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Table of Contents

<i>A Time of Transition</i> Paul Giblyn	3
Symposium: Make Known the Way: Remembering, Rekindling Faith Practices for the Community	
Introduction Richard Perry and Barbara Sheehan	5
The Practice of Caring Well Julia M. Speller	10
Faith Practice of Shaping Communities of Welcome and Justice Joyce A. Caldwell	21
Las Prácticas de Fe en la Cultura Latina Lilia Ramírez and Gustavo Vásquez	35
Watch with Me: A Parable for Faith Practices in Health Ministry Kirsten Peachey	43
Called and Trained: The Mission of Spiritual Direction and the Training of Spiritual Directors Lucy Abbott Tucker	52
Strategic Practices for Communal Formation and Renewal: Applying Lessons from Academia Paul F. Jeffries	63
Creativity as Christian Spiritual Practice: Foundations and Explorations for Ministry Christine Valters Paintner and Amy Wyatt	77
Urban Clinical Pastoral Education: Student Reflections on Practices of Faith	91
Practice of Hospitality Jennette L. Rude	93
Practice of Jubilee Kent L. C. Narum	95
Practice of Saying “Yes” and Saying “No” Damascus Harris	100

ACPE Paper

Tending to Trees of Life...and Hope
Peter Yuichi Clark 103

ATFE Paper

One Small Step: Creative Art and the Art of Supervision in Ministry
Colin J. Hunter133

Book Reviews

Spirituality and Health Care: Reaching Toward a Holistic Future
by John Shea
Review by Janna Born Larsen149

Spirituality Suffering and Illness: Ideas for Healing
by Lorraine M. Wright
Review by Thomas M. Gorey153

A Time of Transition

Paul Giblin

The journal is in a time of transition. I am stepping aside as editor with volume #26, 2006, and Herbert Anderson will assume editorship for volume #27, 2007. Chicago has been the home of the journal since its beginning thirty years ago. It is here that the Board meets quarterly, discerns symposium topics, and brainstorms contributors. David Hogue will be stepping aside as the Board's President, the position that Herbert held previously and the locus of journal activity now shifts to the San Francisco Bay area.

During this time of transition, we invite your feedback about the future of the journal. Specifically we would like your input regarding the following:

- How does it continue to meet your needs for reflection on the theory and practice of pastoral training and supervision?
- Are there specific areas that you would like to see addressed in the future?
- Does the journal adequately reflect your area of ministerial training and formation?
- Can we invite you to contribute to future volumes, and if so how?
- Are you noticing any "seismic" shifts in your understanding and practice of pastoral training and formation that need to be addressed here?

We wonder if the journal would benefit from shifting to an electronic format. We wonder about reaching out to include spiritual direction. We wonder what other journals similar to *JSTM* you turn to. We wonder...

Please send your reflections to me at pgibli@luc.edu and Herbert Anderson at handerson@plts.edu.

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SYMPOSIUM

MAKE KNOWN THE WAY: REMEMBERING, REKINDLING FAITH PRACTICES FOR THE COMMUNITY¹

Introduction

RICHARD PERRY
BARBARA SHEEHAN

The context of ministry in the United States presents many challenges and invitations. We live in a world of competition, individualism, violence, domination, and economic, physical, and spiritual disparities. Within this world, there is a lack of community and multiple injustices. At the same time, there are people reaching out to each other; there are environmental, cultural, and religious sensitivities, respect for human richness in diversity, testimonies of freedom and love, and songs of celebration and energy that feed human flourishing.

It is within this context that supervision and training in ministry is both enlivened and challenged. A challenge is to resist being co-opted and/or numbed by the disconnections that occur in the world and losing our capacity to vision, critique, and offer hope. Another challenge is to recognize that effective ministry is a form of justice understood as “right relationships” within systems, with creation, self, other, and God. Here we refer to all forms of ministry that include supervision and

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training for effectiveness—suburban and urban congregational, urban social/theological, spiritual direction, community organizing, systems leadership, academia, and clinical pastoral education.

We believe that these challenges are invitations to remember and to rekindle the religious/spiritual/faith practices and cultural dynamics that have formed and defined us over time as “people in community.” They are invitations to boldly claim our professed identities (recalling that a “professional” is one who professes something) and our frame of reference from which we have been shaped and called into greater awareness and empowering transformation for a specific ministry.

These invitations call us to reflect seriously on the perspectives and language we use in the ministry of supervision and training. Critical feedback has sometimes identified our supervision and training as being more focused on the dominant psychological-social perspectives and language than on theological and spiritual perspectives and language. These critiques include whether our ministry has lost its “soul,” as it provides the milieu and space for others to grow in transformative relational ministry. How do supervisors make known the way of effective ministry? How do we identify who ministers are to become? What language and practices are used that claim the soul of ministry?

Remembering the practices of our faith and our culture rekindles the fire that has carried us in community thus far and from which we reclaim language of our ministry professions, resisting being co-opted into psychological, popular, or “secular” identifications. This does not eliminate our fidelity in understanding and integrating the wisdom of behavioral sciences in equipping others and ourselves as faithful stewards.

Integrating practices of faith and culture into our supervision and training shapes who we become as supervisors and how we articulate our ministry. Incorporating these into the learning process makes known the way that links theoretical and experiential formation and shapes the practitioner’s identity and her or his ministry of relationship-building and justice-making.

Practices of our faith—as identified in *Practicing Our Faith: A Way of Life for a Searching People*²—are: Hospitality, Shaping Community, Dying Well, Keeping Sabbath, Testimony, Honoring the Body, Household Economics, Singing Our Lives, Discernment, Healing, Forgiveness, and Saying Yes and Saying No.

These practices of faith are activities, ideas, and images lived by people with one another over time. They have been embraced to address fundamental human needs in light of and in response to God’s active presence for the life of the world. They are a way a community organizes itself in its thinking and in concrete actions.

Since 2003, the Urban Clinical Pastoral Education (Urban CPE) program has incorporated the practices of faith into its curriculum. We were both involved in this process: Barbara as an Association for Clinical Pastoral Education (ACPE) supervisor, Richard as Education Committee member and theological faculty.

In fall 2004, a conference was organized at which students, urban practitioners, and theological faculty presented their reflective papers on the use of a practice of faith within various settings. This conference illuminated how the use of practices of faith serves as a link between theological academia and praxis in our common goals of equipping persons for ministry. We are grateful for a grant from the Valparaiso Project that helped us with these and other interdisciplinary conversational gatherings.

Two editors of *The Journal of Supervision and Training in Ministry* participated in the fall conference along with members of ACPE leadership, theological faculty, and urban practitioners. Finding the enthusiasm and the benefits of the use of practices, we were invited to co-edit this symposium.

The essays in this symposium reflect how various ministry practitioners incorporated the practices in their ministries. Our hope is that you will engage these essays in such a manner that you draw challenges and insights for remembering and rekindling practices of faith/spirituality informed by culture in your ministry of supervision and training. We also hope that these essays encourage you to reflect on how you would nuance and identify different practices as you make known the way for others. A third hope is that they will rekindle conversations and connections among the various disciplines that engage in supervision and training in ministry.

In shaping this community of authors, we strove to gather persons who represent diversity in racial, cultural, religious, and gender identity, diverse practitioners and the academy. We regret that due to unforeseen circumstances our community is not inclusive, for we do not have the voices of our Jewish and Islamic members.

Julia Speller begins our symposium as she explores, through personal journey, the difference between providing basic care and the practice of caring well. She highlights for us the importance of the ministry of caring well-grounded in acknowledging vulnerability, embracing community, and inviting the Spirit.

In "Faith Practice of Shaping Communities of Welcome and Justice," Joyce Caldwell shares the process of integrating the practices of shaping community into those of welcome and justice among the Multicultural Urban-Suburban Emerging Leaders group of Milwaukee. In response to this work, we might ask how our learning communities become shaped for welcome and justice, especially with young adults.

Lilia Ramírez and Gustavo Vásquez reflect from their experience of ministerial formation as first generation Latina/o immigrants living in the United States. They identify several cultural practices that supervision and training centers might consider. We appreciate their sharing in their own language and welcome their call to justice through cultural sensitivity.

Through the testimony of a story used as parable, Kirsten Peachey explores how the community practices of friendship, accompaniment, and hospitality provide a framework for engaging in ministries of health and healing. We ask how might we supervise and train for congregational health ministry.

“Called and Trained” by Lucy Abbott Tucker uses story as well to highlight the calls to faithfulness, to mission, and to rest. These she believes serve as foundational disciplines/practices in the ministry and training of spiritual directors.

Paul Jeffries leads us into an innovative practice-based approach to community formation in academia that engages faculty and students in a program designed for the non-traditional student called into ordained ministry. Specific stories exemplify how the practice of community in academia nurtures the minister’s personal formation and his or her leadership in sustaining congregations.

Christine Paintner and Amy Wyatt call for a re-integration of art-making, creative activity, and an aesthetic way of knowing into Christian education, leadership training, and formation. Their creative and provocative work suggests that using our underused imagination and creativity can serve as a container for awareness that makes space for encounters. Do we dare form such a container in our supervision and ministry?

The voices of Jen Rude, Kent Narum, and Damascus Harris, three former Urban Clinical Pastoral Education students, bring this symposium to a close. Their reflections give us a powerful glimpse into how the language of and focus on practices shaped their pastoral identity and ministry.

Our fervent prayer is that this Symposium will rekindle in you a deep desire to engage in practices of the faith in your supervisory and training roles. It may challenge you to identify and employ other practices that will contribute to the transformation of people and the world. Let us make the way known as we continue to remember and rekindle the soul of supervision and training in ministry.

NOTES

1. This Symposium title is drawn from Exodus 18:20 (“make known the way”) and 2 Tim. 1:6–7 (fanning—remembering that which “rekindles into flame the gifts of God...a spirit of power, of love, of discipline”—practices of the community). NRSV adapted.

2. Dorothy C. Bass, ed., *Practicing Our Faith: A Way of Life for a Searching People* (San Francisco, Calif.: Jossey-Bass, 1997).

The Practice of Caring Well

Julia M. Speller

For the past four years, my husband and I had relaxed into an empty nest. After many years of caring for our three children, we were finally learning to care for each other. But the year 2005 brought with it a transition so profound that it shattered our new and comfortable lifestyle. It began on 2 January 2005 when my eighty-two-year-old father had a stroke. This was the beginning of four months of repeated hospitalizations and a lengthy rehabilitation that left him unable to care for himself, so we welcomed him into our home and circle of care. This critical decision was not made overnight, nor was it made in isolation. It came as the result of several meetings between our three sibling families to determine where he would receive the most consistent care. It is important to note that while our home was chosen as his place of residence, other family members covenanted to work together with us to take care of his needs. Soon we realized that our commitments alone would not be enough, so we opened the circle of care to include professional caregivers as well as our church family. Little did we know that, in our honest desire to provide for the needs of our patriarch, we would learn the true meaning of the practice of caring well and in the process be challenged to remember and to rekindle our faith.

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In his short but profound book, *Our Greatest Gift: A Meditation on Dying and Caring*, Henri J. M. Nouwen states that, “To care for others as they become weaker and closer to death is to allow them to fulfill their deepest vocation, that of becoming ever-more fully what they already are: daughters and sons of God.” He goes on to add that the mystery of this caring, “not only asks for community, but [it] also creates it.”¹ His words suggest that the practice of caring well is far more than an obligatory response to those who are sick and dying. It is a privilege that belongs to everyone, not only those with professional training, and that is at the “heart of being human.”² It is a practice inspired by faith that impacts both giver and receiver and is an opportunity to find our greatest strength and reward in the midst of community.

Dorothy C. Bass defines a practice as, something that people of faith “do together over time in response to and in the light of God’s active presence for the life of the world.” She goes on to describe it as practical, interrelated, possessing standards of excellence, and infused with the divine.³ More importantly, she emphasizes that practices find their fullest expression in community. This concept had a distinctive meaning for our family as we moved beyond simply working and collaborating together to embracing what Lee H. Butler calls a collective sense of self. Commenting on the value of community, he states that, “An individual life is given meaning only within the context of the life of the whole community. This also means that one’s responsibility extends beyond one’s self.”⁴ He goes on to say that for African Americans, understanding community in these terms has been, historically, a significant form of survival that has expanded the meaning of caring into expressions of mutual wellbeing through a relational “ethic of care.”⁵ This ethic puts a greater emphasis on communality rather than individuality as the locus of healing and empowerment.

In this essay, I will describe and examine my experiences with the practice of caring well. The essay will discuss the value of viewing dependence as a gift and not a burden for the caregiver as well as the care receiver. It will emphasize the importance of locating the practice of caring well within the heart of a larger community of care; it will highlight the sacramental quality of this practice; and it will finally explore the implications for ministry.

GRACE IN WEAKNESS

During the first few weeks after my father moved in, one of the hardest things to see and accept was how such a strong and vibrant man had become so weak and dependent. Many times, as he lay patiently waiting to be attended, he would say with a chuckle, “Once a man and twice a child.” But then he would ask in a more serious tone, “Are you OK with this, baby?” My response was always upbeat and positive as I replied, “I am only giving back to you all the care you gave me.” But many times in those first few weeks, I would leave his room to enter my own and cry, wearied by the new, unfamiliar, and uncomfortable routines and guilty about viewing them as a burden rather than a joy.

While my father’s condition was stable, it was clear to all, whether spoken or unspoken, that he was approaching the end of life. His attitude about the whole matter, at times, was quite pragmatic. One day, for example, he told me, “This is my last decade. It won’t be long, now.” My response was that it could be five or ten more years, and he retorted, “Or it could be five or ten more months.” And with that realization, he charged me with the task of making all of his final arrangements. This directive was difficult to hear because it caused me to face the reality of his death, head on. But even though he worked hard to face the inevitable, he would, from time to time, lapse into moments of melancholy as he thought about the many friends that have passed on while contemplating the meaning of life and death. During those times, he would talk about how he never wanted to be a burden on his family and how it would be simpler if he could go to sleep and “wake up in heaven.” Clearly my father was in a fervent struggle to find ways to reconcile his increasing weakness and dependence and accept his final death.

Quoting Paul’s words “God chose those who by human standards are weak to shame the strong,” (1 Corinthians 1:27), Nouwen points to the first lesson I learned about the practice of caring well—*acknowledge vulnerability*. This means that the caregivers must allow the weaknesses of the care receiver to remind them of their own limitations, allowing God’s grace to be the tie that binds them to one another. This is indeed a difficult concept to digest in a society that values youth, strength, and control. Nouwen suggests that it requires a shift in our understanding about life and death that takes us from “being in control to being dependent, from taking initiatives to having to wait, from living to dying.”⁶ When we are active and in good health, we find meaning and usefulness in achievement. But when illness becomes our reality and we must depend on others for our basic care, particularly as we

approach the end of life, we can become despondent and even depressed, feeling that we are a burden. Similarly, those who give care too often find their strength and endurance by denying the limits of their own abilities. They are so blinded by their own desire to stay in control and maintain a facade of strength that they miss signs of hidden grace that are displayed in weakness.

To this thought Nouwen adds, “Although we each have within us the gift of care, this gift can become visible only when we choose it.”⁷⁷ In the case of caregivers of the sick and dying, this choice must include an honest acceptance of their own mortality as well. In many ways, I found it much easier to care for my father at arm’s length, performing each task as a necessary means to an end. In so doing, I erected a wall of separation that prevented his dependence and finitude from reminding me of my own. It was, however, only as I began to tear down this wall that the routine of caregiving shifted from simply doing things to keep him alive and comfortable, as a “good” daughter should do, into loving attention given because he was a child of God. This realization slowly caused me to relax into the reality of weakness seen in his increasing dependence and my increasing weariness, gently changing what began as a burdensome routine of caring into a spiritual practice of caring well.

In the midst of the practice of caring well, there is, therefore, the potential for rekindling hope and faith. As the ill embrace their dependence and the caregivers acknowledge their limitations, they create a path through which God’s grace can flow in a mutuality of care that brings healing to the caregiver and the care receiver. The term “healing” in this context does not mean to cure or to remove/end a disease, and it is not restricted to the one who is ill. It is, instead, an intervention that has “implications for personal and social meaning.”⁷⁸ This personal and social meaning that emerges in the practice of caring well is one that opens the way for experiences of compassion and healing that are infused with the divine and that affect both giver and receiver. As persons needing care allow themselves to relax into their dependency, accepting their status as children of God, they make way for spiritual healing through the “hidden grace in complete powerlessness”⁷⁹ that is an essential part of the practice of caring well. But in another way those who give care are challenged, as Nouwen reminds us, to reduce the distance between their love of life and their fear of death by claiming and embracing the deep human connection with those who are sick and dying. In this way, caregivers and care receivers acknowledge that they are all “children of God” who share a common destiny and who are empowered by a common love from God.

COMMUNITY OF CARE

As my father began to relax into his new home, accepting his new dependence, the actual specifics of care grew incidental to the loving exchange, hearty laughter, and honest candor that we shared. I soon began to experience a mutuality in our relationship as caring became a two-way exchange from caregiver to care receiver. In so many instances, he became the teacher again, and I gladly settled into the role of student. During his years of strength, he taught me so much about living well, and now, in his dependence, he is teaching me to die well. But during these first few months, the euphoria of our father/daughter exchange was overshadowed by an increasing sense of burden and responsibility, as I struggled to care for him single-handedly. When others, particularly family members who were originally a part of the covenant, offered to help to relieve some of my anxiety, I bravely declined, truly believing that no one could provide care better than I. In many ways, it was an attempt to keep all of the “precious moments” to myself, consciously depriving others of the same. In a short time, however, I became physically, mentally, and spiritually depleted and ironically very angry and resentful because of what I perceived as lack of support from my family.

Nouwen states that “care is not an endurance test,”¹⁰ and it is here that I learned the second lesson about the practice of caring well—*embrace community*. This means that it is essential to share the responsibilities of care within a community by giving physical, mental, and spiritual support to the primary caregiver while reminding the person being cared for that he or she is beloved by many.¹¹ It was not until I relaxed and opened the door for others to join me in caring that the tension and weariness were eased. Once I relaxed into the nurturing environs of community and welcomed others in, the meaningful exchanges between my father and I became a greater point of connection with others, particularly my sisters. To my delight, they too had stories to tell about their conversations, discussions, and even arguments with him that broadened our experiences of community care in ways we had never dreamed. On many occasions, we were faced, once again, with unresolved issues that surrounded our mother’s death nearly eight years ago. As we did, we often relived the pain, but we were also reminded how we learned to cope with the loss. In so many ways, as we rallied around our father to give him care, he became the caregiver and we became the receivers.

This simple experience of community was not restricted to family, for he also received weekly visits from church members, many of whom had received prayers

and visits from him in his earlier days as a deacon. Soon we began to see and understand that caring well is a holistic act that attends to the body and the spirit and truly creates community. But another aspect of this lesson emerged that further defined what we were experiencing as a community. The contentment and well being that my father experienced was not because of any one individual act and clearly not simply because of my care. These outcomes were possible because of the ethic of care that was operative, revealing that it was in the communal rather than the individual experience that contentment and wellbeing were available to all. This signaled the emerging presence of a collective sense of self that concurs with the West African dictum, "I am because we are; we are, there, I am." While the practice of caring well creates community it also requires community to be sustained. Those in this circle of care understand themselves, in Nouwen's words, as children of God who are also "brothers and sisters of each other."

In the midst of community, therefore, caring for my father ceased to be a burdensome response and became instead a spiritual practice that rekindled our faith. When caring well becomes a faith practice, it not only blurs the boundaries between giving and receiving, it also provides an opportunity to expand and embrace a fuller experience of community. In this community, we each are encouraged to acknowledge our weaknesses and limitations, recognizing that there is a hidden strength in God's grace. In many ways, caring for the ill and dying ceases to become the focal point, yielding to the larger task of making meaning together as a people of faith. It opens the door for all involved to rekindle their faith as they accept, together, the realities of life and death.

SACRAMENTALITY OF CARING WELL

One of the most frustrating parts of caring for my father was finding dependable, capable persons to care for him while we worked. After several failed attempts, we hired two women who were both skilled and reliable. The thing that made their work so effective was that they saw themselves as a part of a larger community that cared for him. To my pleasant surprise, they each intuitively understood that his health and wholeness connected to the health and wholeness of the entire family. Additionally, they both found ways to enter the circle of care and not remain on the periphery. While their main job was caring for my father, they were willing to make space in their lives for the care that he offered them. In this way, they became more

than “hired help.” They became integral parts of the caring community and the family.

