

23. Pohly, *Transforming the Rough Places*, 77.
24. Uniting Church in Australia, "Code of Ethics and Ministry Practice."
25. Uniting Church in Australia, "Code of Ethics and Ministry Practice," clause 3.8 (d).
26. Weissman, "Accountability," 332.
27. D. P. Saccuzzo, "Liability for Failure to Supervise Adequately: Let the Master Beware" (Part 2), *The Psychologist's Legal Update* 13 (2003): 17.
28. Brigit Proctor, *Group Supervision: A Guide to Creative Practice* (London: Sage, 2000), 56.
29. Pohly, *Transforming the Rough Places*, 110.
30. Pohly, *Transforming the Rough Places*, 121.

**Theme for Volume 31 of *Reflective Practice*
FORMATION AND SUPERVISION IN A DIGITAL AGE**

How we live has already been profoundly affected by digital communication and the rapidly emerging tools of social media are likely to change forever how we solve problems and create social renewal. Patterns of communication, revolutionized access to information, shifted the balance of power between experts and amateurs, expanded collaboration in solving problems, redefined the way that we think about membership, and created new possibilities for social intimacy. Digital technologies and the new media landscape are also transforming the church. This shift will accelerate in the coming years. As *Reflective Practice* begins its own digital era with Volume 31, it is timely that we focus on this theme: **Formation and Supervision in a Digital Age.**

- What needs to be done to form a new generation of pastors and supervisors for whom digital technology is natural?
- What might the success of distance learning teach us about digital supervision?
- Is it necessary to balance electronic meetings in supervision with face-to-face meeting with a supervisee?
- How will the fluidity of personal boundaries in social networks like MySpace affect the willingness to be vulnerable in formation or supervision?
- How will confidentiality be secured if the internet is the vehicle for formation and supervision?
- How will the specter of predators who use the internet to attract victims affect forming learning communities of trust?
- Although sharing may be more intimate online, how might the absence of in-person connections affect the sustainability of relationships limited by distance from the outset?
- How will digital formation/supervision affect people with different levels of skill and adaptability to the technology?

More than ever, it is important that young pastors, supervisors, and leaders in ministerial formation write about this topic at this time. Proposals are welcome any time. Articles should be submitted to Herbert Anderson, Editor, by December 1, 2010, for inclusion in Volume 31.

**The Role of Co-Active Spiritual Coaching
in Supporting Responsibility and Accountability
in Formation and Supervision**

Marianne LaBarre with Karen Frank

With the commitment of the Lilly-Endowment to support programs on Sustaining Pastoral Excellence (SPE), the Seattle University Pastoral Leadership Program (PLP) was instituted in 2003. Each year, twenty-five proven and promising lay and ordained pastoral leaders from ten to twelve different denominational backgrounds gather for two to three days a month for renewal and revitalization.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK FOR PROGRAM

In addition to their courses on effective leadership and creating healthy systems in ministry, participants take part in peer groups and spiritual coach-

Marianne LaBarre, EdD, director, Pastoral Leadership Program, School of Theology and Ministry, Seattle University, 901 12th Ave., PO Box 222000, Seattle, WA 98122 (E-mail: mlabarre@seattleu.edu).

Karen Frank, MTS, spiritual director, Port Townsend, Washington (E-mail: kfrank@your-lifeassacredstory.org).

Reflective Practice: Formation and Supervision in Ministry

ing during this nine-month program. In this article, we will explore what spiritual coaching is in the context of the Pastoral Leadership Program, and how we see it as a vital means of ongoing formation, supervision, and accountability for experienced ministers.

Personal spiritual renewal is the heart of the program, offering students the chance to reconnect with their deepest spiritual longings and wrestle with challenging questions in a safe, supportive, and resource-filled environment. Participants accept responsibility for identifying and living out an authentic calling. They are accountable to themselves, to their faith communities, to the group, and to their spiritual coaches to invest themselves wholeheartedly in the process and to implement strategies to change behaviors and reach new goals.

