic moderates in which some believe that COVID-19

is a conspiracy and others reject notions of conspiracy in favor of medical advice coming from the government. Malik expressed frustration with the tendency of some on both political extremes to listen undiscerningly to the media and even "weaponize the Word in the midst of COVID quarantine."

Amari asserted, "As a pastoral leader, I've faced more opposition during COVID than I've ever faced before. Factoring in the racial tension, the politics, all of it, it's really been demoralizing as a leader." Brandon added, "There's been a great unmasking of the church that doesn't really believe what it says it believes." Yashawn expressed frustration at the politics of COVID-19 during a season in which the church should have mourned. He reflected, "What should have been a place of mourning became a place of politics. I think for me, that's been very draining, very frustrating." Brandon expressed frustration at the general lack of willingness to sacrifice for the sake of others. Amari concluded that pastors have a responsibility to listen to different perspectives and to lead in a way that brings love and healing to a community of broken people.

Several pastors also discussed political tensions surrounding racial justice in their congregations. Samuel offered:

> Oh, now we got folks talking about not coming back and [saying] "I didn't really know the church was like that. I thought, because we're multiethnic, everybody loves everybody." [And] "I cannot believe George made that comment or posted a Black Lives Matter billboard on his Facebook. Doesn't he know that's a Marxist organization and they're against the nuclear family? And he's Christian, so how could he?" So, I have been in 'put out fire' mode for a long time.

Anthony offered a very different take on the political/ideological tensions in his congregation:

> In my church, as a pastor, we have people on all sides of the issue. You have your social justice awareness type of people that are in the church and the question they continue to ask is, 'How much more do we have to

> take? How much longer do we have to suffer through this? Have we not as a race been through enough?… Have we not endured slavery? Have we not endured the hangings and the lynchings?' But then on the flip side, I'm having to minister to people who, when they hear White privilege or if they hear systematic racism, they struggle with that, and they say that doesn't exist. It's this denial that the problem that Black people are having is a problem.

Malik further commented on the challenge of discussing racial justice: "For some strange reason, people keep thinking that our discussion even before George Floyd around God's heart for our people in the nations was Marxism, left-wing politics." He expressed frustration that those raising these critiques do not engage in biblical conversations, but only turn to "cultural, political and sociological issues." Jeremiah discussed the unfortunate predictability of evangelical backlash to racial injustice by deflecting toward topics like Black Lives Matter and critical race theory. Amari suggested that these responses are abusive. Caleb and Jeremiah expressed disappointment that their church leaders preferred to avoid discussions of racial injustice.

While there is a certain pressure to avoid social and political issues, Yashawn commented on the importance of engagement:

> I think where we have come down solidly is that a theology that is not addressing the issues of the day is not a worthy theology. So, I think as church leaders we have decided to engage these cultural things because you cannot keep a multiethnic community together if you aren't engaging in these things, because the undercurrent of multiethnic communities is silent mistrust. And if you don't surface that, then people are willing to stay in that silent mistrust, but they never become brother and sister in Christ.

Makayla discussed a vision for a multicultural church in which diverse experience and viewpoint is celebrated and polarized and

monocultural assumptions are questioned. Her vision is motivated by her understanding of what the people of God will be in the future.

Lingering Lack of Racial Awareness. Twelve pastors discussed the lingering lack of racial awareness in the church and American society. Samuel discussed how Black and Brown communities feel that racial injustice is so rampant that they expect people in our country to be aware and "actively doing something about it." He also pointed out that minority communities play an important role in informing and spreading awareness among those who are receptive and seeking to learn about experiences of injustice. Elijah recognized that facing racism is also a challenge for people of color, "I don't think our community, our African American community, when it comes to racism, we still don't know how to bring people together. So most people assume that because of our color, we knew. We're broken ourselves!" Malik discussed the frustration of working in a church in which people question the need to address racial issues when he views racial justice as a natural outflow of a healthy understanding of the *imago Dei* and the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Several pastors discussed the way in which the George Floyd murder forced real conversations. Zion summarized, "I'm thankful for the voice of the George Floyd video. Thankful for the voice of that video because it…spoke something that people had to hear because they witnessed it. …It gave opportunity for discussion… and brought to light what some people were complaining about." Brandon also discussed how COVID-19 heightened awareness of some of the structural challenges that people of color face in terms of gaining access to health care. Jada emphasized the importance of multifaith dialog and relationships as an opportunity emerging during this season. She challenges, "The conversations can't be superficial. They have to be sincere. There has to be a heart to make a change."

Other pastors reminded that lasting change takes time. Elijah questioned, "How long are they going to really fight for this? I mean, is this just the theme of the day or is this really something that people are concerned about and that they really want to jump

in to change?" Darnell reflects, "Whatever needs to change has to be sustained for a consistent period…then it changes the mindset. … I am hungry for a change that will last." Jeremiah emphasized sustained discipleship so that people respond to injustice in the fruit of the Spirit rather than anger and rage. Brandon concludes, "There needs to be moral leaders among the privileged groups who challenge the immoralities, all the illegalities, the structural discrimination…"

Need for the White Church to Learn. As another subtheme, thirteen pastors on thirty-three occasions discussed the need for the White church to learn more about racial injustice. Samuel expressed frustration with the hesitancy of White pastors to protest with Black and Brown pastors because Black Lives Matter protests were happening in a nearby vicinity. Jeremiah similarly noted that many within the evangelical church started to focus on ancillary issues instead of the problem of racism. Brandon commented on how intentional leadership redirection and reaction demonstrates a lack of awareness and complicity in racialization. He noted, "While we were having Black Lives Matter protests, they were having Blue Lives Matter protests. And that is a blatantly racist reaction." Yashawn described his own realization that the church is not as far along in terms of reconciliation as he thought. He summarized, "I believed we were further than we were and then was very, very disappointed when I found out that the Christian community was really just not very far down the road as far as this is concerned." Angel, Anthony and Brandon expressed caution at the White evangelical community's tendency to prioritize Republicanism and Trumpism over the dignity of their Black and Brown brothers and sisters.

Anthony recommended turning from a posture of fighting for one's political party to a posture of listening. He added, "It's when we get to the point of understanding, that's when real change happens." He also encouraged White believers to engage with the Black community, "You will find nothing but love from our culture as a whole. We love the idea that somebody wants to dive into our heart, into our pain, and understand our culture and the nuances that come along with us." Jeremiah discussed how an

important element of discipleship in the Black church relates to helping "people of color heal from the racial trauma that they've being exposed to." Such a holistic perspective on discipleship and personal transformation can be an example to the White church.

White engagement is important, but it also matters how they show up. Samuel, Brandon, and Gabriel encouraged White pastors to walk with Black pastors and bear some of the burden they carry. Samuel calls these pastors to inform their congregations of the experience of their Black and Brown brothers and sisters in Christ. Samuel and Gabriel described the burden that Black and Brown pastors feel when they are asked to share from their experiences, but then not see an ongoing plan of action implemented. Brandon calls for White pastors to be moral leaders who can reach their congregations in ways that a Black pastor cannot. He asserts, "What America needs are White moral leaders, someone to say…'People, we've absolutely betrayed democracy for the sake of short-term power.'" Several noted that it mattered when Whites protested alongside people of color this past year. Garon reflected, "What is inspiring is to see more people caring and more people reaching out and more people wanting to partner with other churches."

According to these pastors, the killing of George Floyd revealed the ongoing challenge of systemic racism in a distinct way. On the one hand, several pastors noted that Floyd's murder was not new to the Black community because they've seen it happen to Brianna Taylor, Ahmaud Arbery, Trayvon Martin and countless others. Elijah reflected, "Racism has been so systemic for so long." On the other hand, Darnell noted, "The Floyd case revealed to us the fear of those who are in control of systems." He went on to discuss how grasping for power is the core issue and is fundamentally a "problem of the heart." Jeremiah commented, "The reality is that a lot of Christians would much rather have people think that they're okay and that they're innocent rather than really wrestle with what part am I complicit in this and how does our collective complicity into this thing really take shape?" Yashawn suggested that there is a systemic ideological attack on the dignity of people of color that is grounded in faulty theology. Regarding police brutality, Brandon asserts, "White folks either want to believe it doesn't happen or

it's just one apple, one bad apple. The hell it is. This is the way law enforcement treats Black folks from sea to shining sea." He continues, "Why are you so scared of us? That's four hundred and one years of racial encoding. That is a reflexive reaction of Whites when they see Black folks. It is implicit racism, the most difficult to get at, most difficult to resolve." George Floyd's murder gave us a glimpse into that problem.

Reflections on Interview Findings

While the Black pastors in this study included men and women from across the nation with diverse ages, denominational backgrounds, and political affiliations, they were unified in their call for US churches to engage issues of racial justice. While some segments of US evangelicalism might be tempted to minimize or dismiss race as a topic of religious concern, the Black pastors in this study call for clear and practical responses to racial injustice. Successfully leading congregations to address racial injustice means acknowledging and confronting political divisions in the church related to COVID-19 and social injustice. Pastoral leaders should caution their congregations about turning any social or political movement into a scapegoat or reason for not dealing with evils such as racial injustice. These Black pastors expressed frustration at political fracturing in the church and lamented the lingering lack of awareness regarding racial injustice. They remind leaders that growth in these areas requires a learning posture and commitment to enacting change. Several Black pastors called their White colleagues to help their congregations learn and then move beyond conversation to action. Leading in areas of justice and righteousness requires action. It also involves lamenting that progress toward racial reconciliation is lagging expectations given the long history of this work. As White researchers, the challenge to move from conversation to action is a key motivator for this publication. As stewards of the stories and lessons that were entrusted to us, we felt compelled to share them here and to find other venues to share these findings.

Theme Five: The Church's Role in Healing

Reporting of Interview Findings

One of the most prominent themes in this study with eighteen of nineteen pastors discussing it on sixty-four occasions was the church's role in healing. During this season of social unrest and COVID-19, these pastors believed that the church has an important though challenging role to play in the healing of individuals and communities. Caleb reminded that those within the church will have different opinions but engaging in truthful and open dialogue is essential. Amari commented:

> I feel the tension of getting back together, but we also understand that we have already had a relationship. This is the body of Christ. We're going to work through this and continue to show the kingdom of God and share the light. But the hardest thing for me is, is to sit there and go, remove the mask. Stop faking it.

Anthony adds, "Going back to the Book of Acts, if my brother is in pain and doesn't have it, then I have to be in pain and don't have it." Angel commented on the important role that Black pastors play as "credible messengers" in their communities. Amari presented a vision to move from "racial reconciliation to racial restoration" and being a church that engages and builds up one's community. Garon called for the pursuit of holistic mission that addresses spiritual and physical needs.

Several pastors talked about the importance of addressing issues of social justice as a gospel calling. Malik suggested, "I believe that all of this has highlighted the central role of the church in addressing this. This is at the heart of the gospel and what the church has been made for." He continues, "The church is the answer for this very moment." Darnell emphasized the need to pray for national leaders and to speak against injustice. Zion added, "In dealing with injustices, the only way that we are able to address them appropriately… is to be centered on Christlike principles and not be Christian in name only. …Christ principles change hearts."

Pastors also discussed what they perceived to be missed opportunities for the church to provide leadership. Elijah reflected on how the polarized responses of White and Black churches have sometimes been unhelpful. He questioned, "How do we get better at hearing one another?" He expressed concern that polarized responses might demonstrate the absence of a real church that has encountered the real love of Christ. Webster suggested that the watching world might be further ready to discredit the church because of the perceived gap between who we say we are and what they see in us.

Despite missed opportunities, pastors suggested that there is hope for the church to refocus and engage missionally. Yashawn recognized that evangelical theology has not typically dealt with systemic evil, but he suggests that Christ might be calling us to overcome that discomfort. He reflected, "My theology has come to the place of, we who are in the church, we have to be about addressing systemic issues and even looking at the teachings of Jesus and seeing where he was directly challenging systemic issues in his teaching." Webster observed, "Jesus identifies with people with [their] backs against the wall." He later added, "The community absolutely needs the church to be speaking into its pain, to call out the wrong that's being perpetuated against the community." Brianna encouraged:

> I think that churches need to speak out. … I think for too many years, the church has been silent. And because we have been silent, people are saying the church doesn't care. I'm telling you, people were blessed to see the pastors because, in the Black community, the church has a very powerful say. And people may say what they want, but in the Black community, when people are hurt, the first place they turn to is the church.

Garon suggested that the pandemic pushed leaders to question their ministry priorities and to focus on mission as it relates to people rather than simple activity. Amari reflected on the need to engage in deep relationship by asking, "How are you really doing?

Then ask that question and really hear their heart. …We need to exemplify more of what Jesus did to the woman at the well and go elsewhere, sit down, have a conversation." Webster commented, "It has made me even more committed to this way of being the church, of being absolutely committed to the community that we're placed in." Makayla discussed her own sense of responsibility to engage in marches for social justice noting, "The Bible is clear that justice should prevail." Brandon found hope in young leaders who are willing to put their faith into action.

Reflections on Interview Findings

Despite the hardship and disappointment expressed by these pastors, they expressed a clear conviction that the church has a key role to play in healing our communities. They described a corporate calling to serve one another and to suffer together. Several questioned the evangelical tendency to dichotomize social justice and the gospel. Instead, they find issues of justice and righteousness at the heart of what it means to live out one's faith in this world. Leading congregations to take injustice seriously will involve calling each part of the church to suffer with and serve those parts that are facing injustice. It also means extending service beyond the church to care for one's community in the hardships that they face. COVID-19 provided an opportunity for congregations to step up and serve their communities. Pastors must lead their congregations to pursue this work with integrity and authenticity because a skeptical world is watching. If they step forward as credible messengers, pastors and their congregations have an opportunity to spread hope. As researchers, we were challenged and inspired by the overwhelmingly positive and hopeful attitude of these pastors who were facing hardship beyond what we had initially imagined.

Practical Implications for Leadership

Considering the findings of this study, there are a number of practical implications for the leadership of Black pastors, White pastors, and academic leaders. These principles emerge from the unified voices of Black pastors representing diverse gender, age, regional, theological, and political perspectives. First, African

American leaders are encouraged to appreciate, cultivate, and grow in their sense of calling even when hardships emerge. The Black pastors in this study experienced a confirmed sense of calling and a clarification of that calling through this season of pandemic and social unrest. Similar to Lemke's study of midcareer missionaries, these pastors described hardship as an incubator for clarifying one's sense of calling.[20] While calling might play a role in the majority of those who pursue pastoral leadership, the breadth and depth of individual calling narratives in this study underscores the significant role that calling plays within the African American pastorate. A sense of calling serves as an anchor during times of crisis, but crises also have the potential to strengthen and clarify callings. Since the cultivation of callings is a lifelong process, African American leaders are encouraged to intentionally reflect upon their callings during times of unhindered ministry and times of hardship. There seems to be a depth of meaningfulness and power in the calling experiences of Black leaders that can be celebrated and cultivated.

A second leadership implication is that White leaders need to listen to, learn from, and walk with our Black brothers and sisters. The pastors in this study remind us that building bridges across racial divides is not a superficial endeavor. As a first step, leaders are encouraged to build authentic relationships with their African American brothers and sisters in Christ and listen openly to their experiences of racial injustice and leading during times of hardship. As a second step, White leaders are challenged to move from listening and learning to action. Authentic and courageous leadership confronts the labeling, deflecting, and scapegoating that is characteristic of political approaches to human problems such as racial injustice. White leaders need to recognize that deflecting focus from real human evils by focusing on depersonalized notions such as critical race theory or organizational movements such as Black Lives Matter is harmful to our brothers and sisters of color. While it may be appropriate to challenge theoretical constructs or organizational principles, the central concern here relates to unexamined motives and the temptation to deflect attention from

[20] Lemke, "Perceptions of Career Agency," 239.

real injustice. Leaders should challenge their congregations to avoid elevating the politics of this world over the politics of the kingdom of God.