As I observed their style of caregiving, I saw an ability to find special meaning in the routine tasks, revealing a certain sacramental quality. A sacrament by definition is an outward sign instituted by God of an inward “spiritual grace,” as in the celebration of Baptism and Communion in Protestant churches. It is an invitation to remember God’s abiding presence, to be reconciled to God’s love, and to restore one’s faith in the power of the divine/human relationship. These sacraments take form in very specific rituals that create a sacred space and time within the life of a community of faith. In a similar way, through the practice of caring well, ritual space and time are created when routine tasks move beyond their functional role to convey the sacred reality of God’s love and grace.

Nouwen acknowledges the importance of sacred time and space as he recalls the final meal Jesus had with his disciples before his death, and here he points to the third lesson I learned about the practice of caring well—*invite the Spirit*. This means that it is important to recognize and make space for the presence of God’s Spirit in the ordinariness of caregiving and receiving. Nouwen reminds us that in his state of vulnerability, Jesus transformed the simple experience of breaking bread into a sacred “memorial meal” that promised the coming of his abiding spirit that would sustain the community in his physical absence.¹² In a similar way, the presence of rituals within the practice of caring well marks time and space as sacred—not only for today but also beyond, as the rituals promise the renewal of community each time they are experienced.

A concrete example of this was seen in my father’s morning and evening rituals. Each day the morning caregiver greeted my father with a hearty “good morning” as she sat by his bedside to prepare him for the day. She usually began by announcing the day of the week and reviewing the scheduled activities. My father always reminded her (as if for the first time) of his inability to “keep up” with the passing days and thanked her for the information. On many mornings, laughter was heard throughout the house as they joked with each other about one thing or another, particularly as he voiced his preference to stay in his warm bed rather than being thrust into a cold shower. In the process, a series of tasks that could clearly be performed in thirty minutes stretched to an hour amid conversation, commentary, and camaraderie.

There was a similar exchange with the afternoon caregiver, and over time, I noticed that in each case, certain procedures were adapted to suit my father’s desires, still accomplishing the task as needed. My experiences with his bedtime

preparation took on a similar tone each evening as we performed all the necessary steps that finally led to his bed, fondly referred to as his “safe haven.” The routine activities of bathing, grooming, clothing, and feeding then became important points of familiarity and comfort for him in a life of diminished independence and heightened dependence. In each instance, a definite rhythm emerged with specific words and actions that were repeated each morning, afternoon, and evening, suggesting a certain ritualistic quality, and it is here that I believe the practice of caring well produces a dimension of sacramentality.

Carlyle F. Stewart III, in his discussion about spirituality and the hermeneutics of freedom found in the African American experience, states that “Ritual not only helps to preserve order amid change and change amid order, it is also an important determinant in managing the uncertainty of the black condition in America.”¹³ While this statement connects to the historical challenges of survival of African Americans in the United States, it has relevance for the reality of my father’s “condition” at this stage of his life. I cannot imagine how it feels to be confronted with the kind of chaos and uncertainty that my father faced following his stroke. In many ways, no amount of hugs, kisses, and well-intended care could establish new and hopeful meaning centered on dependence and limitation. But somehow through his spiritual resilience, my father discovered ways to attach special significance to routine actions and, in so doing, created the basis for rituals of meaning that helped to bring order in his new and chaotic life. Rather than lamenting his loss of memory and his inability to consciously mark time, the daily reporting of his morning caregiver marked the early hours of the day as a sacred time of orientation and new beginning. Likewise, the journey from the living room to the bedroom each evening brought with it an air of sacred anticipation as he looked forward to the tasks and procedures that would lead him to his “safe haven” of warm blankets and soft pillows.

Stewart concludes that ritual is an important variable in the creation of communities of healing and belonging.¹⁴ Recognizing the inherent meaning in each of these activities then, caregivers became important participants in the ritual of care, as they consciously join in, rehearsing each step of the task with precision and conciseness. Here we see an important connection of ritual to the spiritual practice of caring well as an essential element of community. It is important to note that this communality, through the creation of sacred space and time, is only possible as caregivers consciously join in the ritual process. Each time the rituals are “rehearsed,” those involved rekindled their faith as they re-establish the collective sense of self that is so vital to the practice of caring well.

IMPLICATIONS FOR MINISTRY

So what does all of this say to us about ministry? Nouwen reminds us that, “Our society suggests that caring and living are quite separate and that caring belongs primarily to professionals,”¹⁵ but I submit that herein lies the fourth lesson I learned about the practice of caring well—*caring is living and living is caring!* Professional ministry often takes persons away from the passion of their early calling and thrusts them into a world that has lost touch with the divine. In the business of managing a church, for example, the administrative tasks alone potentially block the vital channels through which pastors hear and discern God’s voice and vision. Even the experience of worship becomes yet another thing to plan and execute. For those outside of the parish, ministry challenges in hospitals, universities, seminaries, and para-religious organizations can put a damper on the spirit and turn a meaningful vocation into just another job. The practice of caring well then, provides a both/and rather than an either/or approach to care, and it is important to note that it has implications for the way that ministry happens for and with the sick and dying as well as the ways that religious leaders care for themselves. It highlights three important aspects of ministry that are essential as religious leaders equip ourselves for greater service: acknowledging vulnerability, embracing community, and inviting the Spirit. Together they point to importance of the practice of caring well within the ministry communities.

In the first, the acknowledgement of limits and weaknesses must be understood and shared by both caregiver and care receiver, creating a relationship of equals where both benefit from God’s grace. Just as I moved closer to a spiritual healing from the fear of death and dying as I accompanied my father on his final journey, those in ministry who embrace vulnerability find God’s power and healing that binds givers and receivers together through divine love. In ministry, this is not as easy as it may seem because of the perceived power dynamics that exist between minister and parishioner, counselor and client, chaplain and patient. As leaders acknowledge their vulnerability in the practice of caring well, however, they are reminded of the faith that has sustained them, and their gifts are rekindled for greater service.

In the second, embracing community is a natural component of ministry, but it is often complicated by the complexities of human personalities. For ministry leaders, self-imposed expectations of perfection too often block obvious benefits and support within community that have the potential for providing space for res-

pite and relief. My compulsion to take full responsibility for my father's care, for instance, was not unlike the inability of pastors, counselors, and administrators to allow others to share the load. In my experience, the mutuality found in community was overlooked, leaving me tired and overwhelmed. In a similar way, many in ministry have a "messiah complex" that negates the possibility for genuine community, placing religious leaders outside of a nurturing community of care. It is only when they find and embrace community and graciously receive the love and support that it gives that they are empowered and able to continue in their work.

The third aspect of ministry that emerged from this discussion is the intentional act of inviting the Spirit into all that is done. Ironically, ministry leaders too quickly, and perhaps unconsciously, disregard the presence of God's Spirit, which is ultimately the primary power source for their vocational commitment. When this happens, the routine practices of ministry and care are done with a robotic cadence, disengaged from the heart. This is not unlike my efforts to care for my father at arm's length, hoping to forget the realities of the moment. In like manner, aspects of ministry can actually become boring and lose their sacramentality when they are performed without attention paid to the Spirit. It is, however, when each expression of care is done as if it were new and fresh, that simple caring becomes the practice of caring well, transforming time and space, and rekindling faith through the power and presence of God's Spirit.

I believe that the practice of caring well reminds religious leaders of the important connections that must be maintained within and between communities of care if ministry is going to be vital and transformative. In 2 Timothy 1:6, Paul told Timothy to rekindle the gifts that were first acknowledged with the laying on of hands. In a similar way, Paul challenges religious leaders to make space to remember their original call as an instrument of God's grace and compassion and to rekindle their faith in the midst of community where the practice of caring well heals, fortifies, and sustains.

NOTES

1. Henri J. M. Nouwen, *Our Greatest Gift: A Meditation on Dying and Caring* (New York: Harper Collins, 1994), 58, 65.

2. *Ibid.*, 51, 52.

3. Dorothy Bass, ed., *Practicing Our Faith: A Way of Life for Searching People* (San Francisco, Calif.: Jossey-Bass, 1997), 5–8.
4. Lee Butler, *A Loving Home: Caring for African American Marriage and Families* (Cleveland, Ohio: Pilgrim Press, 2000), 50.
5. *Ibid.*, 53–54.
6. Nouwen, *Our Greatest Gift*, 92.
7. *Ibid.*, 103.
8. Tammy R. Williams, “Is There a Doctor in the House?” in *Practicing Theology: Beliefs and Practices in Christian Life*, Miroslav Volf and Dorothy Bass, eds. (Grand Rapids, Mich.: William B. Eerdmans Publ., 2002), 99. Also see John J. Pilch, “Sickness and Healing in Luke–Acts,” in *The Social World of Luke–Acts: Models for Interpretation*, Jerome H. Neyrey, ed. (Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson Publ., 1991), 191.
9. Nouwen, *Our Greatest Gift*, 4.
10. *Ibid.*, 63.
11. *Ibid.*
12. *Ibid.*, 100–101.
13. Carlyle F. Stewart, *Black Spirituality and Black Consciousness: Soul Force, Culture and Freedom in the African-American Experience* (Trenton, N.J.: African World Press, 1999), 24.
14. *Ibid.* Also see Victor Turner, *The Ritual Process* (New York: Cornell Paperbacks, 1969), and Malidome Patrice Some, *Ritual Power Healing and Community* (Portland, Ore.: Swan/Raven, 1993).
15. Nouwen, *Our Greatest Gift*, 51.

Faith Practice of Shaping Communities of Welcome and Justice

Joyce A. Caldwell

Several years ago, I was cross-country skiing on a sunny winter day. The hillsides and trees were sparkling in the bright mix of sun and snow. I was filled with the wonder and beauty of creation, enjoying the occasional laughter and talk of friends as we skied along. I was feeling the special rhythm of my body and soul as my skiing felt almost effortless on the well-groomed trail. We rounded a curve in the trail, and I started down a hill that stood open in the sun. With the warmth of the sun and the cold temperatures, the snow in that section had been melting and freezing and melting again and refreezing. As I started down the hill, my skis skidded out of control on the part of the trail that was now ice—I lay there for a few moments. It was clear that I wasn't going to get up quickly because my right shoulder was dislocated and I was in great pain.

One of my friends was able to get a car nearby, and I eased myself carefully into it. Sitting there without moving, the pain started to subside, and I thought, "If

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I move very carefully, and we don't hit any bumps, this is OK." When we reached the doctor's office and I was called in, I thought again, "Now this is going to hurt." As the doctor moved my arm around and snapped my shoulder back into place, it did hurt a lot, but then, with my arm immobilized in a sling, I could begin the long process of healing.

As I reflect on ways of "practicing our faith"¹ and the particular practice of shaping communities, I am drawn back to my dislocated shoulder and the metaphor it provides for working with groups across race, culture, and class. Grounded in the wonder and beauty of God's diverse creation, we live in a reality that binds us together as one. We confess this oneness in our creeds and hear and see it portrayed in 2 Corinthians, chapter 12, where Paul creates for us the image of the body of Christ, with each part important and necessary for the working together of all. In many ways, we recognize our intricate connection in a global world and in our local congregations and communities. When all the parts work together, we can flow in effortless motion with each part adding its gifts.

The reality, however, is that we live in a world of brokenness and sin. We are part of systems that draw borders, establish states, and build fences to separate. We become caught up in patterns of fear, separation, and domination. Our oneness as God's intended community becomes dislocated, and we walk around one another—out of joint and moving gingerly and carefully. As a society, we think, "If we smile at one another and if we don't talk about race and just be nice, we can live like this, and we'll be OK." We know that to talk openly and honestly about race and culture, to acknowledge the depth and pain of our places in systems of domination, to confront the complexity of a history of oppression will require pain. But as with my dislocated shoulder, it is only through that process of pain that we can become whole and begin the long process of healing.

THE PRACTICE OF SHAPING COMMUNITIES

"The perennial Christian strategy, someone has said, is to gather the folks, break the bread, and tell the stories."² That strategy in its enactment leads to a complexity of questions for shaping communities, and yet at its heart it holds the essential elements of coming together to build authentic community. Christian communities regularly gather to break the bread of Holy Communion and tell the stories of Jesus. As Christians, we are nourished and fed in that "perennial Christian strategy"

and then take that strategy to nurture body and soul in the sharing of food and stories in many other times and places. Communities come together, in times of both celebration and sorrow, to break bread together and share stories. We enter a deeper community with one another as we share food, and we enter a new depth of relationship as we share stories. As we share our joys and sorrows, we become vulnerable and experience community in greater depth. In breaking bread, we need to be in close proximity with one another. In sharing stories, we need to become real with one another.

Shaping communities across race, culture, and class is essential in an increasingly diverse world. That work requires being in proximity with one another and being real with one another. We need to talk honestly about the systems of structural inequality that impact our lives and that undermine strong communities. Systems of unequal access to resources of jobs, health care, education, and housing; systems of governance in which some voices are heard and others are regularly discounted; systems in which some have the power to make decisions that affect the lives of all—those systems, in which our lives are embedded, by their very nature break down communities and need to be addressed in honest dialogue that leads to collective action.

In this article, I explore the practice of shaping communities and the accompanying “Christian practices of teens”³ of welcome and justice as those practices became a way of life for a group of young people from the city and suburbs of Milwaukee, Wisc. I will share the journey of these young people and address key elements of the practices as they experienced them. The voices of the young people will speak from evaluation forms, past interviews, and a recent interview in which I asked several of the young leaders to speak about what these practices have meant in their lives.

MULTICULTURAL URBAN-SUBURBAN EMERGING LEADERS

For three years, high school youth from the city and suburbs of Milwaukee came together to learn what it means to shape community in new ways. Individual young people became involved in the Multicultural Urban-Suburban Emerging Leaders (MUSEL) Program because of felt needs to address the deep-seated issues of social separation and disintegration of community and to be catalysts for change. Comments of the pilot group of young people expressed the need and desire for this pro-

ject: “Socially we don’t connect in the lunchroom.” “I can’t drive my dad’s car out of Wauwatosa.” “People hate because they don’t know. You can’t hate if you understand.” “We want to make a difference.”⁴

That original pilot group of core leaders was brought together by several adults who shared a vision of empowering high school youth to become leaders in bridging the urban-suburban gap and breaking down barriers of race, culture, and class. As the young people entered into proximity with one another and began to share their stories, they captured the vision and made it their own. They wrote their own mission statement as a group and, with the support and guidance of adults, took on the planning and leadership of the group. Their purpose, as it evolved, was to bridge the gap between urban and suburban teens, breaking down myths, prejudices, and stereotypes; developing relationships; and building community through group dialogues, a fall retreat, and an annual youth summit.

The core team learned what it meant to become part of an authentic multicultural community as they developed programs that could carry their vision of community into the lives of other urban and suburban youth. The vision and mission of the group were put into practice with intentionality. They sought to expand their numbers and the reach of their work by inviting other youth to join them for a fall leadership retreat. In recruiting young people that they identified as emerging leaders in their schools and by connecting with youth leaders of city and suburban congregations and parishes, they discovered other youth who were hungering for the opportunity to move outside their comfort zones and connect with persons from whom they were separated in their daily living. As they sought to build and shape a new community, they began with the first step of gathering together with the intention of ensuring urban-suburban, racial, and cultural diversity.

This intentionality, based in their vision of community, was central to their retreat planning. Having discovered for themselves the importance of sharing their stories and of listening and expanding their perspectives, they structured the leadership retreat around small “family” groups. The small groups, led by the core team, provided a place of safety for participants to get to know one another in a setting that otherwise was outside the experience of many of the young people. From the safety and grounding of the small groups, participants were able to interact within the large group and enter into deep and honest conversation about the meaning and impact of race, geography, and class—in their lives, schools, and communities. As retreat participants caught the vision of community and became part of the leadership team, their collective dreams expanded, and the team began to plan a youth summit. The summit would provide a forum for young people from high

schools and youth groups in the greater Milwaukee area to become aware of and speak out to the larger community.

From their own experience of the practice of shaping community, the core team was able to incorporate the practice as part of their own lives. Adults were present to teach skills of facilitation, to assist them in their planning, and to guide and support them, but the young people were the leaders who shaped the community at the fall leadership retreats and spring youth summits. At each of the events, the young people welcomed participants, introduced, led, and processed activities, facilitated the small and large groups, and set the tone and culture for the event. Their leadership was a living witness to their practice of shaping community through the gathering of folks for meaningful conversation, so that participants left the events writing comments on their evaluation forms that spoke to the significance of their learning:

- “During this retreat I felt we had a very close tightly knitted group, and we shared our hearts in an effort to make ourselves better.”
- “I felt that it’s too bad I don’t have the chance to meet people outside my district more often.”
- “I felt privileged to be able to meet so many new people and talk about meaningful topics. I was able to fit in as a new attendee to this retreat, and I had a great time.”⁵

COMMUNITY DEMOCRACY AND THE PRACTICE OF WELCOME

The practice of shaping communities is intricately connected with the teen practice of welcome,⁶ a practice in which participants are made to feel “at home...[as] a place of security and comfort, a place where we are accepted just as we are.”⁷ From the early meetings of the first youths who gathered to dream about the possibilities for the group, the young people were clear that they did not want to become a clique. They wanted to remain open to anyone who came; whether people entered slowly or quickly, they were welcomed into full participation. Participants at the fall retreats or spring summits repeatedly described the welcome they felt and the sense that their voice would be heard and respected. Participants were also welcomed into leadership roles as soon as they were ready to be actively involved.

The leadership style of the group—its “community democracy”⁸—helped to reinforce the welcome. While adults were always at hand to guide and support,

team meetings had much give-and-take with no hierarchy among the young leaders. Taofiki, one of the group participants, described the “bickering” of the meetings as the most helpful.⁹ For him, the back and forth conversations gave teen leaders the ability to share and challenge each other’s ideas, while the adult guidance brought discussion back on track.

Danielle expressed how important that style of leadership was in quickly bringing people into the group, in learning how to be a leader among peers, and in learning how to find and express one’s own gifts.¹⁰ In an interview, she stated:

There was a sense of equality in the group and each person could learn what teamwork is about. If a person is elected to a position, people in the group let that person do the task. In this group, everyone had to become involved and learn to do a range of leadership tasks, including [public relations], recruitment, registration, small and large group facilitation, planning and leading activities, and whatever tasks were needed to plan, implement, and lead the fall retreat and youth summit. No one could simply stand by and depend on someone else. You had to be a leader and become well rounded.

She said that not many groups do that because it is easier to work with hierarchies and not involve everyone. Danielle and others felt that part of the reason people became so quickly involved at the retreats and summits was because they didn’t feel intimidated by the style of leadership. Participants picked up on the fact that no one was on top and that they were also fully welcome to participate and share their voice.

As the core leadership team met regularly for their program planning, they worked in the collaborative model of community democracy that helped shape community based on gifts and contributions, rather than status. Each member brought his or her own gifts to the process of planning, implementing, and facilitating events, and each member continually invited and welcomed new participants into the process. While power dynamics would occasionally arise, the give and take and trust within the group would pull people back into a place of shared leadership. Working with one another as equals with a shared commitment, the young people were able to transcend the power dynamics of race and class.

The leadership team eagerly embraced the opportunity to learn and put into practice skills of listening, discernment, and community building. Through practice, they developed facilitation skills that engaged their peers in meaningful discussion. An adult observer of a youth summit workshop noted, “The teens ran the sessions and thus created a comfort zone. They were prepared, confident, and willing to learn, listen, and teach.”¹¹

The leadership team found through their practice that youth meeting youth in dialogue is key to building awareness of different cultural contexts and experiences, understanding differing opinions and worldviews, and responding and acting with respect. Through facilitated dialogue they could address the barriers and fears that separated and divided them and come to better understand how they could develop relationships with one another.