Pastoral leaders are invited to reclaim their sense of “calling” by diving deeply into their spiritual and personal renewal. They focus on:

- Nurturing deeper questions
- Committing to inner work
- Living with authenticity
- Claiming strengths
- Honoring limits
- Attending to the shadows

CARL ROGERS AND MAXIMIZING THE POSITIVE

The Pastoral Leadership Program begins with the assumption that these individuals have within themselves the potential for growth, for increased self-awareness, and for solving their own problems. During the year, these ministers become clearer about their strengths and limits. With this clarity, they are able to lead more effectively. They claim what is life-giving in their ministry and move toward new understandings of how the Spirit is calling them.

Russ Moxley captures this dynamic of growing self-awareness and living out gifts in his book *Leadership and Spirit*:

The journey to self is neither easy nor quick. Because we evolve and change, the journey lasts our whole life. Some seem unwilling to do the hard and deep work necessary to complete this journey. Others start but turn back before the journey is complete. But those who stay the course become the person they started out to be. They find their own voice, their own truth. Along the path, they not only understand their true self but

also claim their gifts, heed their call, move toward wholeness, and learn to be authentic.¹

Building on the person-centered psychology of Carl Rogers, Donald Clifton and Paula Nelson identify two basic building blocks for this journey of person discovery and growth: living our strengths and managing our weaknesses.² By asking the question, “What is right with us?” rather than focusing on deficiencies, Clifton, Nelson, and their colleagues from the University of Nebraska have done extensive research on the impact of positive behavior. They note that one way to emphasize strengths is learning to listen to our yearnings because our yearnings act “like an internal magnet” pulling us toward the deep desires that well up within us starting during childhood.

Clifton and Nelson’s research identified several qualities that characterize living out of our strengths. One is that we are likely to get “a kick out of doing it” if it is an area of strength.³ Another evidence of our strengths is rapid learning. Catching on to something quickly is an indicator that this is something we are good at accomplishing. Often this rapid learning corresponds to a sense of effortlessness or naturalness, as if we have done this all of our life. If we develop our strengths to the maximum, the strength becomes so great it overwhelms the weaknesses.⁵ They reframe weakness by calling it “misyearning.”⁶

Clifton and Nelson suggest the following strategies for managing limits:

- Clarify what you do not do well and stop doing it.
- Delegate the task to those with strength in that area.
- Team with someone with complimentary strengths.
- Utilize support systems whenever possible.

If these strategies are used wisely, our limits diminish, and our strengths are given full rein to thrive and develop. Frederick Buechner identifies this as vocation, “the place where your deep gladness meets the world’s deep longing.”⁸

In her excellent description of translating coaching into the supervisory process, Sue Fox aptly discusses the person centered approach of Carl Rogers as the basis of coaching:

For coaching to be effective, the relationship must be comfortable enough for trust to develop between the student and supervisor, but distinct enough for the coaching conversation to challenge the student’s existing paradigms or mental models. ‘This delicate balance is aptly captured by Carl Rogers’ concept of “person-centered” values.’

A person-centered climate, the foundation of coaching, includes the following values from which are derived all other aspects of the coaching relationship. People:

- Are inherently motivated to grow and develop
- Are naturally creative, resourceful, and either have the answers or are capable of finding them
- Are approached holistically, as mind, body, spirit
- Are accepted and prized for who they are; they do not need to hide parts of themselves to be acceptable.⁹

In the Pastoral Leadership Program, faculty members follow this “person-centered” process by replacing self-limiting beliefs with new behaviors and patterns supporting inner attentiveness to personal strengths and inner yearnings.

IMPLEMENTATION

Despite the positive approach of the Program, anxiety increases as the new group of pastoral leaders gathers. Some wonder: What am I doing here? Is there anyone here I can relate to? Will I learn anything I don’t already know? Misgivings and apprehension abound. It is no comfort to them to be asked to write down their hopes and expectations, fears and concerns, when it seems the better course of action would be to bolt from the room. Even more distressing is our request that each person reads each hope and fear out loud. The panic begins to decrease as one by one familiar hopes and fears are named: Not enough time! Too little support at work! Can I go deep enough—do I want to? The voices become a chorus expressing their commonalities. Starting then, rigid shoulders relax, and a collective sigh of relief is heard.