In addition, White leaders and their congregations need to move from passive reception to active engagement. Swapping pulpits or inviting Black pastors to share about their experiences during times like the George Floyd murder is not enough. This sort of passivity might actually contribute to the problem of racial divisions in the church. Leaders of color can help guide us to appropriate action. Whether joining hands in worship, providing food to those who cannot access it, or marching together in protest, White leaders are called to learn and act. Both Black and White pastors have the opportunity to encourage one another and partner together. Acknowledging a mutual commitment to one's pastoral calling, the authority of God's word, and the healing role of the church in a broken world is an important step.

A final leadership implication is that faculty and academic leaders have an opportunity to demonstrate authentic leadership in our research, teaching, and advising. In our research and writing, Black leaders and White leaders have the opportunity to demonstrate active listening and reflective action by conducting research among diverse populations. Although we struggled as White researchers to examine our own motives and potential barriers to effectively researching Black experiences of racial trauma and quarantine, we discovered that it was possible for us to listen to, learn from, and respond to the experiences of our brothers and sisters of color. We were inspired to share the perspectives and convictions articulated by the pastors in our study. We learned that elevating their voices through extended presentation of findings and opening up about our struggles regarding whether and how to conduct this research is important. Perhaps engaging in and following through on this type of research can help contribute to lasting change.

In our teaching, academic leaders have the opportunity to help students examine the motives and perspectives of those engaged in public theology and discourse. As professors of future leaders, we have a responsibility to train up authentic leaders who are committed to theological integrity, the mission of the church, and

intercultural awareness. Future crises will require leaders who are committed to listening and action. In our advising and mentoring work, we can help students understand and cultivate their sense of calling even during times of hardship. Cultivating awareness and growth of callings can contribute to our students' overall motivation to learn and resilience during times of crisis such as this season of social unrest and COVID-19.

Conclusion

The purpose of this study was to listen to the personal and professional experiences of African American pastors during the COVID-19 pandemic and George Floyd protests, and to elicit principles for effective pastoral leadership and living out one's calling. Principles of practical theology and qualitative research were used to identify five main themes from interviews with nineteen pastors: (a) losses through hardship, (b) growth through hardship, (c) leading in hardship, (d) the need to engage racial justice, and (e) the church's role in healing. The findings paint a picture of loss and hardship, but they also point to leadership resilience and growth. Pastors challenge the church in North America to overcome political division by becoming a listening and learning community that demonstrates hope and healing. Through humble listening that seeks to understand and respond to the experiences and explanations of those around us, Christian leaders can honor one another as image bearers and demonstrate the kingdom of God to a watching world.

A Contemplative Response to Pastoral Dread

R. Patrick Moore

Abstract

Pastors and church leaders often experience a vague feeling of apprehension as they carry out their pastoral functions in the performance-evaluative atmosphere of their congregations and denominations. If this feeling leads to an intensified chronic anxiety, they might question their ministerial calling and their ability to lead others in spiritual growth and mission. Drawing upon the concept of dread offered by Søren Kierkegaard, this essay explores the existential promise of dread to raise foundational ontological questions. A contemplative practice is especially helpful to gently distinguish false from true ways of being and to live more fully into the divine vocation of spiritual leadership.

A Personal Journey into Dread

Feelings of pastoral dread came to my attention when I returned in December 2008 from a second tour in Iraq as a chaplain in the Army National Guard. I had spent the previous year with the troops leading worship and pastoring soldiers where ultimate issues of life and death were very real. I counseled people who had killed and refrained from killing and felt guilty of the consequences. I led memorial services of fallen comrades. I struggled to proclaim a message of hope and meaning, in the meaninglessness of war. Having all these intense experiences, I returned home to resume spiritual leadership for a congregation in my denomination, The United Methodist Church.

At the very first Administrative Council meeting, energy crackled among the members as they couldn't wait to share their excitement. I was elated and ready to hear their hopes, wishes,

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and dreams for spiritual growth and mission. Yet, the important topic they wanted to share was—purchasing new pew cushions. I was crestfallen. Meanwhile, the rest of the council absorbed their excitement and develop a plan to see this project through.

Having dealt daily with the exigencies of life and death, now I was discussing the details of pew cushions. I wish I could say I offered them a prophetic critique of their plans and led them to pursue a more excellent way. Alas, I did not. The banality of their desires and of my inadequate response crushed my spirit.

Each time I drove into the church parking lot for a committee meeting, I debated with myself whether or not to pull the door handle and open myself to the situation. And each time I did, something within me withered. I thought the problem was within me, so I hired a nationally known church growth consultant. He told me both of my congregations most likely would not be able to "turn around." They were in a death spiral and would not grow. I felt like a failure, and I knew my future appointments would be based on my ability to meet the quantitative expectations of my superiors. A crisis of confidence arose within me.

Dread can mean several different things. A typical dictionary definition of dread is "to fear greatly" or "to feel great reluctance."[1] From a psychological perspective, dread identifies closely with anxiety, which the *Dictionary of Pastoral Care and Counseling* characterizes as "a psychic response of dread or fear to a vague, unspecified threat."[2]

Initially, dread registered in me as a vague feeling of apprehension when I faced certain pastoral tasks and functions. For instance, I particularly loathe finance committee meetings. A profound resistance accompanies that task. But more generally, pastoral dread indicated a peculiar angst in face of the unknowns in my pastoral vocation: What will congregational life look like

[1] Merriam-Webster, Inc. *Merriam-Webster's Intermediate Dictionary*, (Springfield, Mass: Merriam-Webster,) 2011.

[2] Rodney J. Hunter, ed., *Dictionary of Pastoral Care and Counseling* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1990), 47. This work will be referred to as DPCC throughout the rest of this praxis-thesis.

in twenty years? Will my ministry in the congregation have any lasting significance? Will I be able to reverse the decline of this congregation?

Later, a third meaning emerged: pastoral dread seemed to connote a deep aching or instinct that something in the practice of pastoral ministry was not right. For instance, the model of congregational ministry that sees the congregation as a religious organization that ought to be growing in resources and in participation even in the midst of denominational decline did not sit right with me. I had always resisted the recent preoccupation of leading congregations to have a mission statement, vision statement, a set of values, and measurable outcomes for the sake of numerical growth. These things were not necessarily bad, but they did not represent the reasons I had given myself to pastoral ministry. It was this incongruence between my ideals and the expectations of others that seemed to evoke pastoral dread.

When I began to interview some colleagues along these lines, my hunch that others might be experiencing something similar proved correct. Although our contexts differed, as well as our backgrounds and personalities, each person resonated with the term pastoral dread. There were things in their ministry contexts they were apprehensive about. They also shared a vague unease about the future viability and significance of the current expression of congregational life. And they shared a common disconnect between their current work context and their personal hopes and dreams for ministry.

I came to think that pastoral dread might have to do with something more fundamental, with what Paul Tillich called "the anxiety of emptiness."[3] The anxiety of emptiness is the experience of feeling passionate about a particular issue but finding one's pursuit of that issue frustrated by a particular group or culture. One's promising hope or belief is not realized. Over time the passion dissipates, the original vision fades, and we find ourselves without foundation, substance, or purpose.

[3] Paul Tillich, *The Courage to Be* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1952), 47.

Not only are pastors struggling mightily with vocational discernment, but the rhetoric of crisis in the Church make it worse. United Methodist polity scholar Thomas Frank has observed that the "rhetoric of crisis takes power away from laity and pastors by diminishing the significance of their work—they who meet week after week in sanctuaries all across the landscape to worship God."[4] All the important day-to-day actions of pastoral care and mission in the congregation and community seem worthless if the bottom line of increased membership and giving is not achieved. The rhetoric of crisis and the degradation of the pastoral vocation evokes feelings of dread in many congregational leaders.

The Revelatory Force of Dread

The Concept of Dread is a seminal analysis by Danish philosopher and theologian Søren Kierkegaard. Our understanding of Kierkegaard's concept of dread is complicated because it is based on the German word, angst, and there is little consensus about whether *angst* should be translated "anxiety" or "dread." I will follow Gregory R. Beabout and his excellent analysis of Kierkegaard's concept of angst. For Kierkegaard the structure of human being is bipolar: mind and body.[5] A third factor unites these two poles: the spirit.[6] Beabout explains, "the Spirit is the power of the will to self-consciously relate the two poles of the synthesis to one another and hence to the self."[7]

As we mature, generally we grow in the capacity for the mind and body to relate vis-à-vis the spirit. We develop self-reflection, which allows for a whole host of ontological distinctions in our existence to come to mind. Self-reflection not only distinguishes "I" from "you" but also between "now," "past," and "future";

[4] Tillich, *The Courage to Be,* 47.

[5] Kierkegaard's actual language is "soulish" for the mind, and "bodily" for the body. Other commentators, as Beabout does, use the words "psychical" and "physical" accordingly.

[6] Kierkegaard, *The Concept of Dread*, trans. Walter Lowrie, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1970), 35.

[7] Gregory R. Beabout, *Freedom and its Misuses: Kierkegaard on Anxiety and Despair* (Milwaukee: Milwaukee University Press, 1996), 46.

between "being" and "not being"; between "finitude" and "infinity." According to Kierkegaard, it is the spirit's capacity for self-relation that cultivates our awareness of ourselves not only *in* space and time, but also of the infinite possibilities that the future holds.

One of Kierkegaard's great contributions to our understanding is to point out the deep and resonate ambiguity within our experience of dread, as a feeling of both attraction and repulsion. "The person who looks over the edge of the cliff feels anxious; there is both the dizzying feeling that one might fall with its accompanying repulsion and a quietly felt urge to lean out farther, to leap."[8] There is a quality of sweet apprehension and shrinking danger in the experience of dread in the moment. The human spirit is more or less attracted or repulsed at all possible possibilities, responding with either "sympathetic antipathy" and "antipathetic sympathy."[9] "One speaks of a sweet dread, a sweet feeling of apprehension, one speaks of a strange dread, a shrinking dread."[10]

Our relationship to the future has a bipolar structure. We stand in each moment between two infinite horizons: the limitless freedom of life's potential choices and the unfathomable darkness of our nonbeing. The more we become cognitively aware of this bipolar ontology, the more dread-full our experience becomes. The more self-reflective we are, the more aware we become of the limitless potentiality before us on the one hand, and on the other, of our inevitable death, our nonbeing. Both infinite horizons threaten us with "too much." The inconceivable immensity of both horizons literally blows our minds: The immensity not only titillates but also overwhelms our egos; limitless freedom excites and threatens our fragile sense of self.

Our perception of self-negation first arises in infancy. Theologian and developmental psychologist James E. Loder claimed that ego first arises when an infant notices that the presence—perceived in the "face"—of the parent is not permanent. Up to this time, the face has served as the orienting principal for the infant. Gradually,

[8] Beabout, *Freedom*, 47.
[9] Kierkegaard, *Concept of Dread*, 38.
[10] Ibid.

and perhaps all too suddenly, the infant comes to experience the inner pain of the absence of the face. This perceived absence and initial experience of the void gives rise to the ego as the infant's first negation of that absence, that primordial void. Over a lifetime the ego creatively navigates all types of existential conflicts that threaten its agency. "Void" can serve as a term for anything that negates us from either of the infinite horizons: limitless possibility and inexorable demise. Anything that threatens our sense of self-determination is a face of the Void, which Loder defined as the "ultimate telos toward which all experiences of nothingness point."[11]

Because the infinity of the future is an unpreventable reality in our ontology, manifesting in innumerable forms, the ego—the psychic agency of oneself—nevertheless strives valiantly to negate those negations. Loder described the ego as "a kind of tragic hero who appears to slay the dragon of nothingness."[12] It develops strategies and patterns of negating our negation, of repressing all indications of our limitations and death.

Loder criticized traditional developmental psychologies because they tend to offer therapies in only two dimensions: the lived world and the self. We constantly seek to therapeutically change the future either by changing external circumstances or our capacity to experience external circumstances. Inevitably, we try to "diffuse the painful inner-sense that being human is empty and meaningless by proliferating meaningless activity to the cheers of an equally self-alienated society."[13] According to Loder, one of the most common ego defense mechanisms is *pursuing achievement* to satisfy the pain of both near-term and ultimate negations.

The Illuminative Potential of Pastoral Dread

Dread always has an ambiguous relationship with the future. We can either face the infinity of the future with courage or we can try to avoid the implications through all manner of ego defenses. Usually, we end up doing a little of both.

[11] James Loder, *The Transforming Moment* (Colorado Springs: Helmers and Howard, 1989), 70.
[12] Loder, *Logic of Spirit*, 135.
[13] Loder, *Logic of Spirit*, 82.

With these distinctions in mind, we can clarify pastoral dread as the ambiguous relationship with the future in the context of pastoring congregations. Dread is universal. Pastoral dread is contextual. Dread deals with possibilities and choices, and pastoral dread deals with possibilities and choices within the environment of leading congregations.

In early 2011, I decided to give in. I came to grips with the notion that if I ever was going to get a chance to move to a congregation that felt more passion for the poor than for pew cushions, then I was going to have to grow my congregations to get some street cred with the district superintendent and bishop.

I led each congregation to adopt the official mission statement of The United Methodist Church as its mission statement. We adopted a vision to grow our worship attendance, and it doubled. We moved to a single-board model that simplified the governance structure. And despite these achievements, when I drove into the parking lot to attend the one meeting once a month, I still opened the door handle with a deep weariness. Something inside me withered a little more.

If dread is "What is becoming of me?" then pastoral dread is "What is becoming of me as a pastor called to ordained ministry?" Spiritual theologian Elaine Heath expanded the existential question of pastoral authenticity to include the responses of the Church to its spiritual and cultural malaise:

> Here in the spiritual desert, in the night of increasing aridity, God's people search through all the familiar patterns, activities, choices, and ways, all the old options that used to provide a sense of religious stability, of spiritual meaning. We think about all the ways we worked to get people to join the church and realize that often what we really wanted was enough money in the offering to pay the utility bills. We sift through the labels we have used to define our own and others' religious identity: liberal, conservative, fundamentalist,

> saved, unchurched, Spirit-filled, carnal, Pentecostal, Bible-believing, middle of the road, orthodox. "Is this what it means to be the church?" we ask ourselves.[14]

Pastoral dread arises in the heartfelt rumination on the substance of Heath's question. As pastors, we will look at all the mundane activities and strivings within congregational leadership and ask "Is this all there is?" to our vocation. In this respect, *feeling dread intensely and responding to it courageously has the potential to lead us into a deep, spiritual exploration of who we are in God and what we are called to do*. Standing before the abyss of our self-constructions, we just might glimpse the Holy One who has been there all along and calls us beloved.

Pastors are not immune to chasing after the programs of happiness, seeking security, affection, and power in the exercise of the pastoral vocation. On a functional level, we are often rewarded in these areas through our pastoral strivings. Yet, on an ontological level, the dread of living between inauthentic expectations and one's authentic self remains. In time, the feeling of dread intensifies, and we are issued a new invitation by that very dread to let go of that to which we cling for our salvation.

The spiritual life is one of undulating seasons, of cyclical surrendering and dying. Contemplative writer Phileena Heuertz described it: "The process a tree goes through during the changing seasons…is slow and dry and brutal to the leaves. The leaves are forced to die. Does the tree resist…or surrender to the process in the hope that new life will come?"[15] Pastoral dread extends an invitation to surrender to the process of purging ourselves of all that inhibit us from living from our true center. The journey, however, is fraught with struggle. "We want the fruit, but we resist the dying."[16]

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[14] Elaine Heath, *Mystic Way of Evangelism: A Contemplative Vision for Christian Outreach* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2008), 34.
[15] Phileena Heuertz, *Pilgrimage of a Soul* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2010), 122.
[16] Heuertz, *Pilgrimage*, 122.