SHAPING LIFE-GIVING COMMUNITIES

Ruth Frankenburg has described the primary discourse for white women in our country as being color-evasive and power-evasive.¹² While white women were the subjects of her research, the primary discourse she found is the discourse that penetrates society. It pervades public life and seeks to cover up the messiness of our lived reality within a system that is foundationally grounded in inequality. Racism—and its emotional layers of fear, guilt, anger, and shame—is put in place inside each of us through a range of experiences. We hear messages about ourselves and about “the other” from family, friends, schools, media, churches, etc. Our lives are filled with stories of how we have been molded and shaped to see—or not see—ourselves as racial beings and to see ourselves within systems of structural inequality. We all learn to walk carefully around one another and to tread lightly around issues of race, hoping to keep our fears of color in check. As white people, we do not want our comfortable world of ignorance to be disrupted; as people of color, we hope to lessen the pain.

The act of remembering our collective story challenges the conversation that seeks to discount the power of race and color in shaping people’s lives in this society. The act of remembering takes us underneath the surface of history as it is told. It allows us to see the underbelly of oppression, to know and understand the lives and realities of those who have been discounted, dehumanized, and abandoned by society. The act of remembering unveils the realities of privilege and internalized white superiority and internalized racial oppression. Standing in that place of awareness and understanding, the discourse takes on a different tone, and life-giving communities can begin to take shape.

The work of shaping communities engages in that deep and honest conversation that not only uncovers the individual realities of privilege and oppression, but also leads to an exploration of oppression on structural levels. As the

leadership core team grew in their relationships and met to talk about their lives and differing realities, their conversations repeatedly turned to their schools. They were amazed at the great inequalities in their school lives—in the level of freedom of movement in and out of their school buildings, in the amount of resources that were available to them as students, in the level of challenge and support they received from teachers, and even in the foods that were available to them in their cafeterias.

The students were aware that in national statistics Milwaukee is frequently rated within the top five of the most highly segregated cities in the country. They were aware that people of different racial or cultural backgrounds in many ways move within their own groups and that attendance at the city's summer ethnic events reflects the separation of populations. But as their conversations focused on schools, they turned to deeper analysis of the problem and began to investigate the disparities in greater depth.

Researchers from the Public Policy Forum discovered that, in the seven county area of southeastern Wisconsin, students in Milwaukee Public Schools ranked first in free and reduced lunch as the indicator of poverty at 76 percent, first in habitual truants at 50.2 percent, last in graduation rate of 60.1 percent, and first in enrollment of minority students at 82.1 percent.¹³ These statistics contrast sharply with the nearby suburban Ozaukee County school districts of Cedarburg, Grafton, and Mequon-Thiensville with an average of 3 percent of free and reduced lunch, a habitual truancy rate of 0.9 percent, graduation rate of 99.7 percent, and enrollment of minority students of 5.7 percent. Statistics for neighboring school districts in Waukesha County are similar. These statistics show the gaping disparity among young people who live geographically only twenty to thirty minutes apart but in realities that are worlds apart. And so they decided to act.

This group of young leaders began to plan and prepare for a youth summit that would focus on schools and give students a voice. They envisioned a video as a way to introduce the summit and take students into each other's schools to better understand their differing realities. As an urban-suburban leadership team, they identified areas of interest and concern regarding the stereotypes and realities of one another's schools and developed interview questions that could expose the stereotypes and lead to deep and honest conversation. The young people in the group worked with their school administrators to support the project and identified students in their schools for the interviews. Two of the young men in the group brought their cameras and taped and edited the interviews held in six schools—three urban and three suburban. In producing the documentary video, "High School Reality," the young people displayed a growing awareness of social issues and the

ability to speak out. They gave witness to their willingness to take risks and not walk around in dislocated realities, but rather search for deeper truth. Their comments reflect their growing understanding of what it means to shape life-giving communities:

- “I am more aware of social issues and what it means to live in segregated Milwaukee. I know I can help to bring attention to issues and work toward solving them.”
- “I feel more open and educated. There is a definite difference in me and my understanding. Hearing what people of other races say has made me so much more open.”
- “Being in this group really helps me and has made all the difference in being aware that people think differently from me and helps me understand where they’re coming from.”¹⁴

THE PRACTICE OF JUSTICE

For the young people, the work of doing justice was integral to their practice of shaping community. They recognized that the important first steps of talking together and becoming aware must lead to doing something. Their awareness and understanding led them to the teen practice of justice, a practice that, “for Christians, means acting in ways that promote human flourishing.”¹⁵ This Christian practice for teens was incorporated in the theme of the first youth summit: “Becoming Aware and Speaking Out.” It expressed the needs both to know and to act.

Natalie, one of the core team leaders, noted that it was important for the group to have the opportunity to become aware of issues. In their work on schools, she said she was able to see the differences between her experience and that of others.¹⁶ Together participants could see and name the inequalities among the schools. Because they were in proximity to one another, talking together in a room, they were able to share their realities and experiences and know that the resources available to them in the different schools were worlds apart. Students wondered together why some schools didn’t have money to replace the burned out light bulbs in their small stage area, and why other schools had the most advanced science labs available. They began to name the economic differences among the schools and to see that the schools reflect the unequal economic conditions of the parents and community. Some who came from privileged schools were able, through discus-

sions at the summit, to see how much they took for granted going to a suburban school, and others from those schools wondered about what they came to see as excessiveness in their schools and whether money couldn't be better spent in other ways. This new awareness equipped the students for the process of speaking out. As they built a sense of community and were able to bridge the urban-suburban and racial gaps through discussion, they were able to find a common ground to get something done.

Along with shaping community, the practice of justice became incorporated into a way of being for many of the young people. As they practiced it in the group, it became a living practice in their lives. Jessica talked about how she had learned to stand up for "the little people."¹⁷ Whether she was on the bus, in the classroom, or volunteering in a neighborhood program, she found herself speaking up when someone was being picked on or being talked about. She said she had learned how to stand up for what she believes in and to take the risk to speak up. Katie noted that it makes her angry now to hear what comes out of her friends' mouths.¹⁸ She now knows that things they say about people aren't true, and she finds herself interrupting those comments and spending less time with those who aren't willing to open their minds and hearts.

The young leaders saw awareness as an important first step and expressed that while it is important to know what is going on, it is equally important to do something. They saw that as they became more aware, they developed a different mindset, and they couldn't overlook things that they had in the past. The more they interacted with one another and learned from one another, the more conscious they became, and the more they questioned.

As they grew in confidence and skills, they also began to use their skills in new ways in their schools. Several of the students became active in multicultural groups in their schools. Teddy took the concept of MUSEL into his suburban school. He worked with a teacher to begin Club United, which trained teams of high school students to work with middle school students. Members of the leadership team talked about the new ways they were now able to deal with issues at their schools. They had learned to analyze a situation, name the problem, and go through the proper channels in their schools to work for change. Instead of complaining and being part of the problem, they had learned how to offer solutions.

Jessica and Danielle named the importance of what they learned and its impact on other places in their lives.¹⁹ They saw a ripple effect of their learning and leadership when they used their newfound leadership skills in other groups. The community building activities, skits, and models, and an understanding of systems

of oppression (i.e., inclusion and exclusion) found their way into other groups as the young people spread their learning.

SHAPING COMMUNITY: SHAPING LIVES

The young people who participated in the program recognized their interaction across race, culture, and class; the relationships they formed became significant in their life journeys. They recognized that they became more culturally aware and that they gained a greater perspective on the world. As a result of the many discussions, Danielle said that she has a greater ability to interact with all kinds of people. She is able to talk about deep issues—not just at the comfort level, but also beyond. As students each year left the program to go on to college, the meaning and impact of the practices they had incorporated into their lives became the focus of their college essays.

Jessica's story speaks for many of the youth who engaged deeply in the practice of shaping community—a community of welcome for everyone and a community of justice that seeks to reconnect dislocated and separated people. Jessica says openly that her participation has made her a better person. She felt intimidated by the group when she first began, but she also felt welcomed by them and supported by the adults involved with the program. One of the adult leaders talked with her about the purpose of the group, explained how it could help her develop her skills, and encouraged her to participate. Jessica heard how this group was unique in providing a safe place to talk, learn, and grow with high school students from a variety of backgrounds. She acknowledged that she was quiet at first, merely observing. As she watched and listened, she saw that the group was a good thing to be involved in and gradually began to find her own voice and speak out, eventually taking an active leadership role. Jessica appreciated how the members of the leadership group played off each other and actively shared different viewpoints. As a young African American woman from the city, attending a Milwaukee public school, she had the opportunity to interact with another young African American woman who lived and went to school in the suburbs. As the young women were able to enter into each other's lives, they became aware of their differences and understood each other in new ways. Before her participation in this group, Jessica, like many others, had never been in a group with white and black people who openly and honestly shared their different opinions and who listened deeply to one

another, not having to agree, but respecting and hearing one another. Jessica sees the people she has met in the group as “friends for life.” She can call or e-mail a wide range of people and has been able to network with new people in different areas.

Danielle, Natalie, Katie, Teddy, Taofiki, Emily, and other leadership group participants echo Jessica’s statements. The process of learning to listen to one another, to hear another person’s point of view and perspective of life, to appreciate different life experiences has shaped how they see the world. In Danielle’s words, “I’ve learned to always try to see another perspective. Even if I stay with my own perspective, I can hear the other person, and we can come up with a solution across perspectives.”²⁰ She also noted that in listening with depth and understanding, she found greater strength in knowing and being able to stand up for what she believes. The give-and-take helped participants find themselves and become more confident in their own beliefs and comfort levels in interacting with others.

CONCLUSION

Practice doesn’t make perfect. And that’s OK. ...“A practice is what you do to get better at something like playing the cello or basketball.”...With practice, you also become a more welcoming person, a better friend, a stronger advocate for justice, and a more caring part of creation—not all at once, perhaps, and never perfectly. But through a practice, you become a little more involved in the loving, challenging life of God.²¹

Because we live within communities, congregations, organizations, and institutions that remain separated around issues of race, culture, and class, we need to engage in the practices of welcome and justice. The disparities in education, health care, employment, and housing continue to undermine strong communities and exclude people of color from full participation. The devastating realities of Hurricane Katrina brought our country to a new awareness of the fragility of our communities. It was clear in the pictures and stories that followed the hurricane that discussions of race and poverty need to be central to the practice of shaping communities that are life-giving to all.

As we lived out the practices of shaping community and of welcome and justice through the MUSEL Program, we found it was important to have a vision of what that practice would look like and to be intentional through regular practice.

The young people were clear that their practice did not fool them into thinking there is a perfect world, but they believed that “if we can put the wheels in motion and not just vent, we can be really strong. People took things away from the summits and retreats, and we know the teen community can pull together to work for change.”²²

When asked what makes for strong community, Danielle responded that it takes breaking down the idea of “elite”—an “I’m better than you” thinking. It takes finding common ground. She said:

We need to find the purpose of everyone and why everyone is part of community, and not just the elite. We need a mindset with a common theme of knowing that, if this hurts you, it hurts me. There is a domino effect of people’s lives and connections. Somehow this thing that hurts you also affects me, and it’s up to me, too, to do something.²³

With practice, we can come to know more fully what it would mean to live and move together as the Body of Christ, with each part working together for the good of all.

NOTES

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34 FAITH PRACTICE OF SHAPING COMMUNITIES OF WELCOME AND JUSTICE

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Las Prácticas de Fe en la Cultura Latina

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RESUMEN (ABSTRACT)

El artículo “Las Prácticas de Fe en la Cultura Latina” son una serie de reflexiones en cuanto a la formación ministerial desde la perspectiva latina de inmigrantes de primera generación viviendo en los Estados Unidos. Debido a que la cultura está intrínsecamente ligada a las prácticas de fe, hemos analizado diferentes factores que consideramos claves a la hora de ministrar a comunidades latinas. Dichos temas son: confianza y amistad, consejería, contacto físico, sentido de familia, concepto del tiempo, el silencio y la espiritualidad, la predicación y los discursos.

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BREVE INTRODUCCIÓN PERSONAL

Lilia tiene 30 años, nació en Costa Rica, fue criada en Colombia y vivió varios años en Venezuela. Es socióloga y recientemente fue ordenada como Ministra de la Iglesia Presbiteriana (U.S.A.). Ejerce su ministerio como pastora de la Iglesia Presbiteriana de Paterson, New Jersey. Ha estado casada durante seis años con Gustavo, quien tiene 38 años y nació en Venezuela, es Periodista y candidato al Sagrado Ministerio en la Iglesia Presbiteriana (U.S.A.). Desde hace 5 años viven en los Estados Unidos, estudiaron Maestría en Divinidades en el Seminario Teológico de McCormick en Chicago. Actualmente trabajan con el Presbiterio de Palisades en New Jersey como parte del Equipo de Ministerio Latino.

Con esta breve introducción personal queremos dar a conocer un poco a los lectores sobre nuestra procedencia, lo cual ayuda a comprender mejor nuestras reflexiones en cuanto a la formación ministerial. Debido a que somos una pareja joven adulta, bilingües y de cierto modo biculturales pero no totalmente asimilados a esta cultura lo cual definitivamente marca de manera especial nuestra forma de percibir y vivir nuestro ministerio.

Las prácticas de fe están intrínsecamente ligadas a la cultura de cada persona de la congregación a la que éstos pertenecen. Por lo tanto para poder servir y entender a un grupo determinado es básico conocer su cultura. América Latina y el Caribe están compuestos por 22 países y varios idiomas, lo cual dificulta la definición de una sola cultura hispana o latina. Este hecho hace más difícil la generalización de los comportamientos y valores “latinos” ya que hay que tomar en cuenta si una determinada persona proviene de áreas rurales o urbanas, de países de Centro América, Sur América o el Caribe, el nivel educativo y la clase social a la que pertenece.

Sin embargo, hay algunos factores más o menos comunes en nuestras culturas latinas. Especialmente para latinos/as de primera generación que no son del todo biculturales, es decir que no se han asimilado totalmente a la cultura anglosajona. En el caso de las segundas generaciones (descendencia de latinos) la apreciación de lo que sugeriremos a continuación puede cambiar radicalmente debido al proceso de aculturación que experimentan. Tomando en consideración lo anteriormente expuesto, esperamos que este artículo pueda servir para que muchas personas ajenas a la cultura latina puedan entender mejor el comportamiento, expectativas y necesidades de los/as latinos/as en los Estados Unidos.

CONFIANZA Y AMISTAD

Una de las diferencias entre la cultura anglosajona y la cultura latina es la estrecha relación existente entre la confianza y amistad a la hora de compartir nuestros problemas. Para nosotros es mucho más fácil abrir nuestro ser, contar nuestros problemas y frustraciones a una persona conocida, en la cual confiamos y con la cual existe cierto vínculo de amistad. Mientras que, de acuerdo a nuestra experiencia, en la cultura anglosajona es más fácil en ocasiones confiar los problemas a personas totalmente extrañas.

Esta dinámica tiene su raíz en la forma como ambas culturas abordan la comunicaciones humanas. En la cultura latina la comunicación interpersonal es un ejercicio permanente, que parte de las necesidades de sobre vivencia a partir de la interdependencia social de los individuos. En otras palabras, las sociedades latino-americanas tienen un complejo entramado de relaciones de interdependencia entre sus miembros, lo cual permite el intercambio de bienes y servicios y la posibilidad de sobrevivir en el contexto social.

La comunicación interpersonal es una herramienta fundamental para formar parte de esta dinámica. Mientras que en la cultura anglosajona la interacción y las relaciones interpersonales suelen evitarse al máximo en nombre de la privacidad. La independencia del individuo es un valor asociado a la libertad y la comunicación interpersonal no es un ejercicio necesario, ya que la dinámica social está construida en base al respeto y fomento del espacio privado e individual.

Es por ello que en la cultura latina no resulta nada complicado el poder comunicarse y no se requiere de un espacio determinado y de un profesional, ajeno al entorno de las amistades o la familia, para ser escuchados. La cercanía y la amistad son dos elementos fundamentales para la generación de confianza y apertura. La intimidad de uno, no está tan aislada de la intimidad del otro, de manera que hay una interacción más abierta entre las personas. En la cultura anglosajona, pareciera ser diferente esta dinámica, ya que comunicarse con otros no es tan fácil y la confianza es vista como un instrumento que pudiera vulnerar la privacidad y la independencia. Entonces, resulta más confiable alguien ajeno al entorno íntimo, que no conozca las particularidades de la privacidad, de manera que la intimidad no pueda ser vulnerada.

Podríamos decir que para desarrollar un ministerio efectivo, en nuestra cultura, la confianza y amistad son básicas a la hora de ministrar. Es decir, es muy im-

portante iniciar una relación amistosa entre el ministro y los/as ministrados/as para ofrecer un servicio pastoral eficaz.

CONSEJERIA

Las dinámicas de las relaciones humanas descritas anteriormente, constituyen tienen mucha relación a la hora de atender a una sesión de consejería pastoral. Para nosotros/as el/la ministro/a, como consejero/a es una autoridad y una guía. Por lo tanto, cuando una persona latina acude a una sesión de consejería, ésta espera que el/la ministro/a le diga directamente y le sugiera lo que ésta debe hacer en cuanto a una situación en particular.

De acuerdo a nuestra experiencia en la Educación Pastoral Clínica (CPE) y en clases de atención pastoral (bajo la perspectiva anglosajona), la función principal de los/as consejeros/as es escuchar y conducir sutilmente a las personas a la autorreflexión, hasta que éstas encuentren por sí mismas la solución a sus problemas. Los/las latinas buscamos a un profesional, no sólo para hablar y para auto-analizarse, sino para que le ayude a solucionar su problema de manera directa. Si una persona latina acude a un/a ministro/a o consejero/a y no recibe soluciones siente que ha perdido su tiempo y que el/la profesional no está realizando su trabajo debidamente.

CONTACTO FÍSICO

El contacto físico y la definición del espacio corporal es totalmente diferente entre las dos culturas. En la cultura anglosajona existe un tabú en torno al contacto físico. No es correcto que exista un contacto físico entre dos personas si una de ellas no lo autoriza. Es decir que una persona no puede, por ejemplo, tocar, abrazar, besar, o “invadir” su espacio corporal si una de ellas no lo aprueba previamente. Lo totalmente opuesto ocurre en la mayoría de las culturas latinas, especialmente en las caribeñas.

Para nosotros el contacto físico es parte de nuestra convivencia diaria. Al saludarnos y despedirnos diariamente es común el hacerlo con un beso en la mejilla

y/o con un abrazo, incluso cuando no hay mucha confianza entre las personas o recién se están conociendo. En este caso el abrazo y el beso es símbolo de amistad, receptividad, amabilidad y calor humano. Mientras que en la cultura anglosajona lo más común es saludarse o despedirse de manera verbal o talvez con un apretón de manos, pero nunca con un beso y un abrazo si no hay confianza entre las personas o si una de ellas no pide autorización y la otra lo consiente. Por lo general, esta actitud es entendida como que las personas anglosajonas son un poco “frías” y distantes en el trato personal.

Con frecuencia, nos han preguntado “puedo abrazarte?”, lo cual es totalmente extraño para nosotros, ya que en nuestra cultura no se pide permiso, sino que simplemente si el momento lo amerita las personas se abrazan sin pedir permiso y esto no es considerado como un abuso, falta de respeto o una invasión del espacio físico. Si un/a ministro/a no entra en contacto físico con a quien ministra (no necesariamente con un beso, pero talvez con una palmada en la espalda, poner la mano en el hombro de la otra persona), esto será muy posiblemente interpretado como distancia, frialdad y apatía.

SENTIDO DE FAMILIA

Para los latinos el concepto de familia es muy diferente al concepto anglosajón. En la cultura anglosajona, para muchos efectos, la familia se define como padre, madre e hijos menores de edad. Una vez que los hijos crecen y se casan (técnicamente) pasan a formar su propia familia. Para nosotros, la familia no se limita a padre, madre e hijos menores de edad. Sino que por el contrario es mucho más amplia. Este concepto se extiende a abuelos, compadres, tíos, primos, e incluso amigos cercanos. De hecho en la cultura anglosajona, es muy común que los hijos se independicen a penas cumplen los dieciocho años de edad.

En nuestra cultura es totalmente “normal” que los hijos/as sigan viviendo con sus padres incluso después de casados; o encontrar viviendo a los padres, abuelos, hijos con esposas, nietos y hasta amigos cercanos juntos en una misma casa. Por lo mismo, es difícil para los latinos el enviar a los ancianos a un asilo. Existe cierto sentido de culpa, se siente que se está abandonando a ese ser querido al cuidado de desconocidos. Sin embargo, en la cultura anglosajona, lo más común es lo opuesto, que los “envejecientes” vayan a un asilo. Esto es lo esperado, una vez que la per-

sona llegue a cierta edad. Incluso, las personas planifican con anterioridad en que ancianato pasarán sus últimos años.