As we establish norms of confidentiality and respect, individuals realize that in this group of peers and colleagues, they can risk sharing the truth without constant censoring. In this room, we are not pastors with parishioners but pastoral leaders among peers. This is a safe space to be ourselves, to be authentic, which from the Greek root literally means “to be author of our own life.” The hope is that each person in the group takes this message to heart and embraces the opportunity to alter some patterns in their lives that may not be helpful in realizing their potential.

As part of this change process, each participant attends an hour-long, monthly, one-on-one spiritual coaching session. This serves as an informal

supervisory process for these experienced participants who are a mixture of ordained and lay ministers from large and small congregations as well as hospice, university, and prison chaplains. The agenda of the session is set by the pastoral leader though often the content and assignments from the class work serve as a catalyst for the conversation. The program’s emphasis at the beginning of the year on developing deep questions, designing an individualized learning contract focused on an area of personal or professional growth, and writing a paper on a ministry failure, all surface issues that may be helpful to explore in the spiritual coaching session.

SPIRITUAL DIRECTION AND SPIRITUAL COACHING

Spiritual coaching offers a container to help pastoral leaders sort out their lives with the supportive advocacy of a companion. The spiritual coach invites each individual to courageously attune themselves to God’s movement within, claim their most critical responsibilities and be accountable to the Spirit’s urgings.

What is Spiritual Coaching?

Fundamentally, spiritual coaching provides a sacred space for listening to the truth of the heart. Our process of spiritual coaching developed as we searched to find a practice to support ongoing renewal and vitality of pastoral leaders. We started our search for this integrating component by building on the tradition of spiritual direction and combining this with the practice of leadership coaching. Coaching and direction each provide unique qualities that support the growth and effectiveness of pastoral leaders.

The Advantage of Spiritual Direction as a Part of the Process

The art of spiritual direction stems from an ancient Christian tradition. In this process, a more experienced person in the spiritual life serves as companion, mirror, support, and guide through the varying landscapes of the spiritual life. Spiritual direction offers:

- Deep listening to enable the person to attend to the movements of the Spirit
- Discernment processes to clarify motivations and other factors that affect decision-making
- Prayerful support both from and with the spiritual director

Jesuit priest William Barry, who has written about spiritual direction over the past three decades, defines spiritual direction as the “help given by one believer to another. This enables persons to pay attention to God’s per-

sonal communication to them, to respond to this personally communicating God, to grow in intimacy with this God and to live out the consequences of the relationship.⁴⁰ In other words, spiritual direction implicitly demands that the directee be accountable to God and responsible in living out the insights gained from the relationship.

In particular, Barry's reflection on our invitation to join God's Dream, requires responsive action on the part of each believer. Learning to discern the subtle stirrings of the Spirit is vital in filling our role in the mission of bringing about the reign of God. Barry stresses that the spiritual direction process invites us to enter into an adult relationship with God, leaving behind the parent-child pattern of relating. Authentic growth in the spiritual life deepens our commitment to the ongoing work of the Gospel toward creating a just and peace-filled world.¹¹

The Advantage of Leadership Coaching as a Part of the Process

As fruitful as the spiritual direction relationship is, the leadership coaching methodology offers other dimensions for improving and sustaining leadership effectiveness. Coaching provides the setting to:

- Set goals and strategies for becoming more effective in our ministry
- Be accountable for following through on decisions and commitments
- Clarify feedback and raise awareness on areas of self-sabotage, impasse, or lack of freedom
- Develop more effective leadership skills

Currently business leaders are investing in the services of coaches as a way to raise the bar on leadership effectiveness. Training sessions for coaches have sprung up nationally to fill this need. Google the term "business coaching" nationally and the internet search engine will display over 1.2 million listings. The term *coach*, which originated with sports, carries with it upbeat connotations of cheering on, motivating, challenging, and goading the athletes to be the best they can be. Sports and business coaches also instill lessons about teamwork and mutual accountability in their charges. Responsible for carrying out personal commitments, individuals are accountable to the whole team and to each other.