Not only do we experience the inner resistance to dying, the external system in which we participate resists dying as well. The United Methodist Church, and most other denominations, is in decline. Many of our leaders resist this fact ardently, for institutional decline threatens our collective needs of security, esteem, and power. As a denomination we seek to fix the lived world by making our pastors more effective. We know we need creative "adaptive responses," but we give in to the temptation of quick-fix technical solutions.[17]

Heath reframed the decline of The United Methodist Church in the contemplative tradition. She claimed the present time is really a dark night of the soul for the Church. She wrote:

> Many Christians view the decline of Western Christendom with alarm, as if God had fallen from heaven. Enormous effort is put forth to launch church growth programs to shore up membership, increase giving, and keep denominational ships afloat. But the history of God's people is a history of life cycles, a history of clarity about call and identity, followed by complacence, followed by collusion with the powers, followed by catastrophic loss. Contrary to being a disaster, the exilic experiences of loss and marginalization are what are needed to restore the church to its evangelistic place. On the margins of society the church will once again find its God-given voice to speak to the dominant culture in subversive ways, resisting the powers and principalities, standing against the seduction of the status quo. The church will once again become a prophetic, evangelistic, alternative community, offering to the world a model of life that is radically "other," life-giving, loving, healing, liberating. This kind of community is not possible for

[17] Ronald A. Heifetz, *Leadership Without Easy Answers* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1994).

> the church of Christendom. Christendom opposes prophetic community with its upside-down power and its exposure of golden calves.[18]

In other words, institutional decline can be undertaken as a spiritual test, a spiritual opportunity for a divinely inspired purification, in which God graciously strips the Church of her false attachments.[19]

The unique nature of the pastoral vocational and institutional context sets up a particularly potent dynamic between dread and anxiety. Pastors understand their call to be from God and affirmed by the faith community. Pastors are called to deal with issues of ultimate significance such as life and death, alienation and belonging, sin and forgiveness, and the limitless responsibility and freedom to act wisely and compassionately.

During their pastoral formation they are asked to articulate and give evidence of how they understand themselves to be called by God into ordained ministry. I believe that through this pastoral formation process that one's sense of call becomes extremely entwined with one's sense of self. Moreover, unlike a call to be a pharmacist or plumber, the pastoral call is perceived, if mistakenly, to be bound up in our relationship with God, the source of life. When our perception of call is threatened, our relationship with God is threatened.

Pastor Vashti Jackson has been in pastoral ministry for over fifteen years. She was ordained in another Pan-Methodist tradition. However, she serves as an associate pastor at a large United Methodist congregation, St. Barnabas, which is primarily comprised of African Americans. Pastor Jackson is in her early 40s. She has been serving at St. Barnabas since 2010. She is African American.

I asked Pastor Jackson about how much of her self-identity

[18] Heath, *Mystic Way*, 26-27.

[19] I am not calling for separation from religious institutions and their systems, but rather calling for a new system. Just as we are not transformed by a God separate from us, the only possibility is through finding transformation from the Spirit within us, and living out of that transformation into a new system.

is wrapped up in her call to ministry. She responded, "There are not too many hats I wear that I let pigeonhole me, but the call to ministry is one of them."[20] She reflected on how she acts in public and in private is a part of that pastoral identity. "I feel like I am always Pastor Jackson. It does define me."[21]

Many pastors would echo Pastor Jackson's sentiment. There is a close connection between a sense of call to ordained ministry, a sense of self-identity, and one's ability to carry out the responsibilities of pastoral ministry in the areas of word, sacrament, service, and order. For each of the interviewees of my research, their anxiety in pastoral ministry revolved primarily around meeting expectations of others. Pastor Phil Majors commented, "Most of my anxiety comes from the performance model of ministry where the pastor is the primary performer."[22] For Pastor Majors, preaching was the locus of pastoral dread in which his singular performance felt "like a fraud." "Performance brings up feelings of 'I'm not good enough'; if I know congregants don't like me that bugs the hell out of me!" He then went on to describe that he took his anxiety home and how it adversely affected his wife and his marriage.

The context of pastoral dread and anxiety is larger than congregational ministry. I am an elder within the United Methodist denomination and a citizen within an increasingly secular society. A rhetoric of crisis suffuses conversations within all types of Christian organizations, striving to reverse numerical decline in worship attendance, professions of faith, and financial giving.

> The bind for many pastors is that leading change in their congregations for the primary purpose of increasing quantitative metrics would violate their sense of pastoral integrity. For example, the "Call to Action" report of The United Methodist Church says that "vital" congregations use praise bands in the

[20] Vashti Jackson, personal interview by author, November 5, 2012.
[21] Vashti Jackson, personal interview by author, November 5, 2012.
[22] Vashti Jackson, personal interview by author, November 5, 2012.

> context of contemporary worship.[23] Contemporary worship is not inherently right or wrong. Yet, for some pastors and their congregations, the practice of contemporary worship would not be authentic for the pastor or the congregation. And thus, we have a conflict between authentic spiritual expression and the pressure to conform and perform. Moreover, if the pastor's performance does not lead to improved metrics, their vocation of ordained ministry might be jeopardized. Consequently, pastors face the quandary that leading with spiritual integrity might not meet performative expectations, which calls their pastoral identity, future livelihood, and vocational calling into question.

Dread and Performative Expectations

In his book, *Religion, Theology and the Human Sciences*, Richard Roberts points out that Christian universities and denominations face increasing threats to their financial and social viability. To address these threats, many missionally driven institutions strive for sustainability by imposing a managerial Performative Absolute[24] upon otherwise self-governing, values-oriented people:[25]

> The "Performative Absolute" is an all-consuming, all-seeing, yet self-concealing power that feeds on identity, which it digests and then regurgitates as a troubling reality for those who have the organizational misfortune to owe some form of allegiance to values or to a sublime that would appear to exist external to the vision and demands of management.[26]

[23] "Call to Action: Steering Team Report" (Nashville: The United Methodist Church, 2010).
[24] Richard H. Roberts, *Religion, Theology and the Human Sciences* (Cambridge: University Press, 2002), 3.
[25] Roberts, "Contemplation and the 'Performative Absolute" 17.
[26] Roberts, "Contemplation and the 'Performative Absolute" 17.

The Performative Absolute seeks to replace personal and vocational identity with a managed identity "composed of those skills, competences and behavioral characteristics deemed appropriate to current organizational needs."[27]

Many pastors feel they are being asked to lead congregations in ways that are rooted more in reversing the numerical decline of the denomination than in being faithful to the call of the Gospel. Institutional management tends to evaluate its clergy less on the depth of call and faithfulness in living out that call, and more in terms of ability to increase particular metrics that reflect denominational and congregational vitality. If we succumb to this pressure to perform, and if our value derives from effective performance, we will be oriented falsely and will be serving a god of our own making.

The Contemplative Call to the True Self

The contemplative tradition often describes the spiritual journey in terms of a struggle between the false self and the true self, "the image of God in which every human being is created; our participation in the divine life manifested in our uniqueness."[28] Spiritual development is thwarted by the "false self," as a defensive ego that protects itself from being overwhelmed by infinite possibility or by its own negation. If acting falsely, the ego typically strives to avoid the implications of transcendent potential or the emptiness of absence by repressing the Void and seeking happiness in one of two ways: either "gratifying the instinctual needs of survival/security, affection/esteem, and power/control;"[29] or identifying "with a particular group from whom it can find acceptance and thus build feelings of self-worth."[30] We tend to identify with a particular group, and adopt its performative imperatives, because

[27] Roberts, "Contemplation and the 'Performative Absolute" 21.
[28] Thomas Keating, *Invitation to Love: The Way of Christian Contemplation* (New York: Continuum, 1999), 148.
[29] Keating, *Open Mind, Open Heart*, 2.
[30] Keating, *Open Mind, Open Heart*, 2.

that group promises ego satisfaction by meeting one of these over-identified instinctual needs.[31]

Professor Elaine Heath described the false self this way:

> The false self is universal to the human experience, arising from wounds received in life. Overwhelmingly focused on production, performance, and making the desired impression on others, the false self constructs protective armor. The false self confuses identity with function, so that we think we are what we do. The false self is a Pelagian who believes that everything is on his or her own shoulders.[32]

In other words, we carry within us a false self that is formed by the wounds received in our development; and we create a form of existence that seeks to limit further damage. I have argued that pastoral anxiety happens when the threat of loss, and particularly the loss of pastoral identity, becomes so magnified that one's sense of power and freedom diminishes. In our anxiety we seek to diffuse the intensity of anxiety typically through better performance or giving up. The false self focuses on reducing anxiety by manipulating circumstances rather than engaging the void directly and receptively.

I confess that I confirmed my pastoral call mostly in terms of my congregation's financial and attendance metrics. I had dreams of motivating people to change their lives and change the world into a better place. My primary points of reference for pastoral identity were largely external and oriented to what other people do and what they expect of me. In this way, I am an idolater. But I also confess I do not want to be an idolater. I want to learn to resist the temptation to judge myself on what I do; I want to learn to value who I am at a fundamental level. Moreover, I confess I believe the contemplative tradition's claim that at a fundamental level I am beloved of God.

[31] Keating, *Open Mind, Open Heart*, 187.
[32] Heath, 82.

Yet, there is a final confession: This fundamental truth of who I am is obscured and hidden from much of my consciousness by false attachments. These attachments, and the external pressures that sustain them, are what must die. Phileena Heuertz believes this is exactly the point of spiritual growth: "The contemplative tradition is about learning to die well."[33] That is, the desire to avoid facing our deepest needs and pain must die so that the ontological reality of our union with the Trinity can unfold into our lived existence.

The Contemplative Journey into Our True Self

The contemplative journey, as a particularly illuminative path of spiritual growth, offers a theological framework and a practice intentional openness to God's transformational power. From a contemplative perspective, transformation means one moving away from operating primarily from a false self to the true self, which is grounded in its larger, ultimate source and destiny: the Holy, the divine ground of all things, "in which we live and move and have our being" (Acts 17:28). This ground is known by a host of names and titles, but the foundational article of Christian faith is two-fold: that the ontological unity of Creator/creation disclosed in Christ is the ultimate reality that holds all things together (Colossians 1: 17); God's most fervent desire is that divine unity be manifest in every aspect of our existence, as individuals and as communities (Ephesians 3:14-19).

The contemplative tradition is grounded in the concept of kenosis as found in the ancient hymn recorded in Philippians. "Jesus, who, though he was in the form of God, did not regard equality with God as something to be exploited, but emptied himself taking the form of a slave, being born in human likeness."[34] Kenosis—self-emptying or out-pouring—describes the dynamism of the Triune God in the incarnation of Jesus Christ. In Jesus is disclosed the constant flow of Spirit-to-spirit between Father and

[33] The workshop was at my home on November 8, 2012.
[34] Philippians 2:6-7 (NRSV).

Son by which the Creator and creation are unified in love and purpose. Kenosis creates a dynamically emptying and filling union with God for which we truly and ultimately yearn.

Theologian Jay McDaniel used the phrase Open Space[35] as a way of describing who God is. The kenosis of the incarnation is an example of God opening space to embrace the creative order. In this respect, Open Space and Void have different connotations, but really refer to a similar concept. The reconciling kenotic embrace of God in the incarnation is God creating a void of divine potentiality, an open space which draws in the loving creativity of the life of the Trinity.

For us to dwell in our true ground, the Triune God, we must open up space by facing the void of negation and allowing all distractions to dissipate. This is the essence of the spiritual life: emptying ourselves of false identities, idols, inordinate attachments, and discordant passions, to make room for the Spirit of God who will testify to the truth about who we are, and to whom we belong.[36] Jesus taught us to embrace the void saying, "For those who want to save their life will lose it, and those who lose their life for my sake will find it."[37]A kenotic response results in a self-emptying of false identities in order that our deepest and most authentic self may emerge. When we let go of our false attachments and strivings, and when we allow ourselves to be filled with the union already undergirding our existence, we experience the promise of eternal life, here and now as the kingdom/kindom of God.

Gerald May writes that most people don't realize that they are already united with God, which is the fundamental reality of their existence. Without this realization, we do not engage life authentically by living into and living out of this reality. He writes:

> The problem for most of us is that we don't realize how united we are with God. Except in rare moments of

[35] Jay McDaniel, *Living from the Center: Spirituality in an Age of Consumerism* (St. Louis: Chalice Press, 2000), 103.
[36] John 16:13 (NRSV).
[37] Matthew 16:25 (NRSV).

> mystical experience, most of us don't generally feel such intimacy with the Divine. Even if we believe devoutly that God is present with us, our usual experience is that we are "here" and God is "there," loving and gracious perhaps, but irrevocably separate. At worst, we give lip service to God's presence, but then feel and act as if we were completely on our own. I think of church committee meetings, pastoral counseling sessions, or even spiritual direction meetings I have attended. They often begin with a sincere prayer, "God, be with us (as if God might be in attendance at another meeting) and guide our decisions and our actions." Then at the end comes, "Amen," and the door crashes shut on God-attentiveness. Now we have said our prayers and it is time to get down to business.[38]

In other words, we might proclaim that God is already present, but our actions say otherwise. The hope of the contemplative tradition is that we move from a cognitive understanding of union, and a superficial dabbling in it, to an actualized living out of our union with and in God. The contemplative tradition provides a response to the invitation that pastoral dread offers: to submit our ego defenses and to yield to the transforming power of the only true ground of our existence—God.

The contemplative spiritual journey begins with an awakening and a longing to recover our true identity. We first awaken to our needs, not only our needs mentioned above, but fundamentally our need to be loved and to love. In our awakening we are invited "to know God and to be known by God, which presupposes that one finds and knows one's self. Awakening allows for the initial stages of distinguishing between the false and true self."[39]

Awakening turns into longing to find our true center; to return to our true home. Heuertz notes that the Welsh word for longing is *hiraeth*, "It means more than longing. It indicates an all-consuming

[38] Gerald May, *The Dark Knight of the Soul* (New York: HarperCollins, 2004), 44.
[39] May, *The Dark Knight of the Soul,* 64.

homesickness."[40] Longing, then, is the realization that our current reality of living from our false self is not sustainable, we know deep down there must be more to life. Heuertz continues, "Longing propels us forward. It's difficult to sit in the ache of longing, so sometimes we avoid it. But when we embrace that gut-level discontent, we are moving and growing."[41]

And so the false self must die so the true self might emerge. But what is that true self? Keating describes the true self as "the image of God in which every human being is created; our participation in the divine life manifested in our uniqueness."[42] Awakening and longing teach us that we are free to choose the reality of our true self and allow the false self to die, or we can continue an inauthentic existence.

Traditionally the contemplative tradition describes three stages of experiences on the journey toward the true self, our union with God. Those three stages are commonly called: purgation, illumination, and union. I visualize these concurrent processes of purgation, illumination, and union as three concentric circles. The outer circle being purgation, the middle circle illumination, and the inner circle union with the divine. Purgation is the process of letting go of false attachments that feed our false self. Illumination is the process of receiving the deepest truth about ourselves and about God. Union is the process of living and engaging the world out of our truest self. It is resting in the true ground of our existence—God.

Heath reminds us that the three stages happen at the same time. She says that the phases of the contemplative journey are simultaneous rather than sequential, but our human finitude prevents us from seeing their simultaneity, so that we perceive of them as being distinct phases. Even so…[they] may still be described in a cyclical sense, for the purgation of the night waxes and wanes, along with seasons of illumination and moments of union.[43]

[40] May, *The Dark Knight of the Soul,* 64.
[41] May, *The Dark Knight of the Soul,* 65.
[42] Keating, *Invitation*, 148.
[43] Heath, *Mystic Way*, 30.