Debido a la condición de inmigrantes, muchos latinos sufren la soledad que acarrea la emigración. Por esta razón el sentido de comunidad es bien importante en el ministerio. La iglesia, entra a formar parte de la familia y suple de cierta manera algunas carencias ligadas a la soledad. Mientras que en la cultura anglosajona, el individualismo es prácticamente un valor.

CONCEPTO DEL TIEMPO

El concepto del tiempo es bien diferente entre las dos culturas. Para los anglosajonas el tiempo es valor. Enfatizan la puntualidad y los límites de tiempo (deadlines) están bien marcados. Si se acuerda empezar una reunión a una hora específica, los asistentes llegan antes de la hora pautada para empezar a tiempo. Y si alguien llega tarde incumpliendo la hora acordada se considera como una falta de respeto para los otros asistentes. En nuestra experiencia de ministerio con anglosajones hemos tenido que acoplarnos a esta cultura, llegando a tiempo a reuniones y entendiendo que los famosos “deadlines” son prácticamente una camisa de fuerza.

Pero en la cultura latina, la percepción y entendimiento del tiempo es totalmente diferente. Usualmente si se cita a una reunión a una hora determinada, las personas pueden llegar quince minutos, media hora o más tarde y esto no necesariamente se interpreta como una falta de respeto. En la mayoría de los casos, ya es algo tácito. Es decir, que si se cita a una reunión no se empezará a la hora acordada. Razón por la cual, la mayoría de las veces en la planificación de actividades se prevee dicho retraso. Los organizadores citan un tiempo antes para dar tiempo a que las personas lleguen al lugar, y después de socializar se pueda comenzar con una actividad determinada.

EL SILENCIO Y LA ESPIRITUALIDAD

En nuestra experiencia, el silencio y la meditación personal son valorados de manera diferente. En la cultura anglosajona el silencio es necesario para meditar y

reflexionar, especialmente en el plano personal para ayudar al crecimiento espiritual. Es común que las personas caminen en un laberinto mientras meditan sobre sus vidas, acciones y decisiones. Los retiros silenciosos son apreciados y hasta requeridos por muchas personas que sienten que el alejarse de su medio ambiente es provechoso y necesario para poder reflexionar y tener un encuentro con Dios más cercano.

Por el contrario, en nuestra cultura latina, la meditación silenciosa no es necesariamente un valor ni tampoco es muy común. Nosotros solemos meditar en comunidad; la espiritualidad es fortalecida en grupo, dialogando, conviviendo con otras personas. El silencio llega a ser en ocasiones hasta incómodo. En la cultura anglosajona, es admisible que dos personas estén sentadas una al lado de la otra, sin hablar o que hallan largos espacios de silencio entre ellas. Sin embargo, para nosotros el silencio entre dos personas es símbolo de apatía ya que si hay empatía se espera una conversación fluida entre las partes.

El silencio es en un factor importante en el ministerio con latinos. Ya que en un culto o en actividades con personas pertenecientes a esta cultura el silencio no tomará gran parte de las actividades ni se considera como algo necesario para desarrollar la espiritualidad de las personas. El crecimiento espiritual se puede lograr, en cambio, por medio de la música, la oración colectiva, las conversaciones y todo lo que incluya interacción entre las partes.

LA PREDICACIÓN Y LOS DISCURSOS

Algo que nos ha llamado mucho la atención es que en la cultura anglosajona, si alguien va a predicar o dar un discurso, el/la orador/a debe llevar su pieza oratoria escrita y debe leerla a su audiencia, como muestra de que ha preparado previamente. Si, por el contrario, se presenta sin su discurso o sermón escrito, esto puede ser interpretado como símbolo de improvisación y de una escasa preparación del orador, quien muy probablemente, apelará a una serie de improvisaciones.

Todo lo contrario ocurre en la cultura latina. Se considera que un/a orador/a es bueno/a y que se ha preparado previamente, si es capaz de elaborar su discurso con fluidez, sin necesidad de escribir en su totalidad cada una de las palabras que pronunciará ante su público. Si una persona necesita leer su discurso, ello suele interpretarse como impericia para hablar en público y carencia de conocimiento pleno sobre la materia de la cual dirigirá su pieza oratoria. Por lo general se con-

sidera que cualquiera puede leer un papel, pero sólo aquellos que se han preparado realmente sobre el tema pueden prescindir de la lectura.

Este elemento nos lleva a otro aspecto importante, en la cultura latina tanto el contenido de los mensajes, como la forma en que se transmiten son fundamentales para lograr una retroalimentación entre oradores y audiencia. La oratoria es una herramienta muy importante en el ministerio con comunidades latinas. La fluidez y frecuencia de las comunicaciones interpersonales, provocan una mayor apertura emocional al hablar y hace que las formas de comunicación estén, muchas veces, cargadas de una emotividad e intensidad que se refleja en una gesticulación, que para otras culturas resulta vistosa y en algunos casos vehemente.

CONCLUSIÓN

Las experiencias y puntos de vista expuestos anteriormente no pretender ser una verdad absoluta, ni mucho menos estereotipar o encasillar a las personas procedentes de la cultura latina. Esto sería sumamente difícil e irreal debido a la cantidad de culturas que se han tratado de agrupar bajo el término “latino.” Sin embargo, hemos pretendido expresar algunas de nuestras apreciaciones, las cuales son producto de nuestra experiencia de fe, de nuestro aprendizaje cultural para la sobrevivencia y de nuestra experiencia en el ministerio con latinos y anglosajones. Esperamos que esta reflexión pueda servir como un acercamiento a nuestra cultura por parte de aquellos que no conocen mucho de ella y que desean desarrollar ministerios con la comunidad latina.

Watch with Me: A Parable for Faith Practices in Health Ministry

Kirsten Peachey

For many seminarians, clinical pastoral education (CPE) is one of their first exposures to the often-confusing world of the U.S. health care system. It may be the first time they really begin to think about what it means to be well and how a faith community might be a resource to a person who is sick, grieving, or in pain. Often CPE provides a context to learn about and observe the connections between faith and health. But what happens when the student leaves the CPE environment and heads into congregational leadership? Is health and healing just the purview of the chaplain?

As the director of a health ministry program for a large, faith-based health system, my work is to engage religious leaders and their congregations in developing ministries and programs that promote good health. There is a national health ministry movement that supports this work; health professionals, though, drive much of this movement. As a clergyperson, I often find myself searching for ways to bring a deeper theological and ministry perspective to the field.

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So much of what we do in health ministry focuses on bringing resources to the congregation—speakers, screenings, fairs, programs, and workshops. I have big notebooks in my resource library with methods for forming health committees, activity suggestions, and curricula for this and that. I offer training and consultation on how to start a health ministry in the congregation, programs that are mostly attended by health professionals. I send out a bulletin insert to a couple thousand churches and individuals each month with health tips and information. Sometimes I wonder if all the activities distract from the wealth of the community’s practices and knowledge of health—something that is maybe a little harder to get at but is ultimately a more meaningful approach to healthy ministry.

Faith practices, as they are described by Dorothy Bass in her book *Practicing Our Faith*, are often found in the stories that we tell about our lives.¹ So, in that spirit, I continue this reflection with a story that points toward the ways in which the practices of our faith might provide the roots to ground us in a more integrated approach to health ministry.

In his book *That Distant Land*, Wendell Berry tells the story of Thacker “Nightlife” Hample, a young man who is prone to occasional psychological breaks. As one neighbor describes his condition: “He don’t fit the hole that was bored for him.” One evening, the third night of the church revival, Nightlife decides that it is his turn to preach. Not wanting to go off schedule, the preacher dismisses him. Nightlife makes a scene anyway, and Ptolemy Proudfoot, a big, steady, perpetually rumpled man, is elected to sit with him and talk him through. As Berry describes it, “No clever persuasion was involved. With his big hand resting on Nightlife’s shoulder or his knee, Tol told him that everybody liked him and didn’t hold anything against him and thought he was a good fellow and wanted him to go home now and get a good night’s sleep.”²

The next morning, Tol is in his barnyard with his neighbor Sam wrestling with a cow that wouldn’t be milked and hunting a snake that was trying to steal his chicken eggs. Nightlife walks into the barnyard and picks up the gun that Tol had just used to shoot at the snake. “Why, a damned fellow just as well shoot hisself, I reckon,” Nightlife says, and he walks away across the pasture with the gun.

Tol, at a loss for what to do, tells Sam, “I expect I’ll just ease along with him a ways.” Sam goes into the house to alert Tol’s wife to the situation, and Tol takes off across the fields after Nightlife.

When he heard the screen door slam as Sam stepped into the kitchen, a kind of wonder came over Tol, for almost in the twinkling of an eye he had crossed the boundary between two worlds. In spite of the several small troubles of that

morning, he had been in a world that was more or less the world he thought it was, and where at least some things happened more or less as he intended. But now he was walking down through the wet grass of his cow pasture toward the edge of his woods, a place as familiar to him as the palm of his own hand, in a world and a day in which he intended only to follow Nightlife and foresaw nothing.³

Nightlife walks for hours, stopping occasionally to drink and rest. He doesn't hurry, but walks with purpose, as if he has a destination in mind. Tol follows without calling out or trying to capture Nightlife. Along the way other men join him—Sam, Walter, Tom, Braymer, Put, Lester, Burley. They fan out behind Nightlife, moving when he moves, stopping when he stops, keeping him in sight but never getting too close for fear they might startle him into shooting himself or them. The men sweat in the summer sun and work up a fierce appetite with all the walking. They complain and wonder why Nightlife doesn't just get it over with if he's going to kill himself so they can go back to their work. But they don't break their walking vigil.

After walking for miles throughout the day and the night, he leads them back to Tol's house and into the barn. With the men gathered around him, he invites them to join him in a hymn—*The Unclouded Day*:

*O land of cloudless day,
O the land of an unclouded day;
O they tell me of a home where no storm clouds rise,
O they tell me of an unclouded day.*

And then he preaches the sermon he had wanted to preach in the first place on the text of Matthew 18:12—the story of the good shepherd who searches for the lost sheep. Nightlife hears the text from the perspective of the lost sheep.

“Oh, it's a dark place, my brethren,” Nightlife said. “It's a dark place where the lost sheep tries to find his way, and can't. The slopes is steep and the footing hard. The ground is rough and stumbly and dark, and overgrown with bushes and briars, a hilly and hollery place. And the shepherd comes a-looking and a-calling to his lost sheep, and the sheep knows the shepherd's voice and he wants to go to it, but he can't find the path, and he can't make it.”⁴

The men are deeply moved by his preaching and sit quietly as Nightlife speaks. The whole story comes to a mundane end as one of Tol's chickens flaps around at Nightlife because he is standing in front of her nest. He gives her a whack that “would have given second thoughts to a mule,” and she falls squawking to the ground. In that moment, Nightlife comes back to himself. The women watching

from the porch ring the dinner bell, and everyone goes into the kitchen for the meal which they had been cooking on since the day before...including Nightlife's worried mother who had been held by the community of women as they worked together.

After that, anytime the story is told, Tol's wife Minnie always said, "Poor old Thacker Hample. They kept him alive that time anyhow. They and the Good Lord. ...and don't you know that old hen survived it all. She hatched fourteen chicks and raised them, every one."⁵

This beautiful story is a benchmark for me of what it means for congregations and communities to care about each other: Regular, every-day people accompanying each other when the need arises; moving from the ordinary to the sacred in just a moment as they fall in next to someone who is hurting. It is the sensibility of this story that I find myself looking to as I try to deepen my own understanding of what it means to address health within a faith community.

Tol and his family, friends, and neighbors didn't need professionals to tell them how to care for Nightlife. They didn't need a committee. They didn't need an educational workshop or a speaker's bureau. They didn't need a resource directory. They didn't need "clever persuasion."

Tol and his friends weren't perfect. They complained. They hungered. They didn't understand what Nightlife was doing. They were scared. But they were steeped enough in the practices of their faith to know that the practices would sustain them, even though they weren't sure exactly what to do. Tol and his friends simply connected with what they knew at a gut level—that Nightlife was in trouble and needed someone to sit with him with a hand on his knee and reassure him that the community cared for him. They knew that it might help to "ease along with him a ways." They knew that caring for him *together* was the only way they would be able to sustain the vigil across the miles and the unknown. Despite their impatience with Nightlife, they knew that the work they had been pulled away from would wait or would be covered by someone else. They knew that there were people (the women!) back at their houses that were joining them by cooking for them, feeding the animals, doing the chores, and preparing to meet whatever challenges arose while they were away. They had the integrative ingredient that brings the community to health and life.

This is the power of the faith practices material brought to us by *Practicing Our Faith*. Bass, as editor, drew together the people to speak and write about certain practices because it is hard in our urban, scattered, fast, self-concerned society to trust what Tol and his friends knew. Bass notes in the preface,

We yearn for a richer and deeper understanding of what it means to live as Christians in a time when basic patterns of human relationship are changing all around us. We want to know what Christian faith has to do with our work, with friendship and marriage, with the way we raise our children, with public and political life, with how we spend our money.⁶

The book reminds us that it is really not that complicated. We have the resources in front of us. The practices of our faith traditions prepare us for these times when, like Tol, we are called to move from the ordinary to the sacred in a “twinkling of an eye.”

Gary Gunderson, the director of the Interfaith Health Program at Emory University says, “The cutting edge of health and wholeness does not lie up some unexplored river, over some academic horizon, in come clever new management paradigm, out amid some cosmic mystery. The cutting edge is in between us, among those who literally share our breath and water, our food and shelter. The cutting edge of health ministries is not technical, but relational, how we care for each other.”⁷

Here is affirmation of the mystery that we stand on as people of faith—that God works in the world through us and that, when we attend carefully to our relationships, God’s healing and saving power is made real in our lives.

We believe that the practice of extending hospitality is a fundamental part of what it means to be a person of faith. We preach that when you take in the stranger, you take in Jesus the Christ, the Buddha, an angel. We rehearse the act of taking in the stranger as we tell the stories of our faith tradition, as we engage in the rituals of Holy Communion or *Shabbat*, as we step forward in small, seemingly inconsequential ways to touch someone on the margin. Can it be that these acts are really the heart of ministries of health, healing, and wholeness? No need for a fancy program. Let’s just take care in reaching out to people who are lonely, sick, in pain, rejected, devalued and trust that healing will happen in ways we can’t even imagine.

In our over-programmed, fast-paced society, stress, anxiety, and depression are rampant. Could it be that what we know about keeping Sabbath might really be at the heart of our healing? Could making space for stillness, cultivating family time, refusing to be sucked into the spending and pursuit of material things for one day each week actually make our bodies and minds feel better? This requires choices that sometimes go against the grain. Maybe we’re not up on all the newest technology, media, or television shows.

When I was in high school, the girl’s basketball team practiced after the boy’s team, which meant the practice cut into dinnertime. My parents didn’t let me go out

for the team because we ate dinner together as a family. I hated that decision at the time, but now I see how important it was to ground me in a sacred family routine that kept our lives simpler and more connected. Keeping the family mealtime sacred was a practice that contributed to my health and wholeness and to the health of my family, as well.

Jerry Springer encourages people to rage at each other on television. Someone pulls out in front of us, and we feel compelled to teach the offender a lesson by laying on our horn or extending a rude hand salute. There is very little in our society that encourages us to give up the grudges and burdens of anger that we carry. But our faith traditions teach us that forgiveness is part of a life of spiritual and relational health. The social scientists have gotten on board, and their research is showing that the rituals of confession, repentance, blessing, and redemption that we practice in our worship services actually promote physical health, too.

Weight loss seminars and exercise programs are critical in a time when overweight and obesity are overtaking tobacco use as a health risk indicator. But is there something about engaging the faith practice of saying “yes” and saying “no” that could help us manage the abundance that seems to have crippled us so severely? Is there a leadership role for faith communities to play in restoring balance to a culture of “too much?”

In all faith traditions, food sharing is at the heart of religious life. Holy Communion, the Seder, fasting and feasting during Ramadan are examples of the ways in which eating together help us touch the holy. Recently Advocate Health Care, along with Church World Service—an ecumenical organization addressing hunger and poverty in the United States and around the world—published a curriculum for congregations that addresses how we can eat in ways that express the commitments of our faith. *Just Eating? Practicing Our Faith at the Table* leads participants through a process of thinking about and experiencing a relationship with food that honors the body, the earth, other people in the world, our spirits, and our sense of community. Rather than focusing on weight loss and dieting, the idea is to give attention to the sacredness of the act of every day eating. There is a reason why food is central to our faith traditions. Why is that and how can that inform the choices we make about how we sustain our bodies with food?

For the folks in Wendell Berry’s story, a shared meal offers redemption and reunion with community, celebration, hope, and physical nurture. If we are intentional about the way we integrate faith commitments and the meaning of eating together, people of faith might actually have something to offer in the social

conversation about obesity that goes beyond basic lessons in calorie counting and the virtues of physical exercise.

Another fascinating example of how the things we know as people of faith are being recognized and incorporated into the larger discussion about health is a project of the Joint Center for Political and Economic Studies, a national, nonprofit research and public policy institution. Founded in 1970 by black intellectuals and professionals to provide training and technical assistance to newly elected black officials, the Joint Center is recognized today as one of the nation's premier think tanks on a broad range of public policy issues of concern to African Americans and other communities of color. This policy institute sponsors a *Commission on the Courage to Love*, a project exploring how to impact the high rates of infant mortality among African Americans. The overview of the project states that:

...there is new and promising research on the lack of social support and presence of unmitigated stress as potentially contributing factors to preterm births and infant mortality rates. However unconscious or coincidental, these studies are emerging at a time when philosophers, theologians, and scientists are beginning to consider relationality and complexity as substantive of human nature, as constitutive of what it means to be human. The Commission will address the question: *If relationships are primary and all else is derivative, what then are the implications for care, research, and public policy to reduce infant mortality?*⁸

If even intellectuals and policy makers are getting turned on to the efficacy of relationships, how can we in faith communities sit quietly and serenely on the bounty of wisdom we have about caring for people. Congregations, faith leaders, religious groups should be shouting what we know from the rooftops!

There is no doubt that relationships are hard work and often congregations struggle to get it right. It's not easy to accompany a guy like Nightlife...and which congregation isn't challenged by someone like him in its midst? If we can step into the discomfort and claim what we know, though, we begin to touch the mystery of faith and healing.

Faith practices are the things that help us stay in that often awkward and challenging place at the cutting edge in between us, where we share breath and water, food and shelter. Faith practices are the things that we do together over time that tie us together and that are rehearsals for these "real" moments when we are called on to live out what our faith traditions call us to—things like practicing hospitality, keeping Sabbath, forgiving, healing, sharing a meal, dying, singing, setting limits.

I believe that, at the heart of it, health and well-being are the basic work of the faith community. In the Christian tradition, we affirm that Jesus came that we

might have life and have it abundantly. The word “salvation” shares the same root as the word “heal”—*salvos*, to salve. The faith practices framework offers an important context for the growth of the health ministry movement toward a more integrated approach.

Perhaps most importantly, when the practices of faith are the starting point, health and healing become the work of the entire congregation. Faith practices are communal. They aren’t things that we do on our own. Everyone—children, elders, the able and the “differently abled”—takes part in the practices of the faith and thus in the healing activity of the congregation.

When we talk about health ministry with the language of faith practices, the pastor or religious leader can play a greater role. Normally a health ministry approach seeks the support of the clergy person for the development of a committee and to bring messages of health from the pulpit. A faith practices approach capitalizes on the capacity of the faith leader as a theologian, teacher, preacher, visionary, and moral voice. The religious leaders can speak about what they know—that God created us to be whole and that the things that we do together as people of faith are at the heart of what brings us to wholeness.

Typically in the health ministry world, congregations are valued as venues for programs or as vehicles for mobilizing people to come out for events. The religious leader is seen as an important voice for getting across certain health messages. These functions are important, but have the potential of keeping the congregation in the position of seeking answers about how to achieve health and wellness only from the experts on the outside. A faith practice framework allows faith communities to extend themselves into the culture as leaders in defining what it means to be healthy—integrated and whole.