The foundation of the coaching process is the understanding that the agenda of each meeting belongs to the individuals being coached. The coach comes with questions rather than answers and empowers those coached to access the answer within them.

The spiritual coaches in the Pastoral Leadership Program have a background in theology and spirituality as well as in coaching. Both spiritual direction and spiritual coaching start with the belief that we have within ourselves the necessary wisdom and resources for solving our problems and reaching our goals. Spiritual coaching combines the faith stance of spiritual direction and the built-in accountability of leadership coaching.

Sometimes clients don't think they have the answers; sometimes they'd rather believe someone else—an expert—has the answers for them. In some cases people have a powerful sabotaging voice that tells them they don't have the answers. But co-active coaching stands in the certainty that clients really do know. When they look inside, with the help of a coach, they'll find they know themselves, their strengths, and their limitations. They'll also discover what they want, what they fear, what motivates them and what holds them back.¹²

With the support of their coach, ministers are able to find their own way. The belief of a spiritual coach that individuals have the creativity, resourcefulness, and wholeness within themselves is contagious. The pastoral leaders bring their own agendas; the spiritual coaches' task is to assure that it isn't lost from one session to the next.

Bringing the Two Together

Having been trained as a spiritual director in Chicago at the Institute for Spiritual Leadership twenty years ago, my initial concept of coaching was that it was a similar process. At the time, I directed an executive leadership program and thought it would be useful to learn more about this new idea. I expected that obtaining certification as an executive coach would simply reinforce skills I already possessed.

This was not the case. What I discovered during my co-active coaching program sessions in San Raphael, California, was that I would also be employing additional skills that held the client accountable to her own agenda. We would work together in "an alliance between two equals."¹³ I learned that of the five elements that constitute a comprehensive coaching model, listening, intuition, curiosity, and self-management are very similar to spiritual direction. The action/learning dimension, however, tends to be more directive than most spiritual direction.

The co-active coaching model outlines five elements that the coach brings to the session:

- **Listening.** The coach listens beneath the words to the deepest yearnings and the movement of the Spirit. This also includes attending to what blocks or stops this movement.
- **Intuition.** The coaches are attentive to hunches or to gut feelings in their attentiveness and may bring these up as questions or reflections to the ministers.
- **Curiosity.** “Curiosity is open, inviting, spacious, almost playful. And yet it is also enormously powerful.”¹⁴ This quality of non-judgmental presence opens conversations and allows further delving into the topic.
- **Self-management.** This is the work of the coach—to get out of the pastoral leader’s way and become almost invisible in the process. By leaving personal preferences, agendas, and ego behind, the coach reinforces the wholeness, creativity, and resourcefulness of the individual.
- **Action/Learning.** Emphasizing life giving, positive action with the support of accountability is one of the key distinctions of the coaching process. The deepening of learning is also powerful for growth and renewal. “Accountability is unique in the coaching relationship because it is completely judgment free. There is no shame or blame attached to whatever the client does. The objective is action and learning, not specific results.”¹⁵

By combining the focused work of coaching and the faith-oriented model of spiritual direction, the new model of spiritual coaching emerged. Each person in the PLP chooses a spiritual coach from the program and meets with that person monthly. Spiritual coaching serves as a catalyst for action and accountability. Leaders identify changes they want to make and become more aware of the steps they need to take to create healthy structures of support to reach their ministry goals.

Anticipated Improvement in Responsibility and Accountability

As a spiritual director, I was accustomed to listening with the directees for the movement of the Spirit in their lives. Often an Advent-like “waiting” motif threaded through our monthly sessions. We listened for where life existed in the issue at hand and tuned into the movements of “consolation or desolation” in a discernment process. In contrast, in the spiritual coaching scenario a more directive confrontation might be employed as can be seen in the following excerpt. Mary Lou was working on her doctor of ministry project and was deeply committed to finishing by May.