Purgation, also known as purification, is the process by which the wounds of the psyche and the ego strategies used to mask or avoid the pain are exposed. Moreover, in the purgation we begin to let go of those strategies and allow the inner pain to remain. This "mystic pain" is purifying in the sense that we seek not to withdraw too quickly in response to the pain by fixing our lived world or fixing our ego through avoidant behaviors and self-abnegation. The invitation of dread is to purge or let go (*kenosis*) of coping mechanisms that tend to feed the false and keep the true self hidden. In purgation we learn to let go of the programs of happiness.

As we experience purification and the remnants of the false self are stripped away, we are in a better position to receive the truth of who we are, united with God. In this stage there are stories of mystics receiving visions of the truth. Others describe this stage as receiving a deep peace where striving for significance ends and they rest in the acceptance of God. One of the most illuminating experiences for me is claiming the promises of trinitarian theology that in Jesus Christ my life is hidden in God.

Illumination offers its own inherent danger, however. We may begin to equate the *experiences* of God's grace with the *reality* of God. The danger is when the experiences of God wane, we mistakenly think God is not present, and so we must return to the process of purgation to let go of those false ideas and perceptions. "Thus, much of the contemplative life involves something of an alternation between purification and illumination."[44]

Union with God is the final stage and is difficult to put into words. It is more than an experience of union with God. In this stage our typical ways of interpreting reality are bypassed and established—to some degree, never fully—upon the unitive ontology of Creator and creation. We know God and are known by God is a totally unique way, and we live more deeply out of the more fundamental ontology of union. Heuertz described this unitive state, "When living in the unitive way, we are free to receive

[44] Bauerschmidt, *Mystic*, 18.

and give love. Our motivations are rooted in love rather than in ego-centered compulsions or 'programs of happiness.' The true self is alive and active."[45]

Practicing the Truth of the Divine Life

It has been said that contemplative practice leads to quietism and isolation, and it must be admitted that when contemplation is used—wrongly—to shield people from active engagement, then the criticisms are well-founded. However, Richard Foster, a spiritual writer and teacher, countered this criticism as he distinguished between Eastern religions and Christian meditation. He said, "Eastern meditation is an attempt to empty the mind; Christian meditation is an attempt to empty the mind in order to fill it."[46] The goal of Christian meditation is to empty the mind of false attachments and fill it with the mind of Christ. Foster pointed out that "contemplatives were men and women of action"[47] because the true spirituality of Christianity is incarnational. If it is an incarnational spirituality that releases us from a false self into our true self, then we are necessarily thrust into the world in a renewed engagement. An incarnational faith is always embodied, always enacting the divine life; if truly incarnational—and thus truly Christlike—faithful practice never leads to isolation or inertia. Heuertz connected action and contemplation this way: "True prayer connects us with the compassionate Christ who connects us to all humanity and inspires us toward compassionate service."[48]

On one level the contemplative response to pastoral dread is not as radical a response today as it might've been decades ago due to the popularity of mindfulness. Today mindfulness is discussed and practiced in schools, in the military, and in business settings to build resilience and face challenging contexts. It is understandable then that therapeutic modern mindfulness techniques might shape discussion about the classical contemplative traditions.

[45] Heuertz, *Pilgrimage*, 171.
[46] Richard Foster, *Celebration of Discipline: The Path to Spiritual Growth* (San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 1998), 20.
[47] Foster, *Celebration of Discipline,* 20.
[48] Heuertz, *Pilgrimage*, 137.

Consequently, some might view or engage contemplative spiritual practices as psychological soothing techniques shoring up ego strategies as the self engages the lived world two-dimensionally. However, the authentic lure of contemplative spiritual practices is to a lifetime of intentional dying to the temptation to relate to God on our terms, and posturing one's self to relate to God on God's terms.

James Finley, in *The Contemplative Heart*, said that even in a monastery, temptations abound for distraction in the "frenetic energy of rush hour traffic...with monks running around with a lot of keys...trying to get a lot of important things finished before Vespers."[49] Pastors often find themselves busy doing significant ecclesial things in service of others; however, many times this work is merely an unconscious attempt to assure a fragile ego that busyness is truly the work of God. However, Finley gently reminded us that "there is no ontology to rush hour, either in the cloister or out here 'in the world.' God never said, 'Let there be rush hour.'"[50] Contemplative spirituality is not a salve for weary worship leaders seeking to be effective, but an intentional embodied posture that exposes a more fundamental "dilemma of how difficult it is to live contemplatively."[51]

Choosing a contemplative response to pastoral dread can be daunting at first; choosing one form of prayer from the vast array of meditative styles can definitely seem complicated. However, contemporary contemplative practitioners like Thomas Keating and Phileena Heuertz offered a fairly straightforward way of entering the contemplative tradition through *centering prayer*.

Centering prayer is a practice that begins to teach practitioners to rest in the present moment and begin to move from an ego-centric experience to a deeper center which is one's union with the Triune God. I recommend that centering prayer, which is often a first step into the contemplative tradition, can be a benefit to pastors dealing with the intensification of pastoral dread. As I have

[49] James Finley, *The Contemplative Heart* (Notre Dame, IN: Sorin Books, 2000), 33.
[50] Finley, *Contemplative Heart*, 33.
[51] Finley, *Contemplative Heart, 34.*

argued earlier, pastoral anxiety emerges when one's rumination is centered on the possibilities of loss in future choices. Centering prayer begins to transform one's orientation from the future to the present moment. Moreover, centering prayer begins to allow practitioners to let go of ruminating thoughts and dwell, more or less, outside mental cognitions.

Thomas Keating described contemplative prayer as "the pure gift of God. It is the opening of mind and heart—our whole being—to God, the Ultimate Mystery, beyond thoughts, words, and emotions."[52] He went on to say that centering prayer is a practice that develops the spiritual "faculties to receive this gift"[53]—the gift of contemplative prayer. Centering prayer is not the whole of contemplative prayer but a way of training ourselves to receive the gift of communion with the Triune God.

Keating's model offered four steps of centering prayer. First, one picks a sacred word or image that represents the "consent to God's presence and action."[54] Second, sit comfortably with the body erect and eyes closed. In silence "introduce the sacred word as the symbol of your consent to God's presence and action within."[55] Third, when thoughts come into consciousness, use the sacred word to gently return to the practice of stillness and mental quiet. Keating considered thoughts to include: "body sensations, feelings, images, and reflections."[56] This gentle return to the intention of openness to God is the "only activity…during the time of Centering Prayer."[57] Finally, after at least twenty minutes in centering prayer, sit in silence for a few more minutes and "being to think…ordinary thoughts again."[58]

[52] Thomas Keating, *The Method of Centering Prayer: The Prayer of Consent* (Butler, NJ: Contemplative Outreach, Ltd., 2006), 1.
[53] Keating, *The Method of Centering Prayer,* 1.
[54] Keating, *The Method of Centering Prayer,* 2.
[55] Keating, *The Method of Centering Prayer,* 2.
[56] Keating, *The Method of Centering Prayer,* 2.
[57] Keating, *The Method of Centering Prayer,* 2.
[58] Keating, *Open Mind*, 37.

These are four simple steps of centering prayer as taught by Thomas Keating.[59] Others who teach centering prayer share the same basic framework of sitting with eyes closed for at least twenty minutes and using the sacred word when one becomes aware of thinking "thoughts" to return to the original intention of resting in the silence of the mind and open to God's presence.

Contemplation is a method of prayer where we no longer are the pray-ers. Rather, over time we become the object of prayer as the Spirit of God prays through us. When we practice contemplative prayer, we trust that God, our true center, is always with us and seeking to transform us. Therefore, we sit in silence and let go of each thought, a possible false attachment, as they spring up from our ego consciousness. As we develop this practice over time, we allow an openness to the work of the Spirit operating within our entire being without doing anything, without any effort on our part. The compulsion to perform withers. The need to be recognized lessens.

To dwell in our union with God is transformational, said Thomas Keating:

> Contemplative prayer is a process of interior transformation, a conversion initiated by God and leading, if we consent, to divine union. One's way of seeing reality changes in this process. A restructuring of consciousness takes place which empowers one to perceive, relate, and respond to everyday life with increasing sensitivity to the divine presence in, through and beyond everything that happens. …Contemplation is a fundamental constituent of human nature and hence available to every human being. It is accessed by letting go of our own idea of ourselves, turning our will

[59] The model is simple. However, there are numerous questions that can be asked about methodology and the practicalities of the practice. It is not my intention to address all of these questions. Rather, I would recommend Keating's *Open Mind, Open Heart* as the "textbook" on centering prayer that addresses many questions and concerns regarding this contemplative practice.

> over to God, and resting in the Divine Indwelling that is already present within us and waiting to reveal itself to us.[60]

I offer two cautions for pastors who might be interested in contemplative practices but who are not currently practicing. The first caution is the desire for individual effect. Many folks equate contemplative spirituality with sense-based mystical experiences (e.g., visions and voices; clarity and calm; sensing the presence of God). However, expecting particular outcomes is a fruit of our false self trying to control the process and projecting our expectations upon the work of the Spirit. One might not feel anything in centering prayer; typically, contemplation is rather boring. The fruit shows up in our daily lives, not in the time of prayer.

The second caution has to do with external effects. A pastor's decision to engage contemplative spirituality does not guarantee one develops a magnetic, inspirational personality to lead congregations through exilic times. Contemplative practices should never be used as the next new gimmick to jolt the church growth movement back to life. It is not a spiritual tool but a way of living more deeply in the divine life. Contemplative pastors are prepared day in and day out by sitting in attentive silence to be spokespersons (dare I say prophets) of courage: proclaiming meaning amid decline, decay, and death; proclaiming redemptive engagement; proclaiming judgment on systems that dehumanize.

Cynthia Bourgeault, my teacher at the Center for Action and Contemplation's Living School, would tell us the best way to start a contemplative practice is to "do the deal." One starts by starting. One simple approach to begin a centering prayer practice is to start a daily ten-minute practice. For beginners I recommend setting a quiet alarm on a phone or watch to sound off at three minutes, six minutes, and at the end of ten minutes. This prevents a common thought stream of wondering how much time has passed and is to come. In addition, along with the sacred word or symbol, the quiet alarm can gently bring us back to the present moment. After

[60] Keating, *Open Mind*, 1-2.

a few weeks of this ten-minute practice, move to a twenty-minute practice with the alarm set at five minutes, ten minutes, and fifteen minutes. Finally, after several weeks of this schedule, one could move to an entire twenty-minute practice with no intermediate alarms.

"Doing the deal" is not complicated. There isn't much "going on." And yet, it is the way to death: death to personal expectations of success, death to congregational/denominational expectations of effectiveness, and death to expectations that the Divine will give particular experiences. The good news is where there is death, resurrection is sure to come.

Contemplative practice does not relieve us of dread, but the practice retrains the self to rest in the present moment. It is in the present moment that we experience our truest self in its union with God, and in that holy union, the truth sets us free.

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Mestizo Leadership: Relational Cross-Cultural Leadership for the Borderlands

Martin Rodriguez

Abstract

As a continuation of a preceding article, this essay traces the theoretical origins of constructionist approaches to relational leadership, which understand leadership in terms of relational sense-making processes. Whereas the first essay outlined four categories of relational leadership practice or liderazgo mestizo, this essay explicitly ties the liderazgo mestizo framework to relational social constructionist leadership (RSCL) theory. Integrating Gloria Anzaldúa's borderlands theory and Mikhail Bakhtin's philosophy of dialogue offers a more dialogical vision that challenges notions of individualism, exceptionality, autonomy, monologue, and strategizing within popular contemporary conceptions of leadership.

The argument in this essay proceeds in four parts. In part one we engage the basic missiological assumption at the heart of liderazgo mestizo: that God is the primary agent of transformation. In response to the Spirit's initiatives in all our messy complexity, God's people together learn, dialogue, and experiment their way into relational-participation in the Spirit's work in their lives and neighborhoods. Drawing on Gloria Anzaldúa's borderlands theory I outline a borderland missiology that embraces the complexities of pluralism while foregrounding God's missional initiatives. In part two, the theoretical origins of liderazgo mestizo are traced to Mikhail Bakhtin's philosophy of dialogue in conjunction with constructionist theories of relational leadership as well as my own experiences as a pastor during a time of difficult change. Part three locates liderazgo mestizo as a missiological articulation of relational social constructionist leadership. Finally, part four highlights the

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reorientation that liderazgo mestizo offers to counter idealistic tendencies within relational social constructionist leadership discourse.

Part One: Toward A Borderland Missiology

Our neighborhood in Southern California seems to become more complex every month. Our neighbors to our left are Mika from Japan and Mark from La Verne, California. To the right, Wiep is from the Netherlands. Directly across the street from us lives Maria, a Filipina. Her two daughters are Filipino American. The street has nearly twenty households, fairly evenly divided between Latino families and Black families. Beyond this surface pluralism, the complexities multiply exponentially. My classrooms at Azusa Pacific University and my congregation in Hollywood are marked by the same growing diversity. I am Mexican American—born in California and raised in Puebla, Mexico. Like many of my neighbors, I have experienced my own cultural identity as fluid and in process, marked by plurality, and riven by difference.

We are what Gloria Anzaldúa (1987) calls borderlanders.[1] We experience ourselves, our relationships, families, churches, and neighborhoods, as borderlands—psychological and historical sites where diverse cultural narratives edge each other and occupy the same territory, continuously colliding and coalescing. For us the sophisticated stereotyping promoted in many cross-cultural leadership models are beginning to feel a bit like cassette tapes, sticky notes, and Gameboys in a world of Bluetooth, TikTok, and Nintendo Switch. Our visions of life together must make space for the borderlands not only because doing so increases the likelihood of really *seeing* our neighbors, but also because it is here, in these vulnerable and risky spaces in between, that we are often more awake to God's relational work in the world.

For Anzaldúa, the stories we embody, regardless of how messy and complex, continuously reshape our sense of self and our ways of relating in the world. As I described in the preceeding article,

[1] Gloria Anzaldúa and AnaLouise Keating, eds., *This Bridge We Call Home: Radical Visions for Transformation* (New York: Routledge, 2002).

Anzaldúa's constructionist understanding of identity formation prompted me to reimagine what intercultural togetherness entails. Her work inspired me to (re)envision culture as *webs of testimonios*—a metaphor alluding to the common practice in Latino churches of sharing first-person narratives during corporate worship. Culture, in this view, is likened to the aggregate testimonios of a congregation, testimonios that reflect a cacophony of imaginative structures and conceptual schemes that are continuously (re)constructed through ongoing interactions with others. This definition emphasizes the indefinable and unmanageable nature of a community's culture. (Defining and managing culture, I would note here, is a primary focus of many modern cross-cultural models of leadership.) Our attempts to manipulate change, manage narratives, and control of outcomes are negated in the borderlands.

A missiological framing of leadership at the heart of my proposals asserts that the communal work of discerning how to do life together involves attending to both the creative agency of our neighbors and the creative agency of God. Leadership, in this view, is about waking up not only to the indefinable and unmanageable complexities of our neighborhoods, but also to the unmappable complexities of the Holy Spirit's movements among us. In this borderland missiology, the Holy Spirit is the Borderlander Spirit who is always present and active on the ground in the local. The Borderlander Spirit is (1) the prime bridgebuilder always out ahead of her people pursuing redemptive, bridge-building relationships across the many borders that divide us and others, (2) the prime storyteller always immersed in our webs of testimonios inviting people into a larger story of redemption, (3) the prime advocate always attentive to the most vulnerable and seeking to disrupt abuses of power, (4) the prime catalyst always taking the initiative and always welcoming improvisational participation in her relational work of new creation. The Spirit's initiatives are the blueprint for *liderazgo mestizo* (mestizo leadership), the leadership framework that I introduced in part one of this article.