Maybe instead of teaching congregations about assessment and data-gathering methods, I ought to invite them to make use of a discernment process that they have found works for them. Maybe testimony from people in the faith community about the saving power of love in their lives would unleash a program of mutual caring that could never have been imagined before. Maybe voices lifted together in song would bring hope and happiness in ways that a structured program of support never could.

These days I see that my job is really not that complicated either. Maybe I just need to communicate the message that health ministry isn’t a new technical wonder. Health ministry includes recovering, reclaiming, and tending to the ways we share our breath and water, our food and shelter. It is about watching with each

other along the journey and believing that how we do that really does transform us and provide sustenance for health, healing, and wholeness.

This tending to the faith community as resource has implications for how religious leaders see themselves (pastoral identity) and how they name their competencies for ministry.

It is a shift in the vision upon which supervision and training is focused no matter what the venue for training in ministry. It moves health and congregational ministry from many functions to more community affirmations, blessings, and empowerment of its own internal resources.

NOTES

1. Dorothy Bass, ed., *Practicing Our Faith: A Way of Life for a Searching People* (San Francisco, Calif.: Jossey-Bass, 1997).
2. Wendell Berry, "Watch With Me" in *That Distant Land: The Collected Stories* (Washington, D.C.: Shoemaker Hoard, 2004), 78.
3. *Ibid.*, 85.
4. *Ibid.*, 121.
5. *Ibid.*, 123.
6. Dorothy Bass, *Practicing Our Faith*, x.
7. Gary Gunderson, "The Forest, the Spring, the Leaven" (presented at United Church of Christ Council for Health and Human Services Ministries Annual Meeting, St. Louis, Mo., 6 March 1998).
8. Emphasis mine. From the Joint Center for Political and Economic Studies web site at <www.jointcenter.org/healthpolicy/commission.php>, accessed 10 February 2006.

**Called and Trained:
The Mission of Spiritual Direction
and the Training of Spiritual Directors**

Lucy Abbott Tucker

It was Elizabeth's fourth birthday, and it had been quite a special day. There were birthday cupcakes for snack in pre-school, and dinner at home had included grandparents, presents, and birthday cake. The last thing Elizabeth wanted to do was to go to bed. Her mother was sitting next to her, trying to settle her in for the evening. They were chatting about the day and all the wonderful things that had happened. Her mother was tenderly telling her what a good girl she was and how special she was to her parents. Elizabeth was prolonging the conversation as much as a four-year-old can possibly do when she said something that took even her mother by surprise. Elizabeth quite solemnly announced that she remembered the day she was born. Her mother, quite intrigued with the notion, asked what she remembered. Elizabeth replied that she remembered that mommy was there and daddy was there

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and then announced that God had also been there. Her mother murmured, “Yes, I was there and so was daddy, but how did you know God was there?” With all the surety of four years, Elizabeth announced, “I saw her, she had pigtails!”

Elizabeth’s response might bring a smile or a chuckle to many of us. Perhaps Elizabeth was beginning to be aware of something that continues to be important throughout our lives, our great desire to be in union with God, understanding that union through our images, and sharing our sense of that union with others. Elizabeth’s mother is a model of respectful listening. It was critical that her mother receive her story with all the solemnity with which it was told.

Similarly so, spiritual directors must listen and tend carefully to the life stories that reveal the sacred in the lives of directees. Three prayer disciplines—ways in which individuals actively participate in the reality of God in their lives—are common to many individuals seeking spiritual direction. The foundational discipline is the call to faithfulness. From a deeply rooted sense of faithfulness arise the other two disciplines: a call to mission and a call to rest. In our preparation of spiritual directors, we must give attention to the way these ministers respond to these calls in their own lives. Then, we help directors identify and use the gifts and skills necessary to be effective companions to others who seek to follow these invitations.

THE CALL TO FAITHFULNESS

In the Christian tradition, the Incarnation is an invitation to each of us to learn how to embrace life and live fully present to all the realities that fill our days. Jesus was present to every moment of his life, and invites us to live in the fullness and complexity of that same kind of presence. This means that parts of reality that are difficult or painful to embrace need to be held equally with the joy and wonder of life as gift and grace. The invitation of grace involves taking a stance, of embracing and seeking the presence of God within all that is happening in life at this very moment. We cannot live dwelling solely on our past experiences of God or leaning totally forward into a future when God will be present again. Rather, we are called to live fully rooted in the present with confidence in the activity of God within our experiences at this exact moment. This gives us hope and faith to live on integrating our lives.

In the Buddhist tradition, Pema Chodron reminds us about living mindfully every moment of life. She acknowledges that this is often more difficult with painful or difficult experiences. In her book *The Places That Scare You*, she writes, “Tapping into that shaky and tender place has a transformative effect. Being in this place may feel uncertain and edgy but it’s also a big relief. Just to stay there, even for a moment, feels like a genuine act of kindness to ourselves.”¹

Living mindfully at this exact moment is not always easy, but it is essential to transformation. This experience of transformation is a wildly self-transcending process and invites us to continuously go beyond what went before. We must learn from what has happened and add the new experiences of our lives. As we learn this, we come to a new place, a new wholeness. Oftentimes we perceive transformation as giant leaps from one precipice in life to another. While there are such moments, experience teaches that most often our transformation precedes one small step after another with occasional movements backwards into more familiar, comfortable places. In order to take the next small step, we must be willing to embrace our life experiences, to revere all that they contain, and finally to allow them to be our teacher, our guide. All too often we try to manipulate our experience to fit what we already know or desire. We try to mold our experiences so that they fit into our lives. If we believe in the presence and activity of God in every moment of life, then it follows that every moment is a time of grace. The invitation is to stand deeply rooted in the moment and be open to it as gift, guide, and teacher.

Realizing again that all experiences are not pleasant or easy to embrace, we can learn from the experience of Jesus at Gethsemane. In Mark’s gospel, we read how Jesus came to Gethsemane the evening before his death with Peter, James, and John. From a place of distress, he said to them, “My heart is filled with sorrow to the point of death. Stay here (with me) and keep watch.”² In such a difficult moment, he greatly desired the support of his friends, and they were unable to stay awake with him until the end. Alone in his fear and sorrow, Jesus shows us that all aspects of life are transformative, even those that are lonely and costly. When we can be open and receptive to the experiences of life, the transformation or the sense of union with God that we so deeply desire becomes an active reality.

The prayer discipline that we need to live true to life is one of faithfulness. The invitation is to notice God’s faithfulness to us and our response of faith. This kind of faithfulness nourishes our true selves, the place of love within us that is generative in its activity. From this kind of faithfulness arises a call to mission to the greater world in which we live. We create a widening circle of understanding

and compassion in which we live that extends to embrace all living creatures and the whole of the cosmos.

THE CALL TO MISSION

When I was about twelve years old, I used to love to walk by myself in the woods near our home. My mother didn't really approve of the woods, since this is where the teenagers often went to sneak cigarettes. I, however, would often seek out this quiet, peaceful place. One beautiful autumn day while walking in the woods, I was stopped by the sheer beauty of the moment. I found myself in a beautiful place where the sun was shining through the trees and warming me to just the right temperature, the only sound the soft movement of leaves. I could do nothing at that moment but stand still. As I stood there, I had a sense that my feet were growing roots. I knew that somehow or other I was connected with everything: the woods in which I was walking, the sun shining down on me, all people who had, who were, and who would walk the earth.

In the fanciful mind of a twelve-year-old, I experienced it as a sense of connection that went all the way to the other side of the world. It was an experience of connection with the Transcendent. A connection that was almost transparent. At the time, I understood that something important was happening to me although exactly what I could not articulate. Today, I understand the story as my call to mission, a call to recognize the greater reality in which I live and a call to participate in that reality through the creative activity of my own life. I see it as an invitation to participate in the creative activity of God.

The faithfulness that nourishes our true selves invites us to be in union with others through mission. When we are profoundly with ourselves, we are invited to be profoundly with others. This invitation is about something much greater than responsibility to be a good citizen. It is a realization of the delight that comes in the process of creating and of the way creation completes both others and ourselves. We each create in different ways. All religious practices however tell us that at some moment we move beyond self to care for the cosmos. Parker Palmer, in his book *Let Your Life Speak*, says, "Go far enough on the inner journey, they all tell us—go past ego toward true self—and you end up not lost in narcissism but returning to the world, bearing more gracefully the responsibilities that come with being human."²³

As one hears and responds to the unique word of God that is spoken within, one is lead to engage the world in a manner that enriches. The Transcendent is in the actual experiences of life, and as we touch that reality in our own lives we are invited to share from that place in generosity, kindness, and love. This mission is much more than being of help to another. This mission is much more than providing for others. While these are important elements of our life, if I am only serving from a place of responsibility, I soon tire, grow discouraged, and often angry that all I am doing is not received with gratitude.

Mission is not a subtle invitation for another to become what I desire or wish for them. Mission truly understands service and selfless giving, which does not mean it is not costly, but rather that I am not tied to expected results. Mission has a selfless heart that does not unite success with the way a gift is received and used.

THE CALL TO REST: SABBATH HONORING OF THE BODY

A retreatant told this story to me several years ago. Catherine was celebrating the sixtieth anniversary of her religious profession and had come on retreat to assist her in discerning her next moment of life.

She was using Luke 1:39 where Mary sets out to visit her cousin Elizabeth. With a lively imagination she pictured the scene, Mary riding a small donkey through the arid land going to visit her cousin. Mary was both troubled and joyful. There was that mysterious visit from the angel earlier in the chapter with news of her own pregnancy as well as the unexpected news of Elizabeth's conception. Catherine decided that she would enter the scene and walk beside Mary on this journey. She too was experiencing both worry and joy. She was leaving a familiar home and community to move back to the motherhouse and to begin retirement. She never failed to say retirement without adding, "Whatever that means."

So, clothing herself with comfortable sandals, she moved toward Mary in her imagination. She was delighted with the warmth with which she was received and felt humbled and honored that Mary slid off the donkey she was riding so they could speak more intimately. As they continued on the journey, Mary suggested that Catherine might ride the donkey instead of tiring herself out by walking. Catherine refused and suggested that Mary ought to ride since she was pregnant. Mary said "no," that she was fine, and they continued walking and talking. A second time, Mary suggested that Catherine might ride the donkey. This time as she began

once again to refuse the invitation, Mary said to her, “Catherine, you’re an old lady. Get on the donkey.”

When sharing this story with me, Catherine laughed and laughed. She understood the experience as an invitation to see herself clearly and to be willing to accept the rest that she needed in order to continue to live with faithfulness and a sense of mission.

Often, the men and women that I see for spiritual direction are tired. This fatigue comes not just from a lack of sufficient sleep. It is a fatigue that comes from not knowing how to nourish themselves so they can continue in faithfulness and in mission. Several years ago, business journals and magazines talked about burnout; more frequently now we read about stress. Perhaps what we need to call our attention to is how we nourish ourselves so that we can remain in a stance of faithfulness and mission.

Several years ago, I heard Sister Jose Hobday⁴ suggest that we try and order our days around eight hours of work, eight hours of sleep, and eight hours of recreational activities. She suggested that simplifying our lives in this way enriches not only us but those to whom we minister. She also believes that simplifying our lives in this manner gives us more time for mission. Jose Hobday reminds us that the American Indian did not have a word for “work” until the Europeans came to the country—their word was “life.”

As people working in mission, we must be attentive to what place is given to the re-creative activity of our own lives. The issues of self-care and intimacy with significant others, with friends and family needs to be attended to with reverence for self. Often, people living from a place of mission spend large portions of their day giving to others. In the best situations, this giving also provides nourishment, an exchange of energy that leaves both people enriched. Frequently, the place of mission leaves us giving generously but not necessarily receiving in equal measure. We cannot help but tire from such giving.

Some people respond to mission like sprinters in a foot race. They run as fast as they can for a period of time and then need to stop and rest. Others respond like they are running a marathon, pacing themselves for a longer race. In either situation, the runner needs sufficient rest, oxygen, and water in order to be able to run successfully. While we might get some water and enough oxygen to continue moving and breathing while we are running, our body has a need for more than we are able to provide during these strenuous moments of exercise.

Rest is the process that allows us to live consistent with our deepest desires to be fully present to ourselves and to others. We must order our lives in such a way

that we can continue in mission with love and energy. This means developing an attitude of graciousness and acceptance toward our own needs and it invites an understanding of our own limitations. It means coming to know the people and things that are re-creative in life and giving sufficient time and energy to those activities. People in ministry need to seriously address the issues of self-care that will enable them to continue to be of munificent service to others, to themselves, and to God.

IMPLICATIONS FOR THE MINISTRY OF SPIRITUAL DIRECTION

How do we prepare spiritual directors to be ministers to others who are seeking to be responsive to the calls of faithfulness, mission, and rest in life? Spiritual direction involves both the director's response to a ministerial call and sufficient training for the director to be open and available to the directee.

When preparing men and women for the work of spiritual direction, we must help them to be discerning about their call to this ministry. In addition, there must be sufficient skills training for a director to be competent and to exercise appropriate due care to a directee.⁵ This calls for a level of interiority and honesty about self that is best supported in their engagement in spiritual direction and their commitment to supervision. The realization that we will companion another in the same way we companion our own life stories is a serious invitation to be knowledgeable and gracious about our own lives.

In addition to attention to their own life story, it is important that spiritual directors are provided with sufficient skill training as they prepare for the ministry. There are many skills that can assist spiritual directors to be open, available, and helpful to others as they share their life journey in the direction conversation. Individuals involved in the ministry of spiritual direction must be life-long learners.

Spiritual direction is more than a reporting of information about the directee's life journey. It is a process-oriented experience where the directee actively works on life issues with a director, confident in the presence and activity of God within the direction session. In its best moments, spiritual direction is presence to the direct experience of God. This implies that the director does not need to change, improve, or alter the experience of the directee but invites a deeper presence toward the experience and the activity of God within that very conversation.

What skills help the director to be able to engage in this kind of process-oriented direction? I would like to suggest two themes that need attention in the

preparation of people for the ministry of spiritual direction.⁶ The first is the care and attention that a director must give to the directee. The second is the awareness of self on the part of the director in the direction relationship.

1. Attention to the directee

Spiritual directors must be able to:

- Listen to and hear what a directee is saying or seeking to say without imposing an agenda on the meeting. The director is a companion, a listener to the sacred story found in all the experiences of the directee. A director is an example of a person of hospitality, someone who can listen and pay attention to another.
- Carry an expectation that each person is self-responsible and capable of making the necessary choices and decisions for his or her own life.
- Provide a free and open conversational space so that the stories of the directees can be received as they experience them without censoring, judging, or spiritualizing experiences. Have a willingness to be curious about the life story of another that can allow it to open up to creativity and wonder.
- Notice and use body language in an affective manner. An awareness of both congruence and incongruence in body language in relation to what is being shared can help a director invite deeper levels of understanding and sharing. An awareness of the skill of focusing with another can be a great asset to the direction conversation.⁷
- Understand and relate to the content that is being shared without imposing an agenda on what another is experiencing; respond to the directee in a manner that indicates belief in the presence and activity of God within whatever is happening without needing to impose that belief on the directee; match the emotional tone of the directee while being aware of both too much and too little affect.
- Communicate in a clear and concise manner an understanding of what has been shared so the directee can move forward in the emerging patterns of his or her story.
- Attend to the images that are used and help a directee explore these at a deeper level. This includes an ability to use skills like active imagination and dream work, since dreams are a particular area where images are helpful to self-knowledge and growth.
- Stay with another person in experiences of both light and darkness. Finding God in the lived experience and supporting the directee's presence to those experiences. Recognizing that we meet God in our yearnings, struggles, and joys.

- Recognize the time and place for challenge and confrontation and possess the gentleness and respect for the other that must accompany challenge in order for it to be helpful; willingly speak honestly and kindly with another as a growth producing part of the spiritual direction relationship; notice incongruence between lived and expressed values, between desires and actions, or between behaviors and desired outcomes as moments when difficult issues need to be addressed in a manner that is constructive for the directee.
- Know the process of discernment that accompanies growth and willingly allow the directee to move through all the stages of discernment, which includes darkness, uncertainty, and limits; believe that the directee has the inner resources necessary to make good and sound judgments for his or her own life. Discernment is a time for an individual to recognize and take responsibility for his or her own personal strengths.
- Exhibit a profound respect for the beliefs and denominational doctrines of a directee; recognize the God experience of another without needing to change it for a person and have an awareness of the confusion that comes when God images are changing and expanding; allow a person to develop the God story that is uniquely his or her own, to discover their own spirituality.
- Respect the privacy and confidentiality of the spiritual direction relationship. This includes providing an appropriate setting for the spiritual direction conversation, not discussing the names of people who come for spiritual direction, and strict adherence to the confidential nature of the conversation.⁸

2. Awareness of self

The second theme needing attention as we prepare people for the ministry of spiritual direction is the director's awareness of self.

- While the spiritual direction session is primarily about the directee, it is important to recognize that the director is also impacted and should be changed by his or her participation in the conversation. When we enter with another into the active presence of God we are impacted. Each spiritual direction conversation is an invitation to a director to name, notice, and attend to God's in-breaking in their own life.
- The issues of personal relationships, intimacy, sexuality, justice, and mission need to be seriously attended to in the life of the spiritual director. Just as a directee is responding to calls of faithfulness, mission, and rest, so too is the director. How a director responds to these calls will directly impact the direction conversation.
- A director needs to be aware of the personal attractiveness that draws people to them as spiritual directors. While continuing to be open, caring, loving directors, they must also be reverent toward the appropriate boundaries of the

spiritual direction relationship. As directors we should be profoundly attracted by the mystery of the human person and God's activity with people and have the wisdom and maturity to invite people to explore that mystery. We must genuinely like and care for others from an authentic place within ourselves.

- There must be sufficient training in both theological and psychological principles to enable a director to provide the kind of intimacy that self-disclosure requires.
- Lastly, a spiritual director must be humble enough to genuflect. To see and reverence the God presence that is within the directee and within him or herself and in the relationship.

CONCLUSION

In her poem *The Dance*, Oriah Mountain Dreamer says:

*Don't tell me how wonderful things will be...someday.
Show me you can risk being completely at peace,
truly okay with the way things are right now in this moment,
and again in the next and the next and the next. ...⁹*

This is the kind of presence that spiritual directors need to bring to the direction relationship, a presence that is sure of God's presence and activity now and that it is truly good.

NOTES

1. Pema Chodron, *The Places That Scare You: A Guide to Fearlessness in Difficult Times* (Boston, Mass.: Shambhala Publications, 2001), 9.

2. Mark 14:33–34 (Inclusive New Testament).

3. Parker J. Palmer, *Let Your Life Speak: Listening for the Voice of Vocation* (San Francisco, Calif.: Jossey-Bass, 2000), 73.

4. Sister Jose Hobday is a Franciscan sister and a Seneca elder. She holds several advanced degrees including one in architecture. She says that we must learn to build a cathedral of

beautiful space around ourselves wherever we are on the planet. Her version of John 10:10 is “I have come that you may have life and live it to the hilt!”

5. Many places prepare men and women for the ministry of spiritual direction. In addition, Spiritual Directors International (SDI)—an organization that helps spiritual directors network with others engaged in the ministry and provides education for both the trainers of spiritual directors and those engaged in the ministry of spiritual direction—has prepared *Guidelines for Ethical Conduct* that detail the responsible behavior of all those engaged in the ministry of spiritual direction. The *Guidelines* are available for order from SDI’s web site at <www.sdiworld.org/ethical_guidelines2.html>.

6. SDI has proposed five principles that should be present in the training programs for spiritual directors in the United States. These principles address the areas of discernment, psychological dimensions, theological dimension, practicum, and supervision.

7. Eugene Gendlin at the University of Chicago first described the skill of focusing. His book *Focusing* (New York: Bantam Books, 1981) describes the process and the implications for the daily life of an individual. The process can be gently used within the direction conversation whether or not the directee is familiar with the practice.

8. As in any helping profession, there are times when a director has a responsibility to either report an issue to an appropriate authority, e.g., in the case of abuse of a minor or elder, or to obtain sufficient help for a directee so that no harm is caused to self or to others, or e.g., in the case of threat of suicide or harm to another. It is important that spiritual directors are knowledgeable about how and to whom to report such issues. In addition, many spiritual directors find it helpful to give those coming for spiritual direction written information about such responsibilities in their initial meeting.