MARY LOU: I am so stuck with my DMin and I am not doing any writing these days, even though I know I need to in order to graduate in June.

COACH: What is holding you back? (curiously)

MARY LOU: Well, I don’t have a place to write. My husband doesn’t want me leaving my paper work on the dining room table.

COACH: What is holding you back? (curiously)

MARY LOU: I had created a space in the guest room for my writing but then we had company last weekend and we will have more over the holidays and so it just isn’t practical for me to keep moving everything in and out of that room.

COACH: What is holding you back? (inquisitively)

MARY LOU: (Exasperated and raising her voice) I have told you—I don’t have my own space and I can’t get to the writing without it.

COACH: What is holding you back? (calmly)

(Long pause)

MARY LOU: (Tears welling up) I am afraid! I feel so vulnerable putting myself out there in this writing, etc...

Although in spiritual direction we may identify that fear at some point, coaching begins with the agreement that the coach will hold the pastoral leader accountable to the leader’s agenda. This creates a different style of work.

The commitment to accountability clearly shows in follow-ups to the coaching sessions. In spiritual direction, a directee may say “I am ready to tell my pastor when I meet with him this week that I just cannot continue to fill the role of both youth director and religious education director.” As the spiritual director who helped this minister achieve clarity, I would affirm her resolve, work with her—perhaps role playing the conversation with the pastor—promise prayers for the confrontation, and express my eagerness to hear about how the conversation went.

Over the years in spiritual direction, directees have frequently returned to share that they just didn’t feel like it was the best time for confrontation or that they weren’t quite ready to take the big step. The additional step(s) that I would take as a coach extend an invitation to the pastoral leader to call or e-mail me following the meeting and perhaps even set up an immediate debriefing session. This added mutual accountability reinforces the individual’s resolve to take action.

CONCEPTS OF RESPONSIBILITY AND ACCOUNTABILITY

Being Responsible for Our Shadows

While we learn how to live out of our strengths and manage our limits, we also find out about shadow aspects of our lives and ministries that are not in

our conscious awareness. Parker Palmer describes five shadows that plague leaders.¹⁶ Ironically, even as we develop spiritually, these shadows can diminish our joy and undermine our fruitfulness. By consciously attending to them, we can learn how to reduce their threat. Awareness of our shadows can keep us grounded in our own earthiness as leaders in churches struggling with their shadows as well. Robert Bly invites us, as leaders, to relate to, embrace, and befriend these shadows, acknowledging their potential to keep us honest and humble.

The first shadow Palmer discusses is a sense of “insecurity about identity and worth.”¹⁷ Many ministers coming into the program wrestle with this shadow. The status and privilege of priests and pastors has declined. When we nurture those in our program with lovely luncheons and a supportive environment, they are often surprised. Rev. Tom Smith summed it up: “This is such a contrast to how I am usually treated. I have always gotten the message as a pastor—‘pay him little and keep him humble!’” When identity and self worth are jeopardized, there is a tendency to cling to “productivity” or identify with work. Struggling against self-doubt, pastoral leaders feel constant pressure to meet expectations and prove their worthiness. Though some are bent low with poor self esteem, others lash out with arrogance, demanding special treatment, or rule with an iron hand.

The inner journey to make this shadow conscious brings the gift of knowing our true selves. As we grow in the sense of the deep self, we do not need to depend as much on the trappings of our role or the opinions of others. Our purpose and actions can emerge from a far deeper source: our relationship with God. We accept the responsibility for working within that relationship to increase our understanding of where and how we should be using our energy in ministry. We are accountable to God for responding, or failing to respond, to our call.

Also relevant in the pastoral leaders’ work is the shadow that Palmer identifies and characterizes as “functional atheism, the belief that ultimate responsibility for everything rests with us.”¹⁸ This unconscious motivator drives overwork, leading to burnout and wreaking havoc in personal and family relationships. This shadow disguises itself as selfless service and places us in the sacrificial role of victim when we feel like we are the only ones who can keep the ministry flowing. The gift generated by facing this shadow is that we can let God be God. We are responsible only for our small part. We recognize the gifts within the faith community and the responsibility that other church members also have to be accountable for offering their gifts.