Liderazgo mestizo is about relational practices—practices for anyone in the community—that shape ways of life together that celebrate difference and are responsive to the relational initiatives of the Borderlander Spirit. The term relational here means more than an individual who likes people and thrives on relationships. A relational mode involves practices for leaning into the messiness and wonder of everyday embodied friendships with neighbors. Relational practices remind us that our webs of testimonios do not threaten visions life together but instead enrich our relational imaginations and thus promote ways of life together that pay attention to God's initiatives.

Liderazgo mestizo lays out four interrelated categories of leadership practices that cultivate friendships in the borderlands: bridge-building practices, storytelling practices, advocative practices, and catalytic practices. The primary goal of these practices is not transformation toward a new organizational culture or to more effective ministries. Neither is the goal more knowledge, more efficient communication, or more critical reflexivity, a more Christian imagination, or better leadership skills. These are often important outcomes, but they are secondary. They are by-products. No: The primary purpose of liderazgo mestizo practices is the *cultivation of relationships*—agency-affirming, difference-affirming relationships. The focus is relationships, not results. It is leadership that prioritizes loving God and loving neighbor.

Part Two: Relational Social Constructionist Leadership

Liderazgo mestizo (LM) is grounded in a constructionist theory of relational leadership. In this section, I trace two experiences that were the soil in which liderazgo mestizo took root: an encounter with the Mikhail Bakhtin's philosophy of dialogue and a conversation about gender roles in my home Churches of Christ congregation, where I serve as family life minister. I conclude this section by noting an important distinction between leadership theories that attend to relationships and relational social constructionist leadership (RSCL), which is the focus of this article.

Relational social constructionist leadership theory traces its origins to complexity theories of leadership, which emphasize the need for leaders and their organizations to grow in their capacity to respond to increasingly complex, uncertain, and unpredictable situations. Although complexity theories begin with the premise that no one person can address the challenges of leadership alone, constructionist scholars like Mary Uhl-Bien and Sonia Ospina have noted a tendency even within these theories to understand the leader primarily as a rational self-sufficient individual who can change situations by applying the appropriate leadership techniques, principles, and strategies.[2]

When framing a leadership model that centers on loving God and loving neighbor, the most helpful currents in recent leadership discourse relate to relational theories of leadership that proceed from the social constructionist premise that *wherever people are interacting, they are co-constructing realities*.[3] Social constructionism refers to a theory of knowledge in which all of our interactions in the world—all experiences and activities of everyday life, including all verbal and non-verbal ways we communicate—shape the *webs of testimonios* that shape our ways being in and making sense of the world.

My introduction to social constructionism was via Russian literary theorist Mikhail Bakhtin's (1895–1975) concept of hybridization and his views on the dialogic nature of language as it is performed: the view that "language lives only in the dialogic interaction of those who make use of it."[4] Our accounts of ourselves, of our neighbors, of God, of events, of context: none of these are required by the way the world is. They are relational constructions. "Truth," argued Bakhtin, "is not born nor is it found inside the

[2] See Mary Uhl-Bien and Russ Marion, "Complexity Leadership in Bureaucratic Forms of Organizing: A Meso Model," *The Leadership Quarterly* 20, no. 4, (2009): 631–50.

[3] Cf., Andrew Lock and Thomas Strong, *Social Constructionism: Sources and Stirrings in Theory and Practice* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 53–84, 141–69. Kenneth Gergen, *An Invitation to Social Construction* (London: Sage, 2015).

[4] Mikhail Bakhtin, *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics*, ed. Caryl Emerson (Manchester, UK: Manchester University Press, 1984), 183.

head of an individual person; it is born between people collectively searching for the truth, in the process of their dialogic interaction."[5]

At the time I was exploring Bakhtin's philosophy of dialogue, my church was beginning a conversation revisiting the role of women in leadership. My leadership team at the time was composed of seven men—three Mexican Americans, one Mexican immigrant, two Anglo Americans, and one Nigerian immigrant. A number of the younger families, mostly college-educated middle-class Anglo families, had requested (some in more forceful terms conveying "either this changes or we leave") that we begin moving toward more egalitarian practices. Even in our preliminary inquiries it was clear that the congregation had a tremendous diversity of opinion around this topic. Some were strongly opposed to anything less than full egalitarianism, and others were resistant to any change in this area. To complicate matters, it quickly became apparent that there were significant differences of opinion within the leadership team itself, differences attributable to more than ethno-cultural diversity. How could we guide the congregation toward a goal, one on which we ourselves could not agree?

At the time, our default leadership approach was to rely on our social capital and our power of persuasion to prepare well-researched scholarly expositions on controversial passages (e.g., 1 Corinthians 14:34-35 and 1 Timothy 2:11–15) followed by strategically led incremental changes in women's participation. From several interviews with leaders of sister congregations in other parts of Southern California, however, we knew that managerial, top-down approaches to this conversation were unlikely to elicit consensus, much less enhance relationships in our church. Those interviews reinforced the fact that we cannot force others to accept what we say, nor even control how others understand us.

We were also deeply concerned that this (mostly internal) conversation could drag our attention away from loving neighbors. Was there a way to engage this controversy that would actually cultivate our love for God and love for neighbor, we wondered? Was there a way to go about this conversation that could actually

[5] Bakhtin, *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics*, 110.

deepen our relational commitments and capacities? A way that would celebrate rather than stifle differences? A way that would honor the creative agency of others and create space for God to disrupt our agendas?

Anzaldúa had given me language to describe how my own cultural identity could be simultaneously the same but different. But could this *mestizo* dialectic be applied to the praxis of a faith community? It was at this point that Bakhtin's work began to tug at my imagination. At the center of Bakhtin's philosophy of dialogue is the notion of hybridization, which involves a simultaneous mixing and collision of two or more socio-linguistic consciousnesses. The implication is that differences and complexities, even profound differences, are not impurities to be overcome and expunged in order to vouchsafe dialogic democracy. Rather, it is precisely in the midst of all the complexities and messiness of everyday human life that dialogue happens. Language, argued Bakhtin, is always, *always,* value-laden and saturated with ideology. At the same time, dialogue is where possibility exists, for our language is continually re-accented through dialogical interactions.

Bakhtin's work points to the possibility of discursive processes that are both inclusive and relational. Yet, he was no romantic or lofty idealist. His philosophy remains critically aware of how "formalized" forms of communication can constrain possibilities for thought and action. Dialogue devolves into monologue, explains Bakhtin, when it becomes controlling, domineering, or manipulative; that is, when we begin talking past each other, ignoring or silencing alternate perspectives, or trying to impose our understanding on others. Bakhtin's sociolinguistic constructionism promotes discourse characterized by a dynamic unity that embraces differences even as it works toward participatory action. His constructionism prioritizes relationships—situated, agency-affirming, polyphonous relationships.

Our church-wide discernment process involved teams of congregants drafting experiments for further action-reflection. After two months of discernment and dialogue, one team proposed

an experiment centered on women leading prayers during corporate worship. During a leadership meeting later that week, Eno expressed his ardent disapproval and his profound discomfort at having women leading prayers. A transnational Nigerian immigrant, Eno is a tribal chief among the Oron people of southern Nigeria. Now in his eighties, Eno is the oldest member of our church leadership team. Eno was raised in a patriarchal culture. In fact, his father had multiple wives.

Eno's nonconsent so late in the game fed my own mounting frustration at the slow pace of the discernment process (that now felt like it was coming to a grinding halt). When I gave voice to my frustration at his filibustering, in a tone that would have surely been perceived as disrespectful among the Oron, Eno thought for a moment and replied in his rich Nigerian accent, "Martin, you and I do not agree on this, but you are still my brother, and I love you. If you decide to do this thing, I will be here. I am not going anywhere." Eno's response shifted the tone of the conversation that followed. His gentle reply in this particularly stressful moment of disagreement gave me a glimpse of what it looks like to foreground relationships over results.

Bakhtin's philosophy provides the groundwork for a paradigm of leadership that foregrounds relationship. Of course, all contemporary leadership theories attend to relationships in one way or another.

Transformational leadership theory, for instance, focuses on relationships and builds on the premise that the interaction between leader and follower transforms both. Thus, relationships are the currency by which those in authority (assigned or attributed) influence and inspire followers, cast compelling visions, and engender motivation to produce desired results.[6]

Leader-member exchange theory focuses on the exchange relationship between a leader and a member (follower), insisting that the quality of this relationship determines the effectiveness of leadership. Within leader-member exchange theory, relationships

[6] Bernard M. Bass and Ronald E Riggio, *Transformational Leadership* (Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, 2005).

ought to be marked by mutual individual benefits, since this enhances important organizational outcomes related, for instance, to motivation levels and organizational climate.[7]

Shared/distributed theories of leadership focus on the demands and dynamics associated with horizontal relationships of accountability. In shared/distributed theories, those in authority foster an organizational context that facilitates inclusive and collaborative leadership (e.g., flattened structures, decentralized decision-making, self-managed teams, etc.…).[8]

Servant leadership asserts that when leaders develop close relationships with followers, they begin to understand their individual abilities, needs, and goals. As leaders help followers achieve their potential, this in turn benefits the organization.[9]

These leadership theories all attend to relationships, yet each of these theories still to some extent envision leaders as managers of networks and relational mechanisms, and as users of linguistic routines and resources, or as facilitators of collaborative practices. In other words, even when relationships are center stage, the spotlight remains on the traits, practices, and processes of individuals who engage in interpersonal relationships to influence one another. With few exceptions, these interrelated assumptions and focal constructs have conditioned the empirical observations and explanations of today's dominant leadership models.

The dominant epistemologies in the West have tended to promote leader-centric paradigms that portray leaders as strong, directive, and charismatic initiators and/or heroic visionaries, who with their extraordinary skills are able to transform others and gather people to commit to follow their compelling visions and brilliantly conceived programmatic strategies. But, what if instead of building on atomistic worldviews that assume that people act as

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[7] George B. Graen and Mary Uhl-Bien, "Relationship-Based Approach to Leadership: Development of Leader-Member Exchange (LMX) Theory of Leadership Over 25 Years: Applying a Multi-Level Multi-Domain Perspective" *The Leadership Quarterly* 6, no. 2 (1995): 219–247. https://doi.org/10.1016/1048-9843(95)90036-5.

[8] Richard Thorpe, Jeff Gold, and John Lawler, "Locating Distributed Leadership*" International Journal of Management Reviews* 13, no. 3 (2011): 239–250.

[9] Robert Greenleaf, *Servant Leadership*, New York: Paulist, [1977] 1997.

self-contained individuals, our understanding of leadership were rooted in Bakhtin's relational view of personhood—the mutual and ongoing construction of self and other? What if instead of viewing reality as a singular fact of nature, our understanding of leadership embraced the borderlands—our ever-changing-contesting-coalescing webs of testimonios?

Part Three: *Liderazgo Mestizo* as Relational Social Constructionist Leadership

This section identifies key elements of a relational social constructionist approach to leadership and draws conceptual links to the liderazgo mestizo framework.[10] In what follows, I outline five ways that a Bakhtinian paradigm of relational leadership contrast with modernist (positivist) leadership paradigms that tend to build on Newtonian (people are complex machines that can be understood through empirical method), Cartesian (individual culture-free rationality is the foundation for all knowledge), and Lockian (our language is a mirror of the objective world) epistemic frameworks. Liderazgo mestizo and relational social constructionist leadership theory challenge narratives of individualism, exceptionality, autonomy, monologue, and strategizing within popular conceptions of leadership. I will show how diverse assumptions about the processes by which we come to question, to know, and to justify claims to reality result in very different conceptions of leadership. My goal in the discussion that follows is not so much to silence traditional approaches to leadership as to soften their certainties and perhaps create space in our imaginations for new conversations regarding the work and nature leadership.

[10] In outlining these five core elements, I draw gratefully on the work of Sigrid Endres and Jürgen Weibler, "Towards a Three-Component Model of Relational Social Constructionist Leadership: A Systematic Review and Critical Interpretive Synthesis: Relational Social Constructionist Leadership," *International Journal of Management Reviews* 19, no. 2 (2017): 214–236 who synthesize key themes within RSCL based on their analysis of forty-seven empirical studies that are grounded in a relational constructionist orientation.

Challenging Individualism of Leadership

When we're talking about leadership, we often imagine individuals in authority. We imagine organizational life and organizational transformation as the result of individual action or the cooperative effort of individuals. Either way, the focus remains on *individuals* (e.g., leaders and followers) understood as independent, relatively stable, self-contained entities who gather knowledge, create meaning, and influence others. This *entity* perspective is consistent with an epistemology of an objective truth and a clear separation between mind and nature (i.e., people and context).[11] Relational social constructionist leadership (RSCL) challenges individualistic accounts of leadership as it builds on a metatheory of knowledge wherein knowing is always a process of relating and relating entails ongoing processes of meaning-making. Both RSCL and LM affirm a shift in emphasis from leader to *leadership*—from leadership as related to formal positions belonging to one or a few individuals to leadership as social processes constructed through dialogical and relational practices within the organization.

Social constructionist approaches to relational leadership do not restrict leadership to hierarchical positions or roles. Instead, leadership is viewed as occurring in relational dynamics throughout the organization. Those of us in leadership positions often experience the urge/temptation, especially in the midst of crises and disorientation, to fall back on positional authority to influence change and project a sense of stable command. As the emotional temperature rose in the midst of our conversations about women's roles, for instance, our leadership team considered the benefits of shifting our titles from "spiritual leaders" and "servant leaders" (based on the model leadership described in 1 Corinthians 16:15-18) to the titles of "elders" and "deacons" (1 Timothy 3:1-13 and Titus 1:5-9), in part because we thought that these more broadly accepted and even venerated titles among Churches of Christ would lend us credibility and a greater degree of influence

[11] Mary Uhl-Bien, "Relational Leadership Theory: Exploring the Social Processes of Leadership and Organizing," *The Leadership Quarterly* 17 (2006): 654-676.

to guide community transformation. The hegemonic assumption undergirding this proposal was that leadership is equated with the command and control of a few individuals in formal positions of authority.

By reframing leadership as a relational process tied to dialogical practices, leadership is, in a sense, "distributed" among the members of an organization.[12] RSCL's inclusive or dispersed vision of leadership is incompatible with paternalistic hero-expert and managerial leadership paradigms that sharply distinguish leaders and followers. If we begin from the constructionist assumption that social reality lies in the context of relationships, then leadership must be understood as a relational property of a group. This view contrasts with individual *entity* perspectives where the emphasis is on the properties, behaviors, and interactions of individuals. Implied is a shift of focus toward collective processes.

My church leadership team is by no means free from individualist views of leadership, but we have begun to experiment with more participatory-dialogical forms of leadership by, among other things, promoting broadly inclusive learning communities who discern together through cycles of action and reflection.[13] Unsurprisingly, however, insecurities related to the disorientating changes of the coronavirus pandemic have tempted us to set aside more inclusive praxis-cycles. Our impulse over the last two years has been to consolidate decision-making, control information, and centralize power.

Whereas many leadership frameworks are oriented toward building the capacity and influence of individual leaders, both LM and RSCL promote practices oriented toward building a

[12] Dian Marie Hosking, "Moving Relationality: Meditations on a Relational Approach to Leadership" in *Sage Handbook of Leadership*, eds. Alan Bryman, David Collinson, Keith Grint, Brad Jackson, and Mary Uhl-Bien, 455–467 (Los Angeles, CA: Sage, 2011): 456.

[13] Our learning communities draw on a practical theology method adapted from Mark Lau Branson and Juan F. Martínez in *Churches, Cultures and Leadership: A Practical Theology of Congregations and Ethnicities,* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 2011), 42f. See also: Mark Lau Branson and Alan J. Roxburgh, *Leadership, God's Agency, and Disruptions: Confronting Modernity's Wager* (Eugene, OR: Cascade Books, 2020), 28; also 106-12; 134-6.

community's collective capacity for leadership. For my leadership team, this involves asking how our discernment processes (including women's roles) are helping the whole church to grow in relational capacity—in love for God and love for neighbor.