9. Oriah Mountain Dreamer, *The Dance* (San Francisco, Calif.: Harper, 2001), prelude xiii.

Strategic Practices for Communal Formation and Renewal: Applying Lessons from Academia

Paul F. Jeffries

Cultivating the Christian practices is essential for those called to direct and lead a Christian community—whether a local congregation or parish or some other fellowship of Christians. Leaders of Christian communities that have faithfully lived out their mission have typically embraced central practices that embody those missions.¹ When considering how to equip people called to various forms of ministry, a central feature of that preparation must be to instill a deep commitment to the Christian practices. Until those who are providing direction to Christian communities are themselves shaped by these foundational practices, the very communities they build will lack the strength to withstand the ubiquitous influences that undermine communities.

The personal journey that has led me to have such a deep appreciation of and commitment to the Christian practices has been, to use the title of a well-known Beatles' song, a *Long and Winding Road*. From my days as a college freshman in

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the mid 1970s to my most recent service as a faculty member, I have discovered that one of my most important tasks is to help people become committed to Christian practices. A more thorough understanding of the Christian practices benefits everyone—from undergraduates searching for a major and graduate students preparing for academic or professional careers, to faculty colleagues seeking to create an academic community, or to members of a local congregation. Moreover, the cultivation of these practices is even more important among those called to pastoral vocations.

My commitment to the importance of the practices has developed both from my involvement in “hands on” ministry activities and from my theoretical reflection on this topic. My practical experience spans thirty years of ministry and has included everything from being involved in Christian undergraduate, graduate student, and faculty fellowship groups, to serving as a staff worker for student-led campus ministry groups, an ordained elder in a local congregation, and a faculty member at a Presbyterian college and seminary. My theoretical reflection on the importance of the Christian practices deepened during my time as a divinity school student and then as a doctoral student in philosophy. My ongoing research in philosophy revolves around the work of Alasdair MacIntyre—a central figure in contemporary philosophical discussions of traditions, practices, and virtues. This research has caused me to conclude that the formation of practices is central to the formation of community. By combining practical and theoretical explanations in this essay, I hope to demonstrate the strategic importance of a practice-based approach to theological training for creating and sustaining strong communities of faith.

First, I will share some of the practical and theoretical lessons I have learned from my many years of being involved in ministry activities in higher education. Second, I will draw upon my most recent work with non-traditional, pre-seminary students to illustrate why and how a practice-based approach is essential for the spiritual formation of seminary students, clergy, and local Christian communities.

CHRISTIAN PRACTICES IN ACADEMIA

While I acknowledge that developing a student-led Christian fellowship group at a university presents unique challenges, I believe it can still offer helpful lessons for developing other forms of ministry. Typically, most campus ministries are not

officially “churches.”² Furthermore, at the undergraduate level, the age range of those participating in the group’s activities is often narrow.³ Student-led campus fellowships are dependent on student leaders cultivated within the groups themselves. Given these factors, the Christian practices are vital to any campus ministry effort.

Through my ministry activities in higher education, I have learned three important lessons that have helped me understand why Christian practices are inextricably tied to the formation of faithful academic fellowships. The first lesson arises from the context of campus ministry, the second lesson has to do with the practice-based nature of being a student, and the third lesson revolves around Christian practices as “counter-disciplinary” activities. Through these lessons, I have come to see the cultivation of Christian practices as central to all ministry activities.

A critical truth regarding the context of campus ministry is that a student group is always “a student generation away from extinction.” In a mere four years, even the most thriving campus fellowship group can disappear if those who lead the group are not actively involved in cultivating the next generation of student leaders. The ongoing need to train others to carry on the ministry is expressed in the Pauline admonition to Timothy, “You then, my child, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus; and what you have heard from me through many witnesses entrust to faithful people who will be able to teach others as well.”⁴ From my time as an undergraduate through my serving as a campus minister and my work as a professor, I have always been keenly aware that I need to be actively involved in training new leaders to carry on the fellowship group’s particular mission. The urgency of the academic context, with its endless—and sometimes rapid—turnover (perhaps like more churches in our culture today), taught me the importance of the strategic need for training others in the Christian practices. To train those who can train others, leaders must be grounded in the Christian practices.

The second lesson I have learned from higher education is that students and faculty alike are involved in practiced-based activities. Academia is an inherently “practice-based” setting; subject areas are not called academic disciplines for nothing. To pursue a course of academic study is to place oneself within a setting where one is being intentionally shaped both implicitly or explicitly. I firmly believe that Christian students and faculty have the responsibility to think critically and “Christianly” about the practices of their academic disciplines. From my perspective, this is one of the primary roles for any Christian campus fellowship group. Such groups must come up with ways to cultivate new intellectual practices

and, at times, new social practices that help make manifest one's Christian commitments.

Many campus ministries have a strong commitment to helping students develop some of the traditional spiritual disciplines, such as regular study of the scriptures, prayer, and worship.⁵ However, these disciplines are not enough to equip either undergraduate or graduate students to fulfill their calling as students. I also seek to cultivate additional practices that help students bring their faith to bear on the fields they are studying.

Integrating a Christian perspective into the thinking of Christians pursuing a course of study is important to the common life in Christian academic fellowships. As is typical in the cultivation of any virtue, early habituation is beneficial to making a practice lifelong. With both undergraduate and graduate students, I stress the importance of "thinking Christianly" about one's academic course of study. I apply the concept of "tithing" to their studies; for example, I suggest that, for every three or four books read for a particular course, they read at least one book that engages that subject from a Christian perspective. Similarly, I encourage students to tithe their time. For every eight to ten hours studying "academic subjects," they devote an hour to studying this subject from a more theological perspective. I also encourage students in their classroom practices. For example, I challenge students to be faithful in their classes by regularly attending them, consistently preparing for them, and thoughtfully participating in them. Often I ask students how they would prepare for classes if they were being taught by Jesus or St. Paul, and then I encourage them to consider the verses from Colossians where Christians are encouraged to see their tasks as being done unto the Lord.⁶ I especially try to cultivate these practices in the student leaders to create a practice-based culture throughout the fellowship groups that helps encourage everyone in the groups to be faithful in their lives as students. Building this set of practices would, if done over a lifetime, lead to a deeper theological perspective on one's vocation. Moreover, one can also hope that some of these practices will also help students to creatively find ways to apply them within the context of their participation in a local church community, for example as faithful participants who consider tithing their time.

In addition to these individually oriented practices, I also emphasize the importance of group practices. The creation of small groups according to academic discipline encourages people to think about how their faith might be brought to bear on issues in their areas of study. For example, those in the Department of English might create a disciplinary group to explore the relationship between Christianity and literature. In some departments, the mere existence of such a group can

encourage other students and faculty to pursue more religious topics of intellectual inquiry. Interdisciplinary groups also play an indispensable role in providing a place where people from different disciplines can challenge one another to examine how their fields, or the respective rival academic areas, are shaping their thinking in ways that may not be consistent with their faith. Many have used these groups to present their research and to practice for a conference or job presentation. What has proven instrumental about these groups is their emphasis on both thinking and acting in ways that make faith relevant to the very questions arising daily in the classroom, lab, or library.

As the practice-based orientation to one's academic life causes one to reflect more deeply on some of the potential implications of one's faith, people often start to see points of possible tension. The third lesson that has shaped my approach to ministry in higher education is that sometimes being committed to Christian practices is in opposition to some of the "disciplinary" practices in higher education. The effort to socialize students into their respective disciplines is significant, and few have the life experience or wisdom to recognize the process they are being subjected to. A critical first step is to cultivate a greater self-awareness of this effort to shape people into a specific disciplinary practice. Academic faith communities can encourage people to develop additional, and sometimes alternative, practices that will help them resist some of the forces trying to form—or, in some cases, deform—them. The words of St. Paul in Romans 12:2 inspire this kind of alternative formation: "Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your minds, so that you may discern what is the will of God—what is good and acceptable and perfect." Trying to find ways to live out this admonition means not being satisfied with mere "intellectual reflections." Instead, our faith has to be lived out through actual practices.

Cultivating a set of "oppositional" practices is vital to the ongoing effort to help those in academic fellowship groups grow in their understanding of what it means to be a faithful disciple—not only of their respective disciplines but, most importantly, of Jesus Christ. This oppositional orientation is in keeping with the prophetic role of the church, both to the societies in which the church finds itself and to the need for reform within the church itself.

In order to counter some of these disciplinary pressures, Christian fellowship groups can develop various strategies and practices to address these challenges. For example, interdisciplinary groups help provide a safe place to think about and give voice to "rival" conceptions of the nature of the academic life promoted within different disciplines.⁷ In such groups, reading books and articles can provide a

conceptual and theological analysis of what it means to be called to a life in academia. Books by Parker Palmer and Mark Schwehn are particularly valuable for these kinds of discussions.⁸ For example, in *Exiles from Eden*, Schwehn proposes a set of virtues that he argues are essential for the creation of healthy academic communities. He encourages the cultivation of humility, faith, self-denial, and love as essential practices not only for Christian academics but for the wider academic community as well.⁹ He argues that these virtues, although often opposed to the typical values within academia, make the very best forms of academic endeavors possible, even in secular contexts.

Other examples of Christian graduate students creatively trying to live out new practices in relation to their disciplines include organizing academic conferences that relate issues of faith and the academy. For example, when I was a graduate student at the University of Minnesota, a history student in our fellowship organized an international conference on approaches to the historical study of missions in Africa, while a political science student in our fellowship organized a conference on the study of religion after secularism. Both were able to involve their departments and receive significant support and recognition from the university for their efforts. In a different vein, Christian science and engineering students would perform science demonstrations for children in local homeless shelters, and music students would perform in various venues, including nursing homes, schools, and shelters. With these efforts, students were engaging in activities that they saw as part of their calling as Christian academics. Although these activities were not always appreciated by their mentors or peers, the participating students began to see how their academic disciplines could be creatively used in the service of the Christian and wider communities. These are just a few of many ways to live out an incarnational approach to Christian practices in academia.

These practices have taken root over the years, as evidenced by the fact that the Graduate Christian Fellowship group at the University of Minnesota continues to thrive at least fifteen years after its inception. Christian graduate students have continued to train new generations of student leaders who have the vision and the practices necessary to sustain the group. Many have gone on to take faculty positions across the country and have continued to live out the practices that were so instrumental in their growth and development as graduate students. Several are involved in Christian undergraduate and/or graduate fellowship groups. Some have taken the lead in cultivating faculty groups. Still others have become involved in leadership roles in their department, their institution's administration, or their professional societies. They have taken seriously the Pauline imperatives to pass on

what they have learned to others who can do the same and to transform their thinking and living in light of their Christian calling.

PRACTICE-BASED PASTORAL FORMATION

Ironically, it is through my work cultivating Christian practices in academia that I have come to see the Christian practices as central to the nurturing of future pastors. One might expect that this relationship should be reversed—that academics should learn about Christian practices from the clergy. However, since our future clergy typically spend seven or eight years in academia, we should consider how to start their study and application of the practices much earlier in their careers, and to do this requires a much earlier habituation process. Given this reality, I have tried to find ways to apply the Christian practices to my work with pre-seminary students pursuing vocations of ordained ministry within the Christian community.

One of the joys of teaching at the University of Dubuque (UD) has been the opportunity to work with students preparing for or in seminary. In both undergraduate religion courses and seminary courses, however, I have sensed that students preparing for ministry seem to be unaware or unsure of how to encourage the spiritual growth in congregations. They are too eager to fall into the roles and expectations that congregations typically place on them. From my perspective, they focus too readily on things that seem urgent, rather than taking time to think about what is important for the growth of church communities. So, for example, those students already serving in churches often are very busy visiting church members who are ill, rather than thinking about how they might help their congregations care for those who are ill as a shared responsibility. I have become increasingly convinced that these clergy-in-training need a deeper commitment to practices that will help them grow in their own faith and will provide structures to help sustain their congregations.

I was given a unique opportunity to apply some of my philosophy of ministry and its practice-based orientation with those preparing for ministry when I received a grant from the Valparaiso Project on the Education and Formation of People in Faith. The Valparaiso Project is “a project whose purpose is to develop resources to help contemporary people live the Christian faith with vitality and integrity in changing times. The Project is ecumenical in orientation and appreciative of the legacies of a range of Christian traditions.”¹⁰ The Valparaiso Project seeks to en-

courage congregations, colleges, and seminaries to consider the significance and role of the Christian practices in the lives of individuals and communities.

My grant project focuses on a special group of undergraduate students attending the UD with the goal of becoming ordained ministers, primarily in the Presbyterian and Methodist denominations. UD's 3/3 Program was designed in the 1970s to help non-traditional students who sense God calling them to ordained ministry but who lack an undergraduate degree. The 3/3 Program allows these students to take three years of undergraduate classes and three years of seminary courses and graduate with both a bachelor's degree and a master of divinity degree in six rather than seven years. While there is no "typical" 3/3 student, the program was intended for someone with another career, say as a farmer or a business person, who believes God is now leading him or her to become a pastor. By enrolling in the 3/3 Program, these non-traditional students can develop the academic background and skills necessary to successfully complete seminary studies.

These students face significant challenges as they enter the world of higher education. Some need to develop their academic skills, some have family obligations, some have heavy work schedules in addition to their academic work, and some even have extensive congregational responsibilities as "student pastors." On top of these issues, they also have to accept that they are in classes or receiving tutoring assistance from fellow students who are often the age of their own children. UD has tried to serve the special needs of these students, but attempts have been unsystematic and have waxed and waned. As the academic adviser for several of these students, I came to appreciate their complicated needs and sought to find a way to provide a more systematic effort to provide them support. Developing a practice-based program seemed a perfect way to serve these students while also providing me an opportunity to integrate my academic approach to Christian practices into a more explicitly religious setting.

I believe the Christian practices are essential to the training and nurturing of future clergy, even before they have officially begun their theological studies. Given my rather strong Aristotelian inclinations, I believe it is better to begin the habituation of Christian practices as soon as possible, for a number of reasons. First, helping 3/3 students develop a commitment to the Christian practices early in their academic studies increases the likelihood that they will continue these practices through their theological studies and into their careers in ministry. Second, encouraging 3/3 students to explore the Christian practices during their undergraduate years helps them begin to see how these practices can be used with younger students they interact with regularly. These 3/3 students have a unique

opportunity because they come in daily contact with the very people they need to reach out to and integrate into their congregations, especially if they want their congregations to continue beyond their predominantly graying members. Third, by studying and applying the Christian practices even before beginning their theological studies, these students will bring more thoughtful reflections to their seminary experience. Their early commitment to the Christian practices will aid their continuing spiritual development and their theological inquiries and better equip them to serve their churches. Fourth, creating an ongoing small group of students shaped by Christian practices will catalyze increased discussion about these practices within the wider seminary community. Fifth, helping future ministers develop lives shaped by practices will lay a better foundation for the spiritual health of these clergypersons. Finally, cultivating clergy committed to the centrality of the Christian practices will enable them to better discern what is critical to the work of the Kingdom of God as opposed to merely serving the business of the church.¹¹

The Valparaiso Project at UD is based largely on models from my ministry activities in academia. For example, a weekly small group for all interested and available 3/3 students is one central activity. Meeting for about an hour and a half, we have an initial time of sharing, followed by a discussion of a particular Christian practice, and concluding with a time of prayer. Many fine texts exist, such as those generated by the Valparaiso Project, including the edited collection *Practicing Our Faith: A Way of Life for a Searching People*.¹² Each chapter of this book is structured around one of the practices, which include honoring the body, hospitality, household economics, saying “yes” and saying “no,” keeping Sabbath, testimony, discernment, shaping communities, forgiveness, healing, dying well, and singing our lives.¹³

To help facilitate the group, a 3/3 student further along in his or her seminary studies helps co-lead the group. This student is able to provide assurance of how valuable the practices can be in seminary and in ministry. This student has already caught the vision and is deeply committed to helping the group. Equally important is the fact that we are modeling how to lead a group, and how to share that leadership, so that the group members can learn to lead their own groups, either in a congregational setting or with fellow clergy in the future. Later in the year, the group shares the leadership among all of its members. This is another way to apply the Pauline admonition in 2 Timothy 2 discussed above.

The 3/3 small groups have been an important source of inspiration and encouragement for the students involved. Students have developed sermon materials—even sermon series—based on our study, discussion, and application of the

practices. Moreover, they have started to have more sophisticated discussions about how a commitment to these practices might transform congregational formation and renewal. Rather than merely discussing how a pastor can possibly visit all the members who are ill each week, for example, students are beginning to discuss how they can cultivate communities committed to the practices of healing and/or dying well. Through these discussions, they are beginning to see the possibility of using Christian practices to create a community. In another example, instead of crafting a program to welcome newcomers, creating a community of people committed to the practice of hospitality will make the church a more welcoming place. These 3/3 students are beginning to see how their study and application of the Christian practices can provide a foundation for rethinking the very nature of ministry within a congregational setting.

In addition to the small group, UD's 3/3 Program also offers a class on the history, theology, and ethical implications of the Christian practices. The course is open to 3/3 students, traditional seminary students, and traditional undergraduate students majoring in religion. The course covers three major topics: the history of how Christian and Jewish communities have used practices in the spiritual formation of their followers, the relationship between theology and these practices, and how to educate the contemporary Christian community about these Christian practices. Students adopt one particular practice and study it throughout the semester for their major research paper. Several of the 3/3 students who began taking seminary classes this year have reported that this course gave them a better grasp of some dimensions of church history. Since the readings for this course present reflections and analysis by pastors and theologians who have done more systematic assessments of the Christian practices and ministry, many students have begun to emulate this type of analysis much earlier in their professional development.

Our Christian practices project includes other activities besides the small group and class. We have several communal meals, which include families and friends, to practice hospitality. The 3/3 group has numerous impromptu gatherings, discussions, and other opportunities to live out their commitment to the Christian practices. Some students also practice outreach into the wider community. One student shared a profoundly moving experience at a meal program hosted by a church. He talked about how he wanted to get out from behind the serving table to try to connect personally with people coming in for the meal. His honest confession about his feelings of awkwardness led to some important insights into the true nature of compassion and what it means to be a welcoming host to a stranger. It has

become clear that encouraging these students to embrace Christian practices, has led to their living out their faith and ministry with increasing depth and insight.

By studying the Christian practices, the 3/3 students have been profoundly challenged to place important boundaries on their work, especially in relation to two particular practices—that of Sabbath-keeping and of saying “yes” and saying “no.” People drawn to ministry have a tendency to try to meet all the needs they encounter as though “yes” must be the main word in a pastor’s lexicon. When given the opportunity to select a particular practice to focus on, the 3/3 students immediately decided on the practice of Sabbath. We used a helpful book by Marva Dawn, *Keeping the Sabbath Wholly: Ceasing, Resting, Embracing, Feasting*, as a catalyst for our discussion.¹⁴ Together we explored various ways to build forms of Sabbath into our weekly routines. We used our small group meetings to hold each other accountable and to share about the successes and failures we had that week in trying to practice Sabbath-keeping. An understanding began to emerge that, by taking time to rest and be with God, we were acknowledging that it was God at work in our work. Its “success” was not primarily dependent on what we did or did not do. We are called to be faithful, including the call to rest in God. By exploring the way in which boundaries can be an important tool in their own spiritual lives and work, the 3/3 students discovered that God can use their “no” as a way to encourage others in their communities to learn to say “yes.” One of the mantras I constantly utter, as much to myself as to my students, is: “The word ‘no’ is a spiritual word, as well.” I am convinced that it is particularly important for students preparing for ordained ministry to learn this truth early. Failure to recognize this reality will lead to a tyrannized ministry and an equally difficult personal life.

I had a pleasantly ironic experience of seeing how this message was sinking in with the 3/3 students. One of the students told me that he could no longer attend the 3/3 group meetings the second semester. He had a particularly demanding academic schedule, his church responsibilities took some unexpected turns, and he was the father of four active children. While he was going to take the Christian practices class that semester, he felt he just had to say “no” to the small group. I confess I was a bit frustrated at first, but, upon further reflection, I realized that this student was actually applying the lesson we had been wrestling with in our group discussions. Realizing this helped me “release” him to the other tasks he sensed God calling him to that semester.¹⁵ This kind of discernment is critical for pastors to cultivate, both in themselves and in their congregations. Our Christian communities are often supported on the labors of a very small but very over-worked group of parishioners. Having pastors who can say “no” will empower some of these

people to say “no,” as well. This, in turn, will force more people to take responsibility for congregational life.