Being Responsible for Awareness and Action

Cultural anthropologist Angeles Arrien has researched the experience of indigenous peoples worldwide and come up with four principles that we utilize in the Pastoral Leadership program and spiritual coaching to increase responsibility and accountability. These principles are:

1. show up or choose to be present
2. pay attention to what has heart and meaning
3. tell the truth without blame or judgment
4. be open to outcome, not attached⁹

Showing Up and Choosing to be Present

This emphasis is on letting our “yes” be *yes*. At times the task in spiritual coaching is mirroring back to pastoral leaders that they may not be saying what they mean nor doing what they say. The hard work of rigorous honesty with self is ongoing. Choosing to be present is a painstaking discipline. When ministers check out or fail to be their authentic or best selves, the PLP provides a laboratory to check in on what is really happening.

Pay Attention to What Has Heart and Meaning

Spiritual direction and spiritual coaching have this at their core: We are concerned with finding out what has the “juice” or passion for each individual and helping them to follow that path. This is the path that allows pastoral leaders to engage whole-heartedly.

When ministers ignore the inner voice and pursue the path of “should,” they tend to become half-hearted. According to Arrien, “feeling like we should do something when we don’t want to is the breeding ground for half-heartedness.”²⁰ When we go about our lives half-heartedly, we are not being responsible to ourselves or to those who depend upon us. At such times, we hoard our energy rather than open-heartedly sharing it with others.

Tell the Truth without Blame or Judgment

With ministers steeped in morality and ethics according to their own theological background, this principle often involves emphasizing nonjudgmental approaches to communication. How can the Pastoral Leader speak with radical honesty, integrity, and truth telling, while at the same time not judging or blaming oneself or others? How can a loving, open-ended question replace a more narrowly defined one? How can one stand on one’s own beliefs and values without superimposing them on another?

Be Open to Outcome, Not Attached to Outcome

As we work to create a climate of trust in the PLP, our intention is to allow the space for individuals to clarify what is muddled and discern their way forward. The discernment process is intrinsically concerned with responsibility and accountability to self, to others, and to God. Ideally, the discerner is faithful to acting upon the revelations of the Spirit, whether or not those seem likely to lead to a desired outcome. We encourage a sense of open-handed detachment as essential to the listening process.

Living with Authenticity

The invitation to these pastoral leaders to discover their deepest longings and their best gifts is first of all a challenge to live authentically. In the safe context of shared vulnerabilities, it is possible to shed any inclination to self-deception because everyone has shared failures. Being an authentic individual means being naked before God and transparent before others.

The point is not to become a leader. The point is to become yourself, to use yourself completely—all your skills, gifts, and energies—in order to make your vision manifest. You must withhold nothing. You must, in sum, become the person you started out to be, and enjoy the process of becoming.²¹

The goal cannot be to become invulnerable. Rather we need to live with an awareness of our vulnerability without self-deception and without being overwhelmed by what we know. Authenticity begins by embracing vulnerability and is fostered by a blend of uncompromising realism about individual shadows and unending confidence that each individual has gifts to give. That is ministerial authenticity.

Discernment of the True Self

Margaret Wheatley, in *Leadership and the New Science*, discusses the leader's need to self-reference, to listen within, and to follow his intuition.²² In the Christian world, the Ignatian practice of spiritual discernment invites this inner listening. Living a life aligned with our personal values and the movement of the Spirit is to live a life of radical personal accountability. Faithfulness to this practice is a daily, even hourly, choice of congruence and veracity.

At times this faithfulness to our convictions may not appear logical from the outside. Our choices may not coincide with the expectations of others and may even run counter to old habits of behavior. Nonetheless, as leadership author and educator Warren Bennis states, "Letting the self emerge is the essential task for leaders."²³ The skill needed by us, as leaders endeavoring to

embody our authenticity, requires commitment and intentionality. They are acquired only through time and fidelity to our inner journey.