Challenging the Exceptionality of Leadership

Relational social constructionist leadership challenges the exceptionality of leadership. In Western contexts, talk about leadership often assumes a highly capable and/or charismatic individual who knows how to influence and inspire others toward organizational ends. In contrast, liderazgo mestizo and RSCL intentionally shift the emphasis from the unique skills, capacities, or attributes of a few exceptional individuals to the relational dynamics of collective leadership practices.

At one time or another, most leaders have experienced how an energetic group discussion or brainstorming session ground to a screeching halt the moment the leader shared her perspective. The room falls silent because "the expert" has shared her opinion on a question. The leader's answer now becomes *the* answer. All others are as if forgotten.

Pastor Pablo, a Mexican American, inherited the role of head pastor of a large bilingual congregation when his father, an immigrant from Mexico and the founder of the congregation, retired after forty-seven years of ministry. Though he's been in the head pastor for ten years now, Pablo describes his discomfort with the level of esteem accorded to him by first-generation immigrants from Latin America.

He recounts how he recently mediated a dispute between two women at church, in which a Salvadorean woman had asked a girl from the youth group to help her clean the church building without first seeking permission from the girl's Mexican mother. The exchanges that followed this cultural misunderstanding left both women feeling hurt and offended. They immediately turned to Pablo for mediation. "What I found in my [time as head pastor] is there's a huge respect for my role and who I am… and in many cases, I think almost too much respect that…that they don't work things out amongst themselves [*sic*]." For many of his congregants,

Pablo is the expert when it comes to understanding cross-cultural dynamics or determining the biblical response. For some of us, this kind of power and prestige can be heady and intoxicating, especially for leaders (like myself) whose self-worth often is tied to the admiration and dependence accorded to us by those we lead.

Pastor Mateo is another example of a pastor who is aware of patterns of *caudillismo* in many Latino congregations. He explains that the most life-giving memories in his tenure have been "when people take initiative…whether it be in their ministry or a project or an idea or a dream—when they're able to exert their own gifts and their own personality in a way in which they're agents [*sic*]." Liderazgo mestizo's intentional focus on leadership practices—that is, purposive spheres of activities that shape dialogical learning environments for discerning-action and for enhancing missional capacity—counteracts the strong tendency in some western leadership paradigms to foreground the agency of the leader by, among other things, attributing the success or failure of an organization to a few "gifted" individuals.

Challenging the Autonomy of Leadership

In discussions about leadership, we often imagine a person who stands apart from the crowd, influencing others from a position of hierarchical authority. Individualistic accounts of leadership understand the individual as a self-determined entity clearly demarcated from her/his environment. Both RSCL and LM, however, embrace a dialogic view of people, understanding the *self* as a relational construct made in relational processes. "I cannot do without the other," describes Bakhtin. "I cannot become myself without the other; I must find myself in the other, finding the other in me."[14] If we begin with the premise that we gain a self *through interactions and conversations with others*, then leadership itself becomes a relational construction manifest in relationship.

The way we tell our leadership stories is often revealing in this regard. For instance, when I asked one Latinx pastor, who has led a large multicultural church for over fifty years, to recall a high

[14] Bakhtin, *Dialogic Imagination*, 185.

point in his leadership, he told the story of a self-made visionary and an exceptionally gifted leader who within a matter of months had transformed a small, sleepy immigrant church of sixty people to a church of over three hundred. And how that remarkable growth continued for three decades, so that today, his church is among the largest bilingual congregations in North America. But as his story unfolded, I found myself growing more skeptical. The pastor seemed to connect every success to his own remarkable foresight, clever decision-making, and well-executed initiatives. When I asked him to tell me a story about a leadership situation in which cultural diversity was a key matter, he related how, all on his own, he pioneered the concept of a bicultural Hispanic church: "I arrived very early on in my pastorate at the idea of having a church that had both cultures and both languages at the same time there [*sic*]. Now obviously that wasn't easy, because I had to decide how am I going to do that." In well-rehearsed detail, this pastor told of how (apparently completely unaided) he identified and responded to the challenges of developing and overseeing a fully bilingual congregation. Though I scoffed inwardly, I recognize that I am not immune to imagining myself as the hero of my own stories. In many of the leadership stories I've told, I've placed myself at the center of the action, a key influencer toward positive outcomes.

Relational social constructionist leadership theory deconstructs such stories of leadership, stories in which influence moves almost exclusively in one direction with a heroic and unaffected leader shaping their world. Liderazgo mestizo's relational approach is completely at odds with leadership models that centralize power and control outcomes through domination, which involves engaging others as objects to be manipulated and managed rather than as dialogical agents-in-relationship. Even apparently innocuous leadership paradigms that focus, for instance, on individuals with exceptional skills for developing relationships or on strategies for building rapport between leaders and followers may unintentionally promote relationally distorted conceptions of leadership. Autonomous leaders can easily become dominating leaders.

Challenging the Monologue of Leadership

Popular leadership models often encourage us to think of leaders as culture creators, interpreters of reality, meaning-makers, bridge builders, or catalysts. The problem is that such models have, historically speaking, often struggled to keep the agency of organizational members in the purview, and consequently, have struggled to create space for lasting diversity. Even seemingly innocuous approaches to leadership may unintentionally promote monological tendencies—acting as if one can speak for others, managing meanings in ways that silence alternate narratives, or aligning others with a vision in ways that ignore their creative agency. These monological approaches open the door for patterns of life together marked by hegemony and homogeneity.

Liderazgo mestizo moves in a very different direction, as its emphasis is on "relationally-responsive dialogical practices."[15] Constructionists argue that we exist in mutual relationship with others through *dialogue*, and that our relationships shape us even as we, again, through *dialogue*, (re)shape these same relationships. This calls for a shift in our imaginations regarding the nature and purpose of dialogue. To begin, dialogic ways of interacting suggest that we do not talk *about* something *to* others. Instead, we work *with* them relationally in shaping together a sense of what may be happening and what *we* need to do. Dialogue, therefore, is not about convincing or managing others. That's monologue. Nor is dialogue a skill or tool to be harnessed toward organizational ends. Rather, dialogue is the soil of real relationship, agency-affirming, difference-affirming relationship with others. Hence, leadership practices that figure prominently in LM—like asking questions, listening relationally, storytelling, and reflecting on stories as a group—are oriented toward fostering friendships. These friendships are generative relational spaces in which we learn attentiveness and responsiveness to the agency of others (including God), and this necessarily involves processes of action and reflection (whether we

[15] Ann Cunliffe and Matthew Eriksen, "Relational Leadership," *Human Relations* 64, no. 11, (2011): 1425.

call it this or not). Again, it's about loving God and loving others.

Pastor José's story paints an exemplary picture of this relational/dialogical approach. Language barriers represent a significant challenge in his congregation's weekly leadership meetings. José implemented these meetings as part of his systemic changes aimed at fostering healthier systems of communication in the congregation. These culturally and linguistically diverse gatherings involve over two dozen church staff and ministers, and the issue of power imbalances often tied to linguistic capacity has a profound effect on the ability to develop a sense of ownership and belonging, especially among Spanish-dominant leaders who in the past usually remained silent in meetings.

José, who grew up in a bilingual home but does not speak Spanish fluently, introduced the practice of using his broken Spanish during a portion of every meeting. "We'll sing a song that maybe has verses that can be sung in English and in Spanish. We make sure that both cultures feel appreciated and affirmed. The fact that I'm risking ridicule to go up there and work my way through Spanish—butcher[ing] the language sometimes—they love it. Because our Spanish speakers know what it's like to learn English and also risk ridicule." José's intentional practice of risking ridicule for the sake of relationship creates space for more marginal voices on his team. When leadership is reframed in terms of organizational members-in-relationship actively co-creating meaning together, this keeps the agency and differences of others front and center.

Challenging the Strategizing of Leadership

In Western discussions of leadership, we often imagine leaders to be visionaries who draw on their unique insights and expertise to anticipate challenges and strategize solutions. Leadership in this view often centers on creating alignment around a set of predetermined outcomes. By contrast, in RSCL and LM the emphasis is on habits and dynamics of everyday work rather than strategically and rationally planned action. This emphasis becomes especially important (and difficult) in situations of unpredictable change.

The university where I teach is currently facing severe financial crises tied to dramatic drops in student enrollment, among a host of other factors. Although these financial challenges are raising questions about our core identity and purpose as an institution, most faculty meetings, hallway conversations, and administrative missives have revolved around two themes: the need for more effective senior leadership and the new comprehensive Strategic Plan spearheaded by the president and the provost.

Consider your organization's response to the COVID-19 pandemic. In the mess, we fixate on the need for effective leaders with effective strategies, and leadership becomes about mapping solutions and managing outcomes. Since our congregation began its discernment process on women's roles, I have had three congregants request (in anxious desperation in one case) that the leaders, "Please, just make a decision and then tell us what to believe. Tell us what to do." This strategizing of leadership cannot simply be chalked up to an issue of narcissistic, overconfident, and/or pushy leaders. Often organizational members expect, even insist, that leaders be expert strategists.

Liderazgo mestizo begins with the conviction that no matter how clever and well-informed leaders might be, we cannot strategize our way through the borderlands. I have found that in inclusive discernment processes, initial conversations often involve a growing awareness in the church that the question is not, in fact, simple, though it may appear so on the outside, especially to those of the dominant culture, whose values and preferences have tended to be the standard for the whole community. For instance, in my congregation, the dominant group—predominantly white, college-educated, middle-class, married people—took it as a foregone conclusion that the church was going to move toward egalitarianism, which meant that for them, the question was not about destination but about strategy: not *where* are we headed but *how* are we going to get there. Our knee-jerk response to messy problems is to simplify the problem to strategize solutions, which often involves silencing alternative narratives.

Discernment questions become infinitely more complex when we proceed relationally, that is, when we are attentive and responsive

to the creative agency and differences of others. The borderlands raise awareness of the vast webs of testimonios that shape not only people's preferred visions of the future but also the kind of strategies and processes people prefer to adopt to undertake the discernment. When it came to the question of women's roles in my congregation, it took a considerable amount of time simply to agree on what the question actually was—so, what *exactly* are we talking about when we say we want to have a conversation about women's roles? What's more, consider that there are also borderlands *within*. The contested identities of borderlanders means that people like myself often grapple with contrasting and fluctuating narratives about gender even within our own imaginations.

Ann Cunliffe and Matthew Erikson astutely point out that although complexity theories—and the theories built upon them—"may offer a way of reflecting on practice, they do not necessarily help leaders to grapple with the complexities *within experience.*"[16] Many of today's leadership models ultimately fail to account for the messiness within borderlands and among borderlanders, that is, for the irreducible complexities of real people in real relationships in real contexts.

Our contexts and organizational challenges are not only far too complex and unpredictable to rely on plans, strategies, or vision statements: the irreducible complexity of embodied relationships calls for a relational approach. Agency-affirming, difference-affirming relationships (with God and neighbor) involve continuous improvisation, experimentation, and reflection, a tolerance for ambiguity and mystery, and a commitment to ongoing corporate and individual learning.[17] This is what friends do.

[16] Cunliffe and Eriksen, "Relational Leadership," 1427.
[17] Ingalill Holmberg and Mats Tyrstrup, "Well Then—What Now? An Everyday Approach to Managerial Leadership," *Leadership* 6, no. 4 (2010): 353–372; Hosking, "Moving Relationally," 462; Endres and Weibler, "Towards a Three-Component Model," 223.

Part Four: Reaccenting Relational Leadership Considering Liderazgo Mestizo

There are four important ways that liderazgo mestizo reaccents and enhances relational social constructionist leadership discourse: by attending to power asymmetries, pluralism, embodied practices, and God's agency.

Attending to Power

At times constructionist approaches to relational leadership verge on a romantic view of human interaction, imagining a picture of organizational life generally free of conflicts of interest and of asymmetrical power dynamics. Yet, as Alvesson and Sveningsson point out in their important critique of RSCL theories, organizations are not only harmonious places where "people support, facilitate, share, and collaborate for the common goal. …People typically need to do some fighting to get voice and responsiveness, and if and when there is a more or less collectively supported choice of direction, then the compliance may not be a matter solely of shared meanings but also of the exercise of power."[18]

Even well-intentioned communities committed to egalitarian systems are not immune to patterns of caudillismo, patriarchy, ethnocentrism, and other unrelational uses of power. Even the humblest pastors are not immune to using their influence and positional authority to dominate. In my congregation, where our discernment process has led to significant steps toward more egalitarian practices, I lament unintended consequences such as several black families deciding to leave for more conservative congregations that resemble the patriarchal liturgies with which they grew up. It's hard not to notice how power dynamics in the congregation seem to reflect broader gentrification trends in our neighborhood into which Anglo, middle-class, educated families are moving, pushing out working-class people of color. Liderazgo mestizo acknowledges that what feels like dialogue to one person

[18] Mats Alvesson and Stefan Sveningsson, "Dialogue: A Dialogue on Theorizing Relational Leadership," in *Advancing Relational Leadership Research: A Dialogue among Perspectives,* eds. Mary Uhl-Bien and Sonia Ospina, 227–54 (Charlotte, NC: Information Age Pub., 2012).

may feel like an onboarding process to another—this was a term used in a one-on-one reflection with a black member of the congregation.

When it comes to acknowledging power dynamics, liderazgo mestizo represents a helpful reaccenting of certain romantic tendencies in RSCL scholarship, perhaps because it's a framework that emerges from the narratives of pastors who describe their own churches and neighborhoods as places of struggle. Whose *testimonio* will shape praxis? Whose narrative will hold sway over policy and practice? Whose story will be ignored, silenced, or refuted?

The constant power struggles in contexts of pluralism are especially clear in the stories of the *pastoras* I interviewed. They each describe at least one personal experience of being silenced or censored. When Pastora Adriana was hired as an associate pastor, a number of people objected and left the church. Pastora Isabel describes how for many years patriarchal narratives stifled her own sense of agency. She explains that it took her years to recognize her own gift and passion for leadership, let alone practice it confidently. Said Isabel, "when you don't see models who are female pastoras, then you can't be what you can't see."

Within the liderazgo mestizo framework, *advocative leadership practices* explicitly draw attention to dynamics of power at work when people of diverse narratives encounter each other. The assumption that undergirds these leadership practices is that there are tendencies toward monologue in all our interactions. Liderazgo mestizo responds to these unrelational uses of power by shaping noncoercive learning environments where people can grow in their capacity to recognize and participate in the Spirit's loving resistance to hegemonic and homogenizing tendencies.

Attending to Difference

The second way in which liderazgo mestizo reaccents relational social constructionist leadership relates to attending to pluralism. Though borderlands pervade organizations in multicultural contexts, RSCL theories rarely directly address the challenges of pluralism wrought by globalization. While RSCL usually does a great job of foregrounding individual/group agency, it often winks at real lasting

diversity—the way that constructing meaning is always marked by a multitude and variety of shifting incommensurate meanings. Relational social constructionist leadership theory's somewhat romantic vision of mostly harmonious co-constructions—of people coming together to create a shared story—underestimates the contested nature of shaping shared meanings. In response to this homogenizing tendency, LM represents a helpful reaccenting of RSCL because it is rooted in the stories of pastores and pastoras who serve in contexts of profound diversity. What's more, Anzaldúa's concept of mestizaje serves as a constant reminder that the differences are not only between subjects but also within them.

As my own congregation continues to experiment with more dialogical and relational forms of leadership, we've become more aware than ever of the profound differences among us. In a sense, it feels like our work to construct shared stories has actually drawn attention to a greater number of incommensurate stories.