Obviously much more could be said about both the Christian practices and our 3/3 Program.¹⁶ Based on my long-term experiences in higher education of helping people strategically apply practice-based thinking and living to their vocations, I am convinced that this approach will be effective in cultivating practice-based ministers and practice-based Christian communities. More importantly, I believe that a commitment to the Christian practices is critically necessary for the future health of our congregations and denominations. We must find ways to form clergy in these practices so that they, too, can bring these practices into the lives and activities of their parishioners and ecclesiastical communities. By following St. Paul’s strategy in 2 Timothy, we will cultivate communities faithful to their calling to be the people of God in the world.

NOTES

1. At the outset of this essay, I will make two qualifying observations. First, this essay will focus on the use of practices within the wider Christian community, primarily due to the fact that it is the religious community I am a part of and have worked within. I believe, however, that most of this essay will be applicable to other religious traditions, modified to their histories and theologies. Second, I am reluctant to use the term “successful” to describe those who have done an excellent job of instilling the practices in those they lead. I firmly believe that Christians are called to be faithful as opposed to being successful. There are times when faithfulness leads to being successful. However, in the efficiency- and success-oriented wider culture in which the Christian community of North America finds itself, the concern with being “successful” tends to squeeze out the more important goal of faithfulness.

2. I am referring to various denominational outreach programs, such as United Campus Ministries or Newman Centers, and the many para-church campus groups, such as InterVarsity Christian Fellowship, Campus Crusade for Christ, Fellowship of Christian Athletes, found on campuses across the country. One form of campus ministry that I will not focus on is outreach efforts by local churches found near colleges. Although some of my comments would apply equally to these congregationally based endeavors, their being tied to an actual local church creates a different theological and ecclesiological setting.

3. Those involved in graduate student and faculty groups have a wider age range, more diverse familial arrangements, and typically a longer duration of involvement. For example, graduate students in certain academic programs may take ten years or more to complete their degrees. Faculty members may be on a particular campus for their entire career, but they will sometimes

move in and out of a fellowship group depending on various factors (e.g., pre-tenure, post-tenure, child-rearing, etc.).

4. 2 Tim. 2:1–2 (NRSV).

5. The disciplines discussed in this section are equally applicable to faculty.

6. Colossians 3:17,23.

7. For example, it is rare for a student in microbiology to have a faculty mentor encourage her to pursue a teaching career at a small liberal arts college, whereas a student in history may be encouraged to do so.

8. Some of the books by Parker Palmer I have found useful include *The Courage to Teach: Exploring the Inner Landscape of a Teacher's Life* (San Francisco, Calif.: Jossey-Bass, 1998), *Let Your Life Speak: Listening for the Voice of Vocation* (San Francisco, Calif.: Jossey-Bass, 2000), and *To Know as We are Known* (San Francisco, Calif.: Harper and Row, 1983). Mark Schwehn's books include *Exiles from Eden: Religion and the Academic Vocation in America* (New York: Oxford Press, 1993) and *Everyone a Teacher* (Notre Dame, Ind.: Univ. of Notre Dame, 2000).

9. Schwehn, *Exiles from Eden*, 44–65.

10. Quoted from the Project's web site at <www.practicingourfaith.org/who_valpo.html>, accessed 16 February 2006.

11. The distinction I am making here originally comes from a book by Howard A. Snyder, *Liberating the Church: The Ecology of Church and Kingdom* (Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press, 1983).

12. Dorothy C. Bass, ed., *Practicing Our Faith: A Way of Life for a Searching People* (San Francisco, Calif.: Jossey-Bass, 1997). Other helpful books include: John Van Engen, ed., *Educating People of Faith: Exploring the History of Jewish and Christian Communities* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 2004); Miroslav Volf and Dorothy C. Bass, eds., *Practicing Theology: Beliefs and Practices in Christian Life* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 2002); and Craig Dykstra, *Growing in the Life of Faith: Education and Christian Practices* (Louisville, Ky.: Geneva Press, 1999).

13. See "Times of Yearning, Practices of Faith," in Bass, *Practicing Our Faith*, 6–8.

14. Marva J. Dawn, *Keeping the Sabbath Wholly: Ceasing, Resting, Embracing, Feasting* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1989).

15. This particular student has reconnected with the small group this year and continues to be a valuable source of support and encouragement to his other 3/3 and seminary colleagues.

16. For a more detailed discussion of the University of Dubuque's 3/3 Program, along with some more theoretical analysis of the Christian practices, see my essay, "'Practice-ing' a New Educational Strategy: Developing a Program for Non-Traditional, Pre-Seminary Students," available at <www.practicingourfaith.org/cfm/library/pdf/Paul%20Jeffries%20Paper.pdf>.

Creativity as a Christian Spiritual Practice: Foundations and Explorations for Ministry

**Christine Valters Paintner
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*The heart of human identity is the capacity and desire for birthing.
To be is to become creative and bring forth the beautiful.*

—John O'Donohue¹

How do we become creative? More particularly, how do we birth our lives in creative and beautiful ways? Many of us in the fields of ministry, pastoral care, spiritual direction, and religious education and training would concur that the movement of the Spirit is essential to the process of human becoming. But what of the practice of creativity? What riches lie within the power of imagination and creative activity to foster spiritual formation and human development? This article springs from our scholarship and combined experience—in pastoral and campus ministry, retreat leadership, spiritual direction, and higher education—to suggest that the very pro-

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cess of artistic and other creative engagement serves as a container for awareness that makes space for encounter—with ourselves, our neighbors, the world, and with the God who creates and sustains us. Acknowledging that awareness and encounter are important elements in a vital spiritual life, and likewise of thoughtful and engaged spiritual education and formation, we assert the potentiality of creative activity as a wellspring for human flourishing.

Creative activity and expression has been a part of Christianity since ancient times in ritual, music, poetry, dance, and the visual arts. The history of Christian spirituality affirms that spiritual practice and growth are enhanced by creative practices that can help us encounter God in new ways and expand our vision of what is possible. However, our Western, modern culture has emphasized the verbal and analytic in our education processes and has removed the creative arts from everyday experience by professionalizing them. This article calls for a re-integration of art making, creative activity, and an aesthetic way of knowing into Christian spiritual practice, in general, and into Christian education and spiritual leadership training and formation, in particular.

THE POWER OF IMAGINATION

The imagination is fundamental to all human activity; indeed, exercising imagination is the creative and critical, intuitive and integrative process central to human becoming. It gives us the power to remember the past, to shape our desires, and to project possibilities for the future. The scholar Wendy Wright aptly describes the imagination as:

...the crucial capacity of the human person to create a world—either the familiar world of the everyday or a world not yet visible. Our relentless human search for new ways of being and relating, our dreams of beauty, our longings for mercy and justice, these are exercises of the imagination that, in a Christian context we would say are prompted by the Divine Imagination itself.²

As such, the imagination is the central faculty of creativity, allowing us to imagine the unseen, give form to the new, and actualize potential. Creativity is at the heart of many human pursuits: art making, dreaming and discerning our futures, creating loving relationships, playing in our leisure time, generating new ideas in the workplace, building new visions for what is possible for our communities, working toward justice. The imagination liberates us from time and place, gives us

the power to make and unmake worlds, and helps us to transcend the limitations of external reality. Yet, while God's imagination is limitless and able to consider all possibilities, our imaginations may become constrained and narrowed by the limiting ideas and contexts in which we live. Attending to the whispers of God, who calls us to active awareness, is crucial in a culture that lulls us into passivity and dulls our creative capacity through a constant barrage of media images and the frenzied pace of life. Thus, we assert that a dynamic contemporary Christian spirituality must include practices that nurture creativity by freeing the imagination. Furthermore, we claim the foundations for such practice within the heart of Christian biblical, theological, and historical tradition.

BIBLICAL AND THEOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVES ON CREATIVITY

While books, workshops, and seminars from a secular perspective abound calling people to "claim their inner artist," the Christian spiritual tradition contains a wealth of resources in which to ground creative activity as an enriching form of prayer and spiritual practice. Human creativity, from a Christian perspective, is affirmed in Genesis as being rooted in divine creativity, as an imitation of and extension of God's activity. The creative impulse is an expression of human likeness to God, in whose image we are created (Gen. 1:27 NAB). To delight in the work of the human imagination, then, is to value the image of God in people. As participants in God's creative powers, we are called to be co-creators, persons responsible for helping to shape our world into a more just and peaceful place. Philip Hefner describes this human role as created co-creator:

Human beings are God's created co-creators whose purpose is to be the agency, acting in freedom, to birth the future that is most wholesome for the nature that has birthed us—the nature that is not only our own genetic heritage, but also the entire human community and the evolutionary and ecological reality in which and to which we belong. Exercising this agency is said to be God's will for humans.³

Throughout the Hebrew Scriptures, we encounter the natural vitality of creative expression as a means to express faith and celebrate God's faithfulness. In response to God's liberation of the Israelites from Egypt, Moses and the Israelites sing a song to God, while Miriam takes her tambourine and dances with the other women (Exod. 15:1–21). David proclaims his praise of God in front of the ark by

dancing with “abandon” (2 Sam. 6:14–15). Many of the Psalms revel in the glory of God’s creation and handiwork (Pss. 19, 104) and exhort us to “Sing a new song to the Lord” (Pss. 33, 96, 149). The quintessential song to God within Christian mysticism may be said to be the Song of Songs, which celebrates the delights of the senses, inviting us to relish images of “spikenard and saffron, calamus and cinnamon” (Sg. 4:14) as doorways to a sensual experience of the divine. Such biblical imagery supports the activation of the senses as a means to encounter and praise of God, and finds further foundation in God’s own command to the Israelites to build a sumptuous sanctuary, first as a tabernacle (Exod. 25:1–40) and later as a Temple (1 Chron. 28:11–12).

Not surprisingly then, the Christian value and emphasis upon creativity often comes to a focus in worship. While some historical Christian communities have rejected the use of the arts, most have enriched the liturgy with artistic expression to the glory of God: music, movement and gesture, symbol and sounds, drama, architecture, color and taste, all come together to celebrate the mystery of God’s presence. Christian sacramental perspective affirms the power of sensuous reality to reveal the presence and activity of God. Combined with a theology of incarnation, which asserts that love of our Creator God was revealed to us in the concrete historical person and mission of Jesus Christ, these perspectives undergird the significance of embodied imagination in Christian worship and practice—we live as if the Kingdom that Jesus Christ proclaimed was already fully present in our midst. The Christian community is shaped by these vibrant acts of embodied imagination and then sent forth, challenged to live out in our daily lives, creatively, the intimacy with God and the fellowship that we experience at liturgy.

Indeed, John Paul II acknowledges in his *Letter to Artists*, “Not all are called to be artists in the specific sense of the term. Yet, as Genesis has it, all men and women are entrusted with the task of crafting their own life: in a certain sense, they are to make of it a work of art, a masterpiece.”²⁴ Thus, the primary creative act is the living of our daily lives, living a holistic life of depth and beauty. Cultivating creativity and imagination is, thus, essential to spiritual life and practice. It is, in a profound way, a call—not only of the individual but also of the whole community of faith.

In the Scriptures, God repeatedly calls people to creative imagination by bringing forth a new vision of community. For example, Abraham is called to go to a strange land and become a great nation (Gen. 12:2–3); Moses is called to free the Israelites (Exod. 3:4–19); and while the prophet Jeremiah is called by God to destroy, he is also “to build and to plant” (Jeremiah 1:4–10). In the New Testament,

Luke's Gospel begins with the story of the Annunciation, when Mary is called to consent to the birth of Jesus (1:26–38), to cooperate with God's creative power working deep within her. Paul's letters also include a celebration of our ability to labor with God's power (Col. 1:24–29) in forming and sustaining a unified Christian community, one body with a variety of gifts (Rom. 12:3–8), through which we serve as "God's co-workers" (1 Cor. 3:5–17). Such was the witness of Jesus Christ, who proclaimed the Kingdom of God through metaphor, symbol, and loving action—his life and teaching, especially through parables, serve to release us from ordinary expectations into a new way of seeing, freeing our imaginations to seek God in unexpected places and to create a more just community. In summary, the Scriptures draw us into service of God's deeper vision of what is possible for humanity, and the responses of the faithful are embodied creative acts, heralding the arrival of something new born into the world, as we labor together to bring God's vision to reality.

SPIRITUAL AND PSYCHOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVES ON CREATIVITY

The history of Christian spirituality also provides numerous examples of ways in which art making and imagination have served the faithful in their creative efforts to understand and respond to God's call. One example is Hildegard of Bingen, a twelfth-century abbess and prophet, who expressed her visions of God in writing, visual art, poetry, sermons, and music. For her, the heavens were filled with an ongoing celestial concert; and the making of music was a duty and the heart of praise and joy. Music performed the indispensable function of converting the heart and reuniting heaven with earth. For many believers such as Hildegard, then, the focus of artistic activity has been on crafting a product, one that reflects or even inspires religious experience.

However, other Christians have approached creative endeavor as a process, a means to or vehicle for spiritual encounter. For example, Ignatius of Loyola developed the *Spiritual Exercises* around a method of praying with the imagination in which one enters a Scripture passage and imagines the fullness of the scene—conversations, sights, smells, sounds. This method is a fundamental affirmation of the power of the imagination to convey truth for one's own life and discernment.⁵

It is this latter general emphasis in Christian spiritual tradition—upon creative activity as process—that we believe proves an especially fruitful resource for formation today.

Creativity is a powerful shaping force in human life. It is an intangible human capacity of a transcendent nature. Creativity is “the process of bringing something new into being,”⁶ something that did not exist before—an idea, a new arrangement, a painting, a story. This creation, which is a new reality, works to enlarge our ways of seeing the world and what we perceive as possible. Freeing the imagination is at the heart of this potent process.

Psychologist Graham Wallas was the first to describe four “stages” to the creative process, a theory widely accepted and one that is particularly helpful in demonstrating how creativity and spirituality may converge.⁷ In his theory, the first stage is preparation. This is a stage of conscious work, readying oneself for the creative endeavor. It involves discipline and training. Artists engage in years of education in various forms and methods. Similarly, persons committed to a life of prayer engage in the discipline of regular practice and formation that increases their receptivity to God in the prayer experience.

The second stage is incubation, in which the artist does not voluntarily or consciously think about a problem. He or she may be involved in other work, or engaged in some form of leisure activity. In the spiritual life, this stage can also be looked at as a period of letting go, of emptying oneself of expectations and self-directives, of making space for God to enter. “Preparation and action can only take one so far; at this point, she must stand in readiness and wait for ‘the other’ to complete her experience, be it aesthetic incept or the religious ‘more.’”⁸ It is a stage of simultaneous readiness and surrender to the work of God.

The third stage is illumination. This is where the flashes of insight occur after the waiting in incubation. It is a mysterious process likened to the images that appear in our dreams, received as gift from beyond us. In creative moments, we talk of being inspired. To inspire means to breathe into, drawn from the Latin *spiritus*, also meaning “to be animated or filled by the spirit.”

The fourth stage is verification. This is the stage of working to elaborate on those initial insights, developing these intuitions into the creative work itself. It is the stage where we birth what has been laboring within us. For the artist, it may be the creation of a painting or song or dance. Scholar Earle Coleman writes of the variety of ways this stage can come to expression in the spiritual life: “Genuine religion is always fruitful, productive, or constructive, as when religious figures establish hospitals, schools, libraries, and monasteries...feed the hungry, teach,

preach, inspire, write, translate texts, undertake pilgrimages, and create art.”⁹ The processes of preparation and surrender lead to inspirations from God that are meant to be fulfilled by concrete expression through actions in the world.

These stages are a general pattern of a creative process; they are not, however, always clearly delineated from each other, nor are they necessarily progressive and linear. Our experience has been that creativity is far more organic and intuitive, but the stages offer some helpful insights into the nature of how creativity may work. At the very least, they suggest an affinity between certain movements or moments within creative and spiritual experiences.

Rollo May, the well-known Jungian psychologist, describes two essential qualities of the creative process that are helpful for integration with spirituality. The first quality is that of the creative act as an encounter. Encountering an idea or an image absorbs the person involved. Essential to this encounter is a willingness to give oneself over to it. Encounter allows us to distinguish between talent and creativity: talent may reside in a person, but creativity can be seen only in the creative act itself. We are creative in the doing of it, within the encounter.

The intensity of giving oneself over to the encounter speaks to the second quality of the creative process, engagement. May describes creativity as characterized by an intensity of awareness, a heightened consciousness with its accompanying emotion of joy as a result of actualizing one’s own potential. This heightened consciousness is not self-control, but surrender and absorption: “We cannot will creativity. But we can will to give ourselves to the encounter with intensity and dedication of commitment.”¹⁰ This language of encounter and engagement resonates with Christian spiritual experience and with the process of education and formation, which we shall now explore in greater detail.

CREATIVITY AND PRAYER

We might describe prayer in similar ways to those that Rollo May uses to describe creativity: at its heart it is an encounter with God. The degree to which we allow ourselves to be absorbed by and surrender to that encounter is the degree to which we allow ourselves to be engaged by God’s active presence in our lives. The nature of prayer as encounter is evident in its personal nature. In prayer, God is addressed as “Thou” or “you,” as in personal conversation with someone.

This understanding of prayer, as encounter, springs from our understanding of Christian spirituality. Spirituality has been defined as "...that inner dimension of the person called by certain traditions 'the spirit.' This spiritual core is the deepest center of the person. It is here the person experiences ultimate reality."¹¹ Spirituality is something central to being human, based upon our connection to and longing for what is of ultimate value. Christian spirituality is rooted in the lived encounter with Jesus Christ in the Spirit and is concerned with the ways in which Christian teachings shape us as individuals who are part of a larger Christian community.¹² Prayer is an engagement and encounter with this ultimate reality.

The poet Denise Levertov writes of the parallels between the journey of art and the journey of faith. She described art as an "act of faith" because it is a journey into the unknown, in ways similar to engaging in prayer. She describes the work of art as entering a stage of improvisation as the artist begins to create its form: "That step, from entertaining a project for a poem or other work of art, to actually painting, composing, dancing, writing it, resembles moving from intellectual assent to opening the acts of daily life to permeation by religious faith."¹³ Prayer like creative activity, when fully entered into, is often an improvisational act, as we cannot anticipate the ways God will move in us at this moment of encounter.

As we have discussed, the creative process means creating for the joy of doing, rather than focusing on the product. Exploring creativity in a deeply intimate way honors the process itself rather than focusing on the finished work. To be truly creative, one must move between states of openness to new associations of ideas and states of focused explorations of these associations. We engage in a discipline within which we cultivate an attitude of openness towards surprise and serendipity, while we wait with patience and humility. Such openness is often described as awareness, or attention, within the Christian spiritual tradition; thus, we may assert that to cultivate imagination and creativity is also to cultivate awareness.

CREATIVITY AND EDUCATION

This very language of encounter and awareness may also be found within contemporary philosophies of education. To learn and to know requires at its most basic level an encounter, an interactive experience with that which is to become known. But many contemporary scholars also argue that such an encounter is ideally char-

acterized by a spirit of openness, a willingness to engage and receive, in a manner that resonates with our discussion thus far about spirituality and creativity.

Parker Palmer explicitly subtitles his original text *To Know As We Are Known* as “A Spirituality of Education.” In so doing, he names his concern for the formation of the whole person and for holistic ways of approaching education. His stated goal is to develop “whole sight” in himself and in his students—a way of seeing and being and learning in the world that has less to do with the western enlightenment approach, which he describes as spurred by curiosity and the desire to control, and more to do with a desert monastic approach, which seeks to cultivate loving awareness. Indeed, his spirituality of education promotes an understanding of knowing as loving, as embracing the known, recognizing that we as knowers are intimately connected with the known, and known by it. “The act of knowing *is* an act of love, the act of entering and embracing the reality of the other, of allowing the other to enter and embrace our own.”¹⁴ As we have shown, this is also the act of prayer, as well as the work of encounter and engagement in creative activity.