In Bennis's research with twenty-nine leaders, he found that most of those in leadership do not start out intending to be leaders, but seek to be themselves.²⁴ In that process, their gifts and skills develop. His research identified three essential characteristics of a leader living with integrity: "self-knowledge, candor and maturity."²⁵ Just as the Greek oracle at Delphi admonished all people to "know thyself," this same theme surfaced repeatedly in Bennis's interviews. Four commonalities emerged:

ONE: You are your own best teacher.

TWO: Accept responsibility. Blame no one.

THREE: You can learn anything you want to learn.

FOUR: True understanding comes from reflecting on your experience.²⁶

All leaders interviewed agreed that no one could teach them how to become themselves. It is each person's unique journey.

ENDURING RESPONSIBILITY AND ACCOUNTABILITY

As the pastoral leader and spiritual coach work on discovering the next step in the leader's journey, spiritual coaching inculcates an ethic of enduring responsibility and accountability, both individual and mutual. The leader learns how to make commitments to becoming a whole self and the relationship between leader and spiritual coach can extend beyond the coaching session and program year.

The Story of Pastor Ruthann Carlson

This was the case with Ruthann. All her life she had been the class clown. She developed perfect timing to get a laugh. Going for attention rather than academics almost cost her ordination. But somehow the invitation to try out a new way of relating from her best self, hit a chord. Maybe it was turning forty. Maybe it was the critical comment from her board president about "humor." Or maybe it was the work with her spiritual coach; Ruthann felt more confident than ever about God's calling in her life and that pastoring fit her. She loved preaching, teaching, and worship. She also was eager for theological reflection. She wanted to be taken more seriously by her peers. This was her chance.

Ruthann began the year with an attitude of genuine engagement. She quickly gained respect from her peers as a leader among them and delighted

in both the learning and her new role. The group allowed her to risk positive change and have space for missteps as they happened. Not only did she have increased clarity about living authentically, she discovered how much she had used humor to keep people at a distance. Her deepening confidence allowed Ruthann to disclose more, trust herself, and be genuine in new ways.

Unfortunately, a few months into the program, Ruthann had a setback. Over the Christmas break, she spent time with college friends and slipped back into old patterns. When the January classes began, Ruthann showed up late, disrupted the class with wisecracks, elicited inappropriate laughter from the group, and shifted the energy from an atmosphere of support to a subtle climate of ridicule and sarcasm.

This became a moment of truth for Ruthann when her spiritual coach confronted her about her noticeable change of behavior and its impact on the group. Though this was painful for Ruthann to hear, she realized how easily she had slipped back into patterns that did not serve her well. Given time to reflect, she grudgingly recognized that the new set of behaviors she had embraced during the fall were actually bringing her the relationships, respect, and leadership she had longed to experience.

Two years after she completed the program, Ruth Ann returned to tell her spiritual coach that the challenge had been like a trim tab which changed the course of her life and ministry. A small course correction had led her in a new direction, bringing her greater fulfillment.

CONCLUSIONS

Coaching conversations are designed to help the religious leader move through the gap separating current realities and future goals, both immediate and long-term, by developing greater leadership capacity.²⁷

It's striking how similar spiritual direction and coaching are in some respects. The emphasis on the coaching environment and the skills of listening, intuition, and curiosity reflect elements of spiritual direction. For example, in discussing listening skills, Laura Whitworth, Henry Kimsey-House, and Phil Sandahl emphasize that the coaches remove their own agendas from the process. They place their focus on the other person, listening not only to words but to nonverbal expression and the unspoken feelings behind the words.²⁸

This makes coaching and spiritual direction compatible for melding into a process that combines deep listening with an action/accountability compo-

nent appropriate to a program design to support and sustain pastoral excellence. In our use of the process of spiritual coaching, we have discovered that pastoral leaders are able to move through the gap toward their future selves and the behaviors that support ongoing growth.

NOTES

1. Russ Moxley, *Leadership and Spirit: Breathing New Vitality and Energy into Individuals and Organizations* (San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass Publishers, 1999), 112.
2. Donald Clifton and Paula Nelson, *Soar With Your Strengths* (New York: Delacorte Press, 1992).
3. *Ibid.*, 44.
4. *Ibid.*, 48.
5. *Ibid.*, 19.
6. *Ibid.*, 46.
7. Clifton and Nelson, *Soar With Your Strengths*.
8. Frederick Buechner, *Wishful Thinking: A Seeker's ABC* (San Francisco, CA: Harper, 1993), 119.
9. Susan Fox, "Coaching Conversations," *Reflective Practice* 26 (2006): 100-101.
10. William A. Barry, "Spiritual Direction: Facilitating an Adult Relationship with God," *Presence* 13, no. 3 (2007): 6.
11. *Ibid.*, 8.
12. Laura Whitworth and others, *Co-Active Coaching: New Skills for Coaching People Toward Success in Work and Life* (Palo Alto, CA: Davies-Black Publishing, 1998), 4.
13. *Ibid.*, 3.
14. *Ibid.*, 10.
15. *Ibid.*, 11.
16. Parker J. Palmer, *Let Your Life Speak: Listening for the Voice of Vocation* (San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, 2000).
17. *Ibid.*, 86.
18. *Ibid.*, 88.
19. Angeles Arrien, *The Four-Fold Way: Walking the Paths of the Warrior, Teacher, Healer and Visionary* (San Francisco, CA: HarperCollins, 1993), 7-8.
20. *Ibid.*, 50.
21. William Bennis, *On Becoming a Leader* (New York: Addison-Wesley, 1989), 111.

22. Margaret J. Wheatley, *Leadership and the New Science: Discovering Order in a Chaotic World* (San Francisco, CA: Berrett-Koehler, 2006).
23. Bennis, *On Becoming a Leader*, 113.
24. Ibid.
25. Ibid., 40.
26. Ibid., 56.
27. John P. Martinson, "Coaching Religious Leaders," *Reflective Practice* 26 (2006): 83–98.
28. Whitworth and others, *Co-Active Coaching*, 36.

"There are three types of accountability applicable to both laity and clergy, but applicable to the clergy to a *greater degree*. First, the minister is understood as accountable to an ecclesial community which has authority to interpret how her or his particular ministry is an appropriate expression of God's calling. Second, the minister, clergy or laity, is also accountable to his or her peers in ministry and sometimes to those specializing in a particular type of ministry in order to maintain standards of good practice in the same way that other professionals are accountable to their peers. A third accountability is the accountability of the minister to himself or herself to advance in the practice of ministry—to become competent in caring and in understanding the faith tradition he or she represents."—from John Patton, *Pastoral Care in Context*. Louisville: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1993. p 80.

Working to Prevent Clergy Sexual Misconduct

Christie Cozad Neuger

I focus this article on preventing clergy sexual misconduct by presenting four vignettes that together begin to indicate the scope of damage that occurs when clergy cross sexual boundaries with congregants. For this article, I am limiting the definition of clergy sexual misconduct to inappropriate sexual behavior (for example, sexualized comments and touch, various forms of sexually-oriented manipulation, acts of sexual intimacy including sexual intercourse, and so forth) between a clergy person and an adult congregant. I have focused on clergy-to-adult sexual misconduct because, in my experience, this kind of behavior seems to be viewed with the greatest amount of ambiguity and ambivalence by congregants, judicatory representatives, clergy, and the general public. Language like "affair," "misjudgment," and "mutual" get used instead of the language of "abuse," "violation," and "tragedy," which are used more commonly with clergy-to-child misconduct but are also appropriate in its clergy-to-adult forms. It is important to locate the starting point for this conversation in the context of

Christie Cozad Neuger, MDiv, PhD, founding director, Institute for the Support of Pastoral Ministries, and distinguished senior scholar in Pastoral Care, United Theological Seminary of the Twin Cities, 3000 Fifth Str. Northwest, New Brighton, MN 55112 (E-mail: cneuger@unitedseminary.edu).

Reflective Practice: Formation and Supervision in Ministry