We lean into the borderlands only to discover a whole host of borders we never knew were there. The differences are uncomfortable, and, as Pastora Isabel puts it, the temptation is to "melt the differences away." Instead, LM engages differences with dialogical friendship. To do so, LM foregrounds the relational initiatives of the Borderlander Spirit who enables coalescence while at the same time creating space for ongoing contestation.

Attending to Concrete Practices

Relational Social Constructionist Leadership discourse has at times portrayed relationships in an abstract, theoretical, and philosophical way, neglecting discussion of real on-the-ground relationships expressed in embodied practices. Each of the pastor's narratives illustrates relationships as embodied in concrete practices like sharing meals in homes, showing up for important moments of celebration and grief, creating opportunities to talk openly and honestly, and asking hard questions.

Within the *storytelling leadership practices* category, friendship is about recounting personal narratives and laughing together, practices that not only grow love for God and love for neighbor but also deepen awareness of our situatedness. Within the *advocative*

leadership practices category, friendship is about solidarity with those who suffer under oppressive uses of power and willingness to step out of comfort zones, to risk ridicule or loss, and to give up control over outcomes in order to promote the voices of others. Within the frame of *catalytic leadership practices*, friendship involves listening to others and learning together through joint experimentation, even when things go sideways. Within the LM framework, relational leadership practices do not lend themselves to abstraction.

Attending to God's Agency

The fourth way that liderazgo mestizo helps reaccent relational social constructionist leadership is by attending to God's agency. Amid the complexity and unpredictability of real relationships and real dialogue, proponents of RSCL call practitioners to embrace the uncontrollable nature and the messiness of real relationships among other things by foregoing strategic plans and managerial approaches that privilege the agency of a few individuals (leaders) and obscure the agency of others (followers). Interestingly, RSCL frameworks speak often of "trusting the process" or of trusting the creative potential of organizational members (who often disagree!). But such policies often leave readers wondering, "*What* exactly am I supposed to trust in the chaos?" In a missiological framing of relational leadership, our answer is robust: we trust that the Borderlander Spirit is present and active in the borderlands. This is where LM moves beyond where secular organizational theories can go.[19]

In their essay "A Tale of Two Perspectives," Kennedy, et al. present two hypothetical case studies set in the context of a weekend leadership development program in order to highlight the tensions that arise from differing paradigmatic views—constructionist approaches versus entity (positivist) approaches. The characters "Rachel" and "Meg" describe the assumptions and conflicts that arise from their differing conceptions of leadership. Meg, the constructionist scholar, focuses on engaging with participants in the moment, using metaphor, imagery, and symbols

[19] In RSCL scholarship, Hosking's discussion of divinity is a conspicuous exception to this rule; Hosking, "Moving Relationality," 460.

to cultivate generative spaces for collective learning in the face of unpredictability. Reflecting on Meg's experience, the authors note how, "not knowing how a group would work with concepts, [Meg] would have to trust in what happened in the moment as context, participants, facilitation, words, and images came together. She had learned to trust that whatever happened would provide more than enough depth and richness to work with."[20]

Stepping into the Borderlands with relational dialogue can be disorienting and uncomfortable. Dialogical approaches to leadership generate anxiety as we choose not to manage outcomes, choose to create space for the agency and differences of others, and become more aware that others hear and see things differently. Our impulse is to respond to the disorientation with managerialism (predict, command, and control). Liderazgo mestizo invites us to remember (and trust) that the Borderlander Spirit is present and working in these messy and contested spaces, the borderlands within people and the borderlands within communities.

Concluding Thoughts

Complex and messy borderlands invite a missiological reimagining of the nature and purpose of leadership. My hope is that in problematizing dominant Western leadership approaches that build on Newtonian, Cartesian, and Lockian conceptions of knowledge, liderazgo mestizo might create space for new imagination regarding ways of doing life together in contexts of pluralism. Leadership moves in a quite different direction when we understand it as iterative relational processes of social construction by which our stories (webs of testimonios) are constructed and changed. Perhaps the philosophical and praxiological distinctions outlined above will promote ongoing discernment regarding our approaches to leadership. Such discernment is needed lest we forget: (1) that people should never be understood in isolation from the

[20] Fiona Kennedy, Brigid Carroll, Joline Francoeur, and Brad Jackson, "A Tale of Two Perspectives: An Account of Entity and Social Constructionist Approaches to 'Conflict,'" in *Leadership Development in Advancing Relational Leadership Research: A Dialogue among Perspectives*, eds. Mary Uhl-Bien and Sonia M. Ospina (Charlotte, NC: Information Age Publishing, 2012), 184.

complex and contested discourses, situations, and relationships that shape their webs of testimonios*;* (2) that people-in-relationship are never passive recipients but agents with creative and relational capacity; (3) that attempts to control meaning-making can devolve into hegemonic and homogenizing systems and practices; and (4) that hope for transformation ultimately lies in the relational initiatives of the Borderlander Spirit. The borderlands remind us to foreground relationships. These contested and inconstant spaces between invite a relational reimagining of leadership grounded in love for God and love for others (Mark 12:30-31).

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Book Review

Ten Commandments for Church Reform: Memoirs of a Catholic Priest
By: John Wijnaards
Lafayette, Louisiana: Acadian House Publishing, 2021
261 pp. hardback
ISBN 978-1-7352-6415-8

When Martin Luther called for reform, he posted 95 theses on the door of a Catholic Church in Germany. Like him, John Wijngaards was an ordained priest. Unlike Luther, Wijngaards taught for over 35 years in seminaries, served as the Vicar General of his religious order, and earned a doctorate at the Gregorian in Rome. Both valued the Roman Catholic tradition enough to call for reformation. Both endured persecution for their efforts. Luther led a reformation that resulted in multiple Christian believers forming their own ecclesial traditions. Wijngaards remains hopeful that his efforts will impact the policies and laws of the Roman Catholic Church.

Using a narrative style, Wijngaards reflects on his life of priestly service to illuminate issues that require attention. As a thoroughly educated Scripture scholar, he also demonstrates deep theological understanding. He describes his efforts as a young man and his entry into ordained priesthood as a Roman Catholic assigned to missionary work in India. He articulates his journey as an educator, leader in his religious community, and as a man who wrestles with application of Church teaching and law in concrete pastoral circumstances. This process reveals his grounded call for reform in the Church.

At times, the text reads more like a self-congratulatory who's who in theological circles. Wijngaards documents incredible energy and effort at including many in the educational efforts he tirelessly supervises. Indeed, at times the reader can wonder incredulously

at his ability to network with multiple people toward reaching an ever-expanding circle of influence. He describes utilizing scholarship, cartoons, videos, still photos, power point slides, and eventually the internet in his tireless effort to make Church teaching and Scripture available to all. This work necessarily expanded his interactions with vowed religious women and men, ordained priests and bishops, and people of influence in India, England, the Netherlands and Rome. As a missionary, Wijngaards maintained a tireless dedication to spreading the word of God to everyone he could imagine. As a leader he models energy, vision, ability to network, and deep regard for the people he serves.

Throughout the memoir, Wijngaards reflects on his learning. These reflexive moments reveal insight about what the church needs to do to reform itself. Thus, the ten commandments of reform. Of course, the promotions for the book list a couple of the more obvious- like expanding ordained leadership to include women and married men. These two require a re-thinking of the theologies related to understanding sexuality, especially the theology advanced by Augustine of Hippo and others. Wijngaards also argues for opening the closed doors of the Vatican theologies to those who might think differently. He discusses thoroughly the process of more conservative theologians who shut down discussion of alternative theological viewpoints. These points are thoroughly rooted in his own experience in India. He brings a deep pastoral awareness of the people of God and lobbies for ordained ministers to listen to the laity as ordained and lay together form the church.

As a pastoral theologian, I found myself agreeing with the reforms Wijngaards names. As a lay woman I appreciated Wijngaards deep allied behavior as he names reforms and complies himself with those reforms he champions. This text answers questions I was asking as I interacted with his amazing store of online materials at https:/womanpriests.org. I have used the website for my own research and have wondered how this man attracted so many assistants, compiled so many resources, and dared to stand in solid opposition to the teaching of the Roman Catholic Church on women in ordained ministries. This book answers all the questions and also documents a powerful life story that inspires solidarity.

The reforms are on target. At a time when the Roman church is entering a synodal process of listening, Wijngaards text offers a list that every Catholic could take to their local process. Wijngaards names ten reforms that would move the Roman Catholic Church to more fully live into the vision proposed by the 2500 bishops and others who approved the documents of the Second Vatican Council.

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Book Review

Sustaining Grace: Innovative Ecosystems for New Faith Communities

By: Scott J. Hagley, Karen Rohrer, and Michael Gehrling, editors.
Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2020
136 pp. paperback
ISBN 978-1-5326-8759-4

In 2012, the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church (USA) created the 1001 New Worshiping Communities initiative, the goal of which was to develop . . . well, I guess its name makes that clear. Since that time, over 600 new worshiping communities have been launched. In the forward to Sustaining Grace, Nikki Collins, Coordinator of 1001, mentions the longitudinal studies into these communities that are taking place, as well as specific research into their sustainability. Some common themes have been identified in successful communities, but "a perfect formula for success" (xii) has not been identified.

Sustaining Grace includes contributions from "theologians, church planters, seminary faculty, presbytery leaders, and innovative pastors" (xii), all of which pertain to the topic of sustainability in faith communities. As a candidate for ordination in PCUSA with a call to form a new worshiping community, I ordered a copy shortly after learning of the book's existence. The timing of its publication was fortunate, as the urgency of sustainability has increased during the COVID-19 pandemic.

The book includes eleven essays across three sections, which include "Sustainable Ecologies for New Church Development," "Cultivating Care," and "Leadership Development in a Sustainable Church Ecology." Scott J. Hagley's essay, "Sustaining Grace," introduces the topic of worship community leaders who are willing to shed "comfortable religious structures and forms" while meeting in "living rooms, pubs, and elementary school gymnasiums" (2-3).

He shares this thesis: "American Mainline denominational systems need pioneering, adaptive leaders to experiment with new forms of Christian community, to dream a new shape for Christianity identity in our present context. So also, pioneering adaptive leaders need mainline denominational systems to provide the support that might make their work sustainable over the long haul" (3). The other contributors share this belief in interdependence between existing congregations and new worshiping communities; both types of entities are needed for the long-term viability of the denomination. Existing structures provide a foundation and support mechanism. New communities offer a way forward that is not fueled by nostalgia or dependent on a "return to some era of hegemony" (5).

In "A Small Shift toward Sharing All Things in Common," Karen Rohrer wonders if the story of Ananias and Sapphira is sometimes mirrored by the idolatry of the local congregation, in which "we are living as if the broader church ecosystem exists to serve each plant, rather than each plant serving the health of the larger church ecosystem" (24). At the same time, she states that "no communities should be instrumentalized or viewed as disposable [since] health must be understood ecosystem wide" (29).

In "Sustainability in God's Good Order," Barry Ensign-George considers New Worshiping Communities (NWCs) from a lifecycle perspective, understanding that some "may in fact discern that [they were] of a particular moment" (39). Nonetheless, he points out the advantage that they have from a structural standpoint, "deeply rooted in the Presbyterian ways of living out faith" (44).

Michael Gehrling stresses the importance of "truth-telling" (61) and spiritual practices in "Sustainable Churches Have Discipled Leaders." This helps lead to "a whole community of siblings able and willing to provide a sacramental experience of Christ's authority" (64). Aisha Brooks-Lytle wants readers to "be open to the imaginative ways we can communicate with God as we connect with one another" (78) in "The Stewardship of Prayer and Play." In "Learning to Listen," Kristine Stache discusses the unique calling of each worshiping community, how its mission extends beyond its walls, and ultimately how "it is about what God is doing in and

through us communally" (90). David Loleng tackles the topic of generosity, and how focusing on the disciplines of simplicity and margin help us "make space for the other, for God and for God's kingdom purposes." (96).

In "Democratizing Church Planting," Michael Moynagh speaks of how "the Spirit is unleashing a twenty-first century way of following Jesus" (105), and how that can involve seeing "new worshipping communities as little planets around a 'sun' congregation" (110). Beth Scibienski articulates a sentiment that often presents itself when discussion of an NWC is introduced to a presbytery: "Innovation in any form calls into question the way we have done it in the past, and if we are calling the past into question, we cannot humanly help but take the question personally" (117). Jeya So writes about the contributions third-culture leaders bring to NWCs, which includes understanding "what it means to be a part of different cultures simultaneously and [how] to navigate fluidly from one to another" (122).

Anyone interested in the topic of worshiping community sustainability should find value in Sustaining Grace, especially considering the range of voices and perspectives offered by its contributors. It is a worthwhile complement to other 1001 New Worshiping Communities resources, which can be found at https://www.newchurchnewway.org. Whether you are familiar with 1001 or simply interested in learning about a sustainable future for faith communities, this book is worthy of consideration.

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Book Review

The Art and Science of Leadership (7th Edition)
By: Afsaneh Nahavandi
Boston: Pearson, 2015
393 pp. paperback
ISBN: 978-0-1335-4676-7

The book The Art and Science of Leadership (7th) is a researched based review of the history of leadership as an academic field and a description of current theory and practice. It contains ten chapters divided into three parts. Part 1 (Building Blocks) includes chapters 1-5. These chapters cover the definition of leadership; leadership in a global, multicultural context; the history of leadership theory and thinking; individual differences and traits of leaders; and the use of power by leaders. Part 2 (Contemporary Concepts, chapters 6 and 7) discusses current ideas in the field, including charismatic, transformational, and value-based leadership. It also reviews the distinction between micro and upper echelon strategic leaders, and the unique ways leadership is practiced in non-profit organizations. Part 3 (Leading, chapters 8-10) focuses on leading teams, leading change, and developing leaders.

Dr. Nahavandi acknowledges that there are many definitions of leadership, but states that there are four "common elements" in most of them. Leadership (a) is a group and social phenomenon, (b) involves interpersonal influence or persuasion, (c) is goal directed and action oriented, and (d) assumes some form of hierarchy within a group (3). Her own definition of a leader is: "any person who influences individuals and groups within an organization, helps them establish goals, and guides them toward achievement of those goals, thereby allowing them to be effective" (3). This definition accords with the idea that leadership is the same no matter the motivation or goals of the leader or group. Thus, Adolf Hitler or Joseph Stalin would fit this definition as well as Nelson Mandela or

Abraham Lincoln. Those who espouse value-based approaches to leadership might disagree. (So, the debate about defining leadership continues).

A key concept that permeates Dr. Nahavandi's thinking about leadership is the idea that leadership can be taught to almost anyone; one is not born a leader but learns to be one. Thus, the practice of leadership is not limited to a few gifted persons. In any organization leaders can be developed through an intentional process. This connects well with her focus on shared leadership in teams or groups, which, as she documents, is a very popular concept in the field of leadership today.

The Art and Science of Leadership is very well written. The author is very adept at writing in a clear, understandable, and well-organized manner. Terms are clearly defined and illustrated. Many stories and examples from real life leadership contexts help to make clear the ideas and concepts that are discussed in the book. Also, many chapters include a discussion of how leadership concepts and practices are implemented in various cultural contexts. For example, Dr. Nahavandi indicates that the use of direct evaluative feedback from followers to positional leaders as part of a leader development process is often very effective in places like the United States or certain European countries. This approach might be ineffective or even counterproductive in some cultural contexts in Asia or the Middle East. Thus, a leader must be aware of these dynamics and find culturally appropriate ways to provide feedback. Things get more complicated when the leader is serving a multicultural team or organization.

Another aspect of the book that is very beneficial is that it recognizes that there is not a single theory, approach, or way of practicing leadership that is effective in all situations or contexts. The author often integrates several theories or ideas when explaining how a leader ought to address various situations or circumstances. This broad synthesis of ideas and practices is very helpful.