Other scholars utilize less explicitly Christian language to describe this process of loving awareness and encounter in art and in education. For example, Nel Noddings, who writes as an ethicist as well as a philosopher of education, names an affinity between her “ethics of care” and Martin Buber’s concern for the other as “Thou,” as well as Derrida and Levinas’ “ethics of alterity”—which involves “letting the other be.”¹⁵ In terms of a pedagogical approach, her model suggests that to achieve knowing, one must respectfully acknowledge the other as other, and furthermore one needs to care for or love the known. In a similar vein, the field of aesthetics at times suggests that to understand or to know a work of art, one must love it; and Maxine Greene brings that insight explicitly to bear on her philosophy of education in her text *Releasing the Imagination: Essays on Education, the Arts, and Social Change*. Greene believes that imagination is crucial to knowing, and that one can educate the imagination through artistic engagement. Her sense of the value of aesthetics is precisely—insofar as it promotes awareness of, sensitivity to, and appreciation of a work of art—an other as other. The exercise of imagination, in receiving the other, for Greene is essential not just to understanding art, but also to making sense of reality. It is part and parcel of knowing.¹⁶

In summary then, knowing itself may be argued to involve an aesthetic mode, which is characterized by loving awareness and engaged encounter, just like the practice of Christian spirituality and the practice of creativity. How appropriate, then, to utilize creative activity as a container for awareness, a vehicle for encounter, and a pedagogical approach to spiritual formation, education, and training.

CREATIVITY AS CHRISTIAN SPIRITUAL PRACTICE

We took just such a pedagogical approach while teaching a course entitled “Creativity and Christian Spirituality” at the Graduate Theological Union, in Berkeley, during the spring of 2003, funded by a Valparaiso “Practicing Our Faith” Project Grant. The course led a diverse group of seminarians and doctoral students in religion through the biblical, theological, historical, psychological, and spiritual foundations, briefly outlined in this article, for claiming and practicing creativity. Like the Valparaiso Project, we affirmed that spirituality springs from a particular way of life, supported by a specific faith tradition and community, which is made up of practices. In the book *Practicing Our Faith*, practices are defined according to their value and function within the community of faith, in ways which are instructive for naming creative activity itself as a Christian spiritual practice.¹⁷

First, practices address fundamental human needs and conditions through concrete human acts. If creativity is basic to human nature—for indeed “making special” is not merely a theological imperative of the *imago dei*, as we have argued, but actually a biological need, according to Ellen Dissanayake¹⁸—then practices of art making and other creative work fulfill the human need to engage the creative process in a very practical and concrete way. Practices are not valued just for their outcomes; it is again the engagement in the process itself that has value.

Second, practices are done together over time. Certainly, as previously mentioned, the believing community has engaged in creative activity for centuries. The singing of psalms; the painting of icons; the telling of stories; the expression of spiritual longing and insight through the forms of symbol, metaphor, and image are all ancient practices of our Christian tradition.

Third, practices possess standards of excellence. The practice of creative expression and art making are not just matters of entertainment or ornamentation, but of surrendering ourselves to a process greater than ourselves and letting God’s light shine through our expression. It is important to reflect on the ways in which we are able to let go of control of the creative process enough to let God’s insights become manifest in our work. We might ask ourselves how open we are to being surprised by what is revealed.

Finally, when we begin to see our ordinary activities as Christian practices, we come to perceive how our daily lives are intimately connected with what God is doing in the world. Creativity is part of our daily lives—in the work we do, the decisions we make, the love we give, and the hopes we have. By making it an

intentional part of our spiritual practice, we may grow to see the ways in which God is active with and through our everyday lives.¹⁹

As such, the course participants in “Creativity and Christian Spirituality” engaged in regular creative activities throughout the course. We employed collage, painting, beads, masks, movement, singing, and like activities, in such a manner as to emphasize the process, over product. As we played and created together, we simultaneously prayed together. And we explored how each of us might utilize art making and more generally practice creativity, as a means to make space, cultivate awareness, and foster encounter both within our personal lives and our ministries.

THE PRACTICE OF CREATIVITY

To use creativity as a Christian spiritual practice involves a fundamental shift in intention. We must enter the creative process with a commitment to seek God, which involves the humility to invite God into our prayer and lives, to be an intimate part of the process, to help direct and guide our efforts while we listen. Just as prayer is our response to God’s invitation to a deeper relationship, so the creative process begins with God’s own creative desires inviting us to respond prayerfully with our creative expression.

The creative process and art making, with intention and awareness of God’s invitation and movement within us, become the process of prayer itself. As previously suggested, it is a process of surrender and reception, of letting go and welcoming newness. It is a process of dialogue as we reach out to communicate with God and open ourselves to God’s communication with us through image and symbol, gesture and sound. We can develop an awareness of God’s presence in everything we do, see, and feel, so that prayer generates all of our activities. We can use our imagination and intention to keep calling God’s presence in our awareness. “If we become conscious that every moment is a possible sacramental one and that God is at the horizon of every act and Jesus walks with us in the Spirit, then every mundane thing we do is consciously connected to God as a gesture of prayer.”²⁰ All of life becomes rooted in encounter with the holy, through a deep sense of awe and humility at the revelation of God present in every moment. Developing an awareness of God in our creative expression reveals a God who is not static, but a dynamic and active force in our lives and in the world. This allows us to cultivate ways of being in the world that are creative.

Thus, the very practice of creativity cultivates a deeper awareness in the living of our daily spiritual lives. In a sense, art making can inform the way we live. Formalized artistic processes—for example, the practice of the rhythms of creative preparation, incubation, and illumination, or in spiritual terms the practice of rest and activity, of receptivity and expression—teach us skills and ways of being that are transferable to everyday life and prove essential to healthy and creative living. Art empowers our daily lives through time of self-reflection and contemplation. Art requires acts of courage to make oneself visible through the creation of form and the expression of visions. Most importantly, when we steep ourselves in the creative process, we open ourselves to deeper awareness, encounter, and knowledge, which serve us in our becoming and in our loving engagement with the world.

This article is meant to be evocative rather than prescriptive. We invite those engaged in the formation and training of persons in ministry to consider the ways in which you might engage the creative process more intentionally in your programs both through the practices of art making as well as through broader attention to elements that nurture creativity. Some of these elements, as we have explored in this article, include considering whether you allow the spaciousness in your program that creativity needs for flourishing and that imagination needs for free exploration of possibilities. Is there a rhythm of receptivity and activity as a framework for how you approach training? Do you include creative activities that can become a container of awareness, which makes space for encounter and promotes loving awareness toward oneself, others, and God? Are you able to let go of some level of control and allow the creative process to unfold freely and then welcome God's newness that is ushered in as a result? Is attention to the creative process a central framework for how you have designed your program or is it an added consideration? Is there consideration for the ways the image of God, and the invitation to create that flows forth from this, are uniquely manifested and expressed in those persons you train?

We leave you with these programmatic questions to consider as well as an invitation to pay attention to your own creative process: In what ways do you tend to your own desire and capacity for birthing? What brings you life and joy? When do you feel most vital and fully alive? How do you model a lived way of honoring the creative process in your own life? What facilitates your encounter with the holy Creator in whose image you are lovingly made?

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Urban Clinical Pastoral Education: Student Reflections on Practices of Faith

Jennette L. Rude

The Urban Clinical Pastoral Education (CPE) program is based in urban Chicago. The CPE students' ministry is within the context of urban social and faith-based organizations serving the most marginalized people. Some but not all of the CPE sites have a person who serves in the capacity of pastor or chaplain. By and large, the supervision and training of these students expands their concepts of ministry and their identities as persons called into ministry within their faith traditions. The population served includes youth and adults of all cultures, faith traditions/spiritualities, sexual orientation, and spiritual needs.

The Urban CPE focuses its initial curriculum on four of the practices as identified in *Practicing Our Faith: A Way of Life for a Searching People*.¹ This included the students' reflections on their faiths and cultures related to the practice in their CPE—ritual leadership, verbatim/ministry encounter reflections, open/covenant group reflections, personal process reflection notes, individual supervision—and in the systems and social locations of their ministries and those with whom

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they ministered. They reflected in like manner on the Urban CPE system as they experienced it. These reflections included the questions: Where is this practice present? Where is this practice absent? What difference does or does not this practice make in the lives of those with whom we minister? How does this practice identify or not identify your role as pastor? In what way does this practice help or hinder your integration of your faith/spirituality and your cultural perspectives?

At the end of the CPE unit, each student wrote a reflective paper, choosing a practice that was fundamental to his or her identity formation and the skill needed for the ministry. A few brief examples before we listen to the students:

One student's ritual was a simple meal in which he invited his CPE group to reflect on the reality of household economics of "There Is Enough." This led to conversations and learning around pastoral identity and functioning coming from interdependency and available community resources. Issues of shame, over-self-protection, or grandiosity were raised as areas of reflection that interfere with healthy relational ministry.

Focusing on the practice of honoring the body enabled some students to relate this to the concept of the Body of Christ. Others saw this as the body of the extended family and the care each has for and with the community. These reflections led to the exploration of issues of self-esteem and self-worth for the students in their ministry as well as changing the lens of "self-care" to honoring the body of God in themselves and in others—homeless, addicted, poor—as they learned the art of healthy confrontation in personal choices of food and drink, in systemic malnutrition for the poor, in environmental concerns, in taking Sabbath time, and finding ways to offer Sabbath to those on the streets and in shelters. This latter Sabbath time was the time to be listened to, to have their voices heard in respect and care.

Focusing on testimony as a faith practice enhanced the power of listening or the use of the self in ministry, listening carefully to one's own testimony as evoked by the other. The skill of asset-based approach was coupled with the practice of testimony of many faith communities particularly of the African American and Native American cultures. In focusing on testimony in the practice of ministry, the students began to hear and name the resources of flexibility, resourcefulness, endurance, resilience, and creativity of those marginalized by others.

While many more examples could be cited, the following student papers illustrate the use of practices in supervision and training in CPE to shape pastoral identity and pastoral functioning.

Practice of Hospitality

Jennette L. Rude

MINISTRY SITE: THE NIGHT MINISTRY

This is your block. You tell me your footprints were all over this block before you were even born. Perhaps your footprints are more plentiful than you thought they would be because you have no shelter. Perhaps your footprints are more scattered than you hoped they would be because you roam the streets at night, for it is dangerous to fall asleep out here. You, child of God, have no safe place to lay your head.

Our Tuesday and Friday ritual brings us together. We meet each other on that corner unknowingly embodying the Greek word *xenos*, which can mean stranger, guest, and host. Who will I be tonight? Who will you be tonight? Is it possible that we will be the fullness of that word for each other as we share this sacred city sidewalk? Yes, yes, this is the way it is to be.

I was a stranger, and you welcomed me. You had no reason to trust this young, Caucasian, female minister. I probably look like someone who has passed you by without dropping a quarter in your cup, without looking at you. But I continued to come to our Tuesday and Friday ritual time, and slowly I became your guest. As your guest, I was honored to hear your stories: stories of pain, forgiveness, despair, hope, your story. I listened although often it hurt...a small taste of your deep pain. I listened although you often shocked me by your hope...the gift of hope endures and lives in places I never knew existed. And I continued to come to our Tuesday and Friday ritual time, and slowly you allowed me to be your host. Against all rules of the street, you were vulnerable and allowed me to hold you, if even for a short time. You let me get to know the person underneath your street name, that identity you have created to survive, that name that instills fear in others, although you are just as fearful of it yourself.

And we meet again over turkey sandwiches and Mountain Dew® on that same corner. Our footprints, now intertwined, cover this sidewalk as the steps of an intricate, seemingly chaotic dance move. And now we fluidly move in and out of our mutual *xenos*, although I will never call you stranger again.

But whether guest or host that evening, we part and I go home. I cannot invite you into my house (although I have fleeting thoughts of this). But I have made a

home for you in my heart. With pain, I know this doesn't keep you warm in the winter. But as you have hosted me, let me host you. If you grant me this privilege, I promise to be a host that listens with respect, sees your holiness, invites your gifts, also acts as guest, and takes the risk of being changed by you. And I promise to be a host that witnesses, that advocates, that fights for dignity and justice for you. For you would do the same for me if this was my block. But this is not my block. On this, your block, you have hosted me as a guest, and I have received your gifts... of faith, hope, endurance, joy, healing, love.

My friend, I will never call you stranger again. For in you, I found God. Stranger, host, and guest. A trinity dwelling in you and me.

Practice Of Jubilee

Kent L. C. Narum

MINISTRY SITE: CHICAGO UPTOWN MINISTRY

As I endeavored to offer pastoral care to the guests of Uptown Ministry, I encountered one man whose story exemplifies so many of the struggles faced in the Uptown neighborhood. Late one morning, I was enjoying the sunshine on the sidewalk in front of Uptown Ministry, a few hours before the sun's progression would be blocked by the condominium next door. A man walked by and asked if I could help him find a job. Through gentle prodding, his story unfolded. He had recently been released from a long prison term, and he spoke with both great resignation and amazing optimism. He was tired of the violence, the drugs, and the fear in his life thus far. He wanted a new life that transformed the violence and fear into productive, beneficial work that would sustain him.

As this man revealed his name to me, it was impossible not to connect this story with the proclamation of the prophet that shared his name, Isaiah. I listened and shared my hope for this man: that the prophet's proclamation would be fulfilled; that weapons of violence, fear, and destruction would be turned into tools of productivity and sustenance for the community; and that future generations would learn war no more (Isa. 2:4 NRSV).

This story illustrates the severe need for a practice and a vision that can sustain the urban neighborhood of Uptown, the city of Chicago, and the community that is our world: the vision of jubilee, as it is rooted in the foundational Jewish laws of Leviticus, the prophetic tradition, and the Christian Gospels. From Leviticus to Isaiah to the Gospel according to Luke, the practice of jubilee brings together the biblical concepts of Sabbath, justice and shalom, and the reign of God. Through these biblical concepts, jubilee paradoxically brings together an idealistic vision and practical practice.

Leviticus and Jubilee: The Community Aspect Of Sabbath

It is thought that Leviticus was most likely written during the postexilic age, as an impoverished, harassed Israel lived under the domination of the Persian Empire. The community sought to redefine, clarify, and return to the traditions and practices on which it had been built; in order that, Israel could once again recover its identity

as a holy people in whose midst the Lord dwelled. The heavy economic pressures of the empire virtually and literally enslaved the people in poverty. As a response to the economic slavery faced by the community, the Leviticus writers turned to the earlier and more foundational practice of Sabbath as they innovated another practice to meet the spiritual and economic needs of the people. That new practice was jubilee. The writers of Leviticus state that you shall count off seven sabbaths of years, seven times seven years. Then you shall have the trumpet sounded loud, and you shall proclaim liberty throughout the land to all its inhabitants. It shall be a jubilee for you (Lev. 25:8–10). The writer goes on to use the Sabbath concept to declare rest and debt-relief for all people. And all people radically includes, as the culminating verses state, resident aliens if they have not been redeemed in any of these ways; they and their children with them shall go free in the jubilee year (Lev. 25:54).

Prior to this, the concept of Sabbath was mostly limited to how one structured one's own life. However, the writers of Leviticus applied the concept of Sabbath not only to how one related to oneself, but also to how one related to one's neighbor. Through the practice of jubilee, one is to be an advocate for the economic relief (that is, for economic Sabbath) of one's neighbor. And the neighbor is radically defined to include everyone from kin to the resident alien. At programs like Uptown Ministry, many who utilize the food pantry are virtually enslaved in poverty with little chance of liberty. Others who come to Uptown Ministry come as refugees and immigrants, as resident aliens, seeking this very chance at liberation.

The practice of jubilee challenges laws that oppress, offering hope rooted in the biblical concept of Sabbath to all people. Indeed, practical release from the cycles that ensnare people in debt and poverty is demanded of the observer of the practice.

Isaiah and Jubilee: Justice and Shalom

There is a tradition at Uptown Ministry in the sending-off of those who have served for a length of time. A framed copy of Isaiah 61 is presented, and prayers are said to sustain the individual leaving in their on-going ministry. Captured within the beautiful poetry of Isaiah 61, one finds the practice of jubilee subtly developed from Leviticus. As the framed copy states, the Spirit of the Sovereign Lord is on me, because the Lord has anointed me to preach good news to the poor to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor (Isa. 61:1–2 adapted).

Just as people departing Uptown Ministry might feel like refugees in a foreign land, the writer of Isaiah 61 was part of a postexilic community trying to

reassert itself and reestablish its identity as a people valued by God. The practice of jubilee, rooted in Sabbath, provided a response to this need. The Isaiah writer dynamically weaves together the practice of jubilee (identified by the year of the Lord's favor) with the theme of justice, particularly justice for those who have experienced brokenness: the oppressed and brokenhearted, the captives and prisoners.

All across the country and particularly in the Uptown neighborhood, individuals—such as the Isaiah I spoke to on the sunny morning—search for a life after imprisonment. They are refugees in a paradoxically foreign and strangely familiar land. Through the practice of jubilee, with its connection to social justice and concern for those who have experienced brokenness, the promise of God's healing and reconciliation can be brought to those who severely need it. And there is not only a need for the promise to be stated, but for advocacy work to be done in prison reform, particularly with so many educational and job-training programs being cut from prison budgets in the last decade. The laws and practices of the United States are not only taking years from the lives of convicted criminals, their whole lives are being held up with little chance of ransom.

One can easily overlook other work that is desperately needed, unless one reads further in Isaiah 61, where the author declares what it means to practice jubilee. It means, to provide for those who mourn, [for] they shall build up the ancient ruins, they shall raise up the former devastations; they shall repair the ruined cities, the devastations of many generations (Isa. 61:3–4). In neighborhoods like Uptown, generations of communities have been devastated by the dominant culture. Native Americans and African Americans, in particular, desperately need assistance to tear down substance abuse and poverty as well as rebuild self-confidence and self-worth. Through the practice of jubilee, as it is rooted in the biblical concept of justice in Isaiah, one can offer to these communities the vision of hope and the practical support of pastoral care, providing for those who mourn and raising up former devastations.

Luke and Jubilee: The Reign Of God

The tangible work of ministry was most definitely present in the life of Jesus as described in the Gospel according to Luke. Jesus goes home to Nazareth and on the Sabbath day is in the synagogue where he is handed the Isaiah scroll. He unrolls the scroll to the place where it reads, "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me...to bring good news to the poor...to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor" (Luke 4:18–19).

In this way, the Lukan community understood the ministry of Jesus as foundationally based on the practice of jubilee.

Furthermore, as Jesus moved from Nazareth to Capernaum and on to other cities, he proclaimed by the end of the fourth chapter of Luke, “I must proclaim the good news of the kingdom of God to the other cities also; for I was sent for this purpose” (Luke 4:43). In this way, the practice of jubilee with its call to bring good news is closely tied with one of the primary themes of Jesus’ ministry as it unfolds throughout Luke to proclaim the good news of the reign of God. In other words, Jesus begins with the practice of jubilee in order to bring God’s reign, or God’s activity, into the world.²

One of the most desperate needs in urban ministry, and indeed in ministry throughout the world, is to identify and proclaim God’s activity in the world. This is not to say that God’s reign is all too often distorted or denied through the actions of individuals and the relationships that we build. The practice of jubilee and its connection to the reign of God in the Lukan Gospel, however, demands that we proclaim and participate in the activity of God in this world.

As an observer at Uptown Ministry, one quickly encounters storytelling. Everyone has a story to tell. Valuing the sacredness of each story allows us to participate in the activity of God in this world. Pastoral care, indeed, is often about helping individuals shape the sacredness of their story and recognize the *imago Dei* in themselves—just as Jesus’ life and ministry were centered in concern for the poor, the oppressed, and the brokenhearted in order to recognize the divine healing, reconciliation, and Sabbath that were already present.

The practice of jubilee invites us to reflect on and participate in this work so that we might assist in building the reign of God in our own hearts, in our own lives, and in our whole world. Jubilee is a dynamic practice that calls us deeper into the sacredness of Sabbath.

The writers of Leviticus invite through the practice of jubilee a declaration for economic Sabbath for those who have been reduced to enslavement. This includes all people, from kin to the resident alien, and causes those who practice jubilee to ask: What debts am I being asked to release the resident alien from? What Sabbath does my neighbor need? Isaiah extends this practice of jubilee to preach and proclaim a hopeful message of justice and then to live out that message by comforting those who mourn and building up that which has been reduced to rubble. It invites questions such as: What is being accomplished by our justice system? How can I support the rebuilding