Another strength of the book is that pertinent discussion questions, exercises that involve the content, and self-assessment instruments conclude each of the ten chapters. These interactive prompts make the work very practical and assist the reader in

integrating that content into their personal practice of leadership. There are also many useful figures and tables that clearly capture the essence of the various ideas, concepts, theories, etc.

One of the few limitations of the book, especially in religious leadership contexts, is that most of the stories and illustrations are from the business world. To include examples from other types of organizations would broaden its scope. Also, there could be more in the book about the role of leaders in conflict resolution.

The Art and Science of Leadership is an excellent book for use in seminary leadership classes. And anyone who teaches leadership should at least read the book and have it on their shelf as a good reference tool.

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Book Review

The Congregation in a Secular Age: Keeping Sacred Time Against the Speed of Modern Life.
By: Andrew Root
Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic 2021
262 pp. paperback
ISBN 978-0-8010-9848-2

Andrew Root argues that the "accelerating of time has had a huge impact on the congregation" (xii). He does so by tracing humanity's experience of time under a historic succession of timekeepers: the church, nation-state, and Silicon Valley Each of these regimes has exercised immense influence on both our experience of the present and our vision of the good life.

For Root, the present timekeeper is the tech industry. The high goods it promotes are those of newness, speed, and change. While not inherently bad, under Silicon Valley these have become ends unto themselves, forcing society into an untenable experience of acceleration. Free to avail ourselves of the limitless opportunity technology provides and compelled to do so to communicate an "authentic" self, we find the sheer number of options before us fatiguing. As technological acceleration is inseparable from social and pace-of-life acceleration (60), the very technology promising openness and freedom disregards the wisdom of old and becomes a taskmaster to us all. It demands we accomplish more with our time to maintain our reach and to avoid falling behind.

The effect of acceleration is a compressed and flat present, one in which people experience a "time-famine" (154). In such a scenario, resource accumulation becomes paramount, under the belief that the good life has become a future fantasy. Per Root, we believe that if we can harvest enough resources in the present, the possibilities for living well will one day make themselves known. In such a state, our engagement with others takes the form of "casual and instrumental connections and interactions" (183), by

which we experience others according to how they can further our agenda, not as independent agents to whom we can truly relate. The net effect is a powerful experience of alienation to the world and those who inhabit it.

Addressing congregations, Root calls into question the assumption that churches who wish to flourish must innovate to meet the demands of their day. This an unwinnable strategy as the congregation is forced into a state of endless change. A congregation may also become a victim of its own success, in which busy people who sought a busy church soon fall away when they realize their own inability to keep pace (40). At the same time, Root is clear that our entire world is predicated on a system of dynamic stabilization, meaning that the health of any organization or agency is secured (and judged by) its ability to grow continuously (176). Because congregations are themselves subject to the demands of dynamic stabilization, they are unable simply to slow down to counteract this acceleration that leads to alienation.

While escaping the modern time-keeper is impossible, Root believes congregations can poise themselves to reclaim a sense of sacred time. He suggests this can be accomplished through resonance. Resonance is a relational encounter in which one's experience of other persons affects them, eliciting an emotional response. Resonance also has a practical dimension, in which emotion moves the individual to action, but of a type that eschews objectification and recognizes the other's personhood. Whereas innovation to meet the demands of an accelerating present is a human-led initiative, resonance and the transformation it can bring is the work of the Spirit. For Root, resonance is anchored in Eros, a love that constantly seeks out the other.

As the Carrie Olson Baalson Chair of Youth and Family Ministry at Luther Seminary, it is perhaps no surprise that Root suggests "carrying children," as a central way in which congregations can experience resonance and so reclaim a sense of sacred time (217). For him, the importance Jesus placed upon welcoming and becoming like children is best understood through the lens of resonance, by which we accept another without thought of how

they might benefit us, and humbly acknowledge our own need to be cared for and carried by others.

The Congregation in a Secular Age is a fascinating social study on humanity's changing conception of time. While in some places it tends toward the dystopian, this is not necessarily hyperbolic. Rather, Root's study pulls back the veil on an existing reality that the reader might initially find far-fetched, simply because it is the only world we know. As such, the reader may discover a need to translate their learning from this volume if its purpose is to help a congregation become more aware of time. In fairness, Root's interest does not seem to be that clergy enable their people to tell time, so much as experience it in deep and meaning-filled ways.

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Book Review

Leadership, God's Agency & Disruptions: Confronting Modernity's Wager.
By: Mark Lau Branson and Alan J. Roxburgh
Eugene, OR: Cascade Books, 2021
225 pp. paperback
ISBN 978-1-7252-7174-6

Modernity's wager is that "life can be well-lived without God" (35). Autonomy and the ability for individuals and societies to continually reshape themselves are hallmarks of this wager. Branson and Roxburgh believe that Christians (and especially Christians from Euro-tribal churches) have unwittingly bought into this narrative and thus are enacting leadership strategies that are almost completely devoted to human agency. Against this they set a vision of God's agency and the ways that God has been at work in the biblical narratives. They call for Christian leadership to have distinctive practices and goals. Their assumption is that "the basis of leadership within the Christian narrative begins with the question of God and what God is doing in the world" (5). Working with Jeremiah, Matthew, Acts, and Ephesians, they demonstrate God's work and the leadership response in various biblical narratives. This results in the need for leaders to create a habitus, or "taken-for-granted ways a group of people live in relationship with one another" (168). The leadership responsibility is to shape practices, which are the "ways in which a group goes about working out its habitus" (171). This book is the result of Branson's and Roxburgh's long-standing collaboration in working with congregations and their conviction that most "Christian" leadership practices are highly secularized.

At the heart of this book is engagement with biblical narratives and the ways that God works to shape interpretive leaders, nurture learning communities, and disrupt human expectations. They explore the way that Jeremiah interprets massive discontinuous

change for the people of God. They show how Matthew uses action-reflection for communities who need to be "fully reoriented around the announced presence of God's reign" (121). They read Acts not as an evangelistic tract but as a way to understand more fully how to keep up with God's action and follow God's initiatives. The book of Ephesians helps us engage concepts of empire and see ways that "loyalty to God gets colonized by nationalism and the church's vocation gets confused with careers and industries" (161). In engaging these biblical narratives, they seek to connect thinkers like Jürgen Habermas, Paulo Freire, and Everett Rogers to church leadership. Their goal is to "go deep" into the philosophical underpinnings of Western thought and leadership theory in order to help readers be reshaped from our modern, Western assumptions about leadership and ecclesial life.

Following this re-orientation of our leadership imaginary, Branson and Roxburgh move us to leadership practices. They note that leadership is often seen as being an expert and telling people what to do. Believing this to be inadequate and often missing God's agency, they want leaders to shape the way people live in relationship to one another (the habitus). This happens through paying attention to the ongoing practices of the congregation. Leaders need to ask questions rather than give answers. They need to find people who are (often) outside of the established ways of organizing congregations and denominations. These practices are profoundly local, which means seeing what is going on in the neighborhoods around us. Branson and Roxburgh also call for leadership that is improvisational, which requires discovering what God is doing as we go along rather than simply enacting an already decided upon plan. Ultimately, they are deeply theological as they seek to articulate Christian leadership that follows the Holy Spirit into uncharted territory.

I often find my seminary students arriving in class believing that already know what needs to happen through their leadership. Whether it is social justice or individual conversion, most students seem to have already decided their desired outcomes. The result is that they functionally have little need of God, except to provide the ethical or evangelistic ends of their work. When asked how God is

involved in their ministry, they do not have much of an answer. Branson and Roxburgh are providing that answer. Truthfully, it is a profoundly disruptive answer because it shows that the church's goals are already profoundly shaped by modernity, with a resulting secularization of ministry. That makes this an important book for teaching leadership that is demonstrably Christian, because it gives a way to help student engage leadership theologically and not just functionally.

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Book Review

Unlocking Leadership Mindtraps: How to Thrive in Complexity

By: Jennifer Garvey Berger
Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2019
148 pp. paperback
ISBN 978-1-5036-0901-3

Jennifer Garvey Berger, founding partner and CEO of Cultivating Leadership, invites us to reshape our human tendencies from responding to a world that no longer exists to addressing volatile, complex, uncertain, ambiguous (VUCA) global and local contexts. In her book, Unlocking Leadership Mindtraps, Garvey Berger introduces five "mindtraps" that hold us hostage, followed by practical suggestions to release ourselves from these traps. She ultimately invites us to pay attention to an overarching ladder to escape falling into mindtraps in the first place.

The first mindtrap describes how human beings create "simple stories," reminiscent of "The Danger of the Single Story." For Garvey Berger, the simple story we tell ourselves is a way of making meaning out of complexity and randomness. We attempt to create a story of sequence, with a beginning, middle, and end, that has cause and effect embedded in it. We project our past onto the story so that we can make sense of it, compartmentalize success and failure, and select data to support our biases. To self-correct and find our way out of this trap, we ask a key question and work toward a key habit. A paraphrase of the question goes like this: "How do I make a character in the story a hero (when originally I made her a perpetrator)?" The key habit is to entertain at least three possible stories by acknowledging several possibilities about circumstances and people involved.

The second trap is called "rightness." The felt experience of our opinions tells us that our thinking is correct. To live in rightness is to close off curiosity and openness to data that might prove us

wrong. Defensiveness and over-confidence accompany rightness, and attention only absorbs self-reinforcing data. The key questions for finding a way out of this mindtrap are "What do I believe?" and "How could I be wrong?" The key habit is to listen to learn (versus listen to win).

Third, we can be trapped by "agreement." Agreement often promotes a sense of connection and bonhomie, which paints concurrence as a virtue. The problem with a culture of agreement is that dissenting views are unwelcome. Garvey Berger claims that if we cannot agree, we try to compromise; if we cannot compromise, we polarize. None of these behaviors deepen relationship or lead to the best solutions amid complexity. Understanding conflict as a way to deepen relationship and approaching disagreement as a way to broaden our thinking, creates a culture of learning with greater chances of sustainable connection. The key question here is "Could this conflict serve to deepen a relationship?". The habit is to expand possibilities because choices usually are not simple.

The fourth mindtrap brings us to "control." Control, or being in charge, diminishes influence. Paradoxically, we often think control is the secret to success. Control connects to the simple story and rightness. For example, emphasizing measured outcomes (e.g., analysis of a hospital stay or effectiveness of a curriculum) is one way to control parts of a system with quick fixes if one cannot control the whole system. To shift this control mindtrap, we need to think about influence instead. Garvey Berger asks these questions to move us in this direction: "What could I enable? What could enable me?" The key habit invites experimentation at the edges of a project, idea, or group to alter patterns rather than outcomes.

The fifth trap is "ego." Garvey Berger states that we often believe that we have grown and changed over time, but we are presently at the pinnacle of our development. Therefore, we guard our identity, status, and reputation carefully to keep it fixed in the here and now. She discusses the socialized, self-authored, and transforming forms of mind as part of human development, claiming that the ego can get stuck in self-authoring. A transforming mind looks for the next possibility rather than attempting to retain the status quo. The key

question is "Who do I want to be next?" and the key habit is to listen to learn from oneself with ongoing internal questions.

The final chapter acknowledges that previous chapters were designed to teach escapes from mindtraps. Here, Garvey Berger invites a connection to our purpose, our bodies, our emotions, and self-compassion accompanied by compassion for others that help us stay out of mindtraps in the first place. She provides a description about how to build each rung of this ladder to connect to vital parts of our best selves and to connect in an open way with others.

Unlocking Leadership Mindtraps is one of my chosen texts for leadership courses I currently teach for clergy continuing education, business leaders, and in seminaries. Garvey Berger takes us beyond the Adaptive Leadership mindset (Heifetz and Linksy) into the increasingly VUCA world, and invites us to self-examine our unconscious biases, tendencies, and even our training to become relational leaders who not only adapt but create networks of possibility for the future of business, non-profits, and religious organizations alike.

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Book Review

Living at the Next Level: Leader's Edition
By: Courtney McBath
Sandford, FL: Avail Publishing, 2021
240 pp. hardback
ISBN 978-1-9507-1888-7

Materialism is embedded within the culture of Evangelical Christianity. In many Evangelical churches across the United States, discipleship is synonymous with the American dream. In his book Living at the Next Level: The Leaders Edition, Courtney McBath proposes a countercultural notion that the exercise of Christian leadership is rooted in a personal relationship with God. Adopting this attitude provides McBath the capacity to resist defining successful leadership within the framework of corporate models of leadership, which are constructed upon accumulating power through influence. He provides an alternative framework of successful leadership based upon the pursuit of an intimate and vibrant relationship with God. Bishop McBath presses his point by asserting: "Money, fame, influence-- nothing comes close to being God's friend-- and that is Living at the Next Level" (15).

McBath harnesses the power of narrative theology by engaging the reader in stories from his own life and the biblical text. Interweaving personal and biblical narratives within the book serves as a great model for the integration of both orthodoxy and orthopraxis when producing content under the genre of Christian leadership. It further aids in providing an alternative to corporate leadership models built upon a framework of accumulation of power, status, and wealth. McBath proposes that the core of this alternative model should be assembled upon four attitudes that will position leaders to live at the next level.

The first attitude proposed by McBath is to have a heart for friendship with God. McBath makes explicit what is often implicit in Christian leadership books by declaring it "begins and

ends in friendship with God" (35). Making this pronouncement reinforces the idea that Christian leadership requires a theological underpinning that is not supplied by corporate models of leadership. Upon quoting John 14:6, McBath writes, "Our friendship with God through Jesus is the way to the path--the beginning of Next Level living" (35). Replacing friendship with God over power through influence as the primary component of Christian leadership leads to addressing human limitations and their connection to leadership.

When the framework for leadership is rooted in a friendship with God, it allows leaders to develop gratitude in the difficulties of life. Directing the reader to the biblical narrative of Peter's imprisonment in Act chapter twelve, McBath proffers that leaders who develop gratitude understand that limitations are an opportunity to deepen faith. No longer an impediment to leadership, limitations can be seen as an opportunity for deepening one's relationship with God. Juxtaposing the inevitability of limitations against the cultivation of gratitude provides leaders with a fresh approach to perceiving the role of limitations in the formation of a Christian leader.

Yet, a life of gratitude does not require Christian leaders to be defined by their limitations. Rather, McBath advises that a life of gratitude will propel the Christian leader to have a heart of expectancy towards God. McBath contends that expectancy towards God positions leaders to see beyond their limitations: "Our problem is that we give up on God too easily. To protect ourselves from frustration in difficult times, we often lower our expectations of God" (129). To punctuate the point, McBath shares the story of a mission trip to Estonia, placed adjacent to the story of Peter's release from prison in Acts 12 as means of challenging the reader to respond to God's call--even when circumstances appear bleak.

The final attitude of a Christian leader striving to live at the next level is to have the heart to seek God. McBath proposes this as the climax of Christian leadership, or living at the next level. God's love for humanity is deep enough to have care for both the internal and external affairs of His people. This allows for spiritual formation to be elevated alongside the traditional metrics of success as advanced by corporate leadership models. It further provides a level of grace

that stands in direct opposition to the capitalistic drivers embedded in secular leadership theories. Thus, in many ways McBath brings the reader full circle, by beginning and ending his work by locating Christian leadership in a vibrant relationship with God.

Locating the final destination of "next level leadership" within a relational walk with God provides a stability that is absent when more money, influence, or power serve as the final destination. The latter are temporal elements that are in a constant state of flux. When friendship with God is the final destination of "the next level," the leader has an eternal focus, not a temporal one based on circumstances or people. This attitude further allows Christian leaders to develop mutually reinforcing attitudes of gratitude and expectancy towards God. Living at the Next Level: Leadership Edition provides an alternative framework towards understanding Christian leadership, that prioritizes matters of the heart as vitally important to the expression of leadership, and therefore can serve as the basis for exploring new pathways of leadership within the specific genre of Christian leadership.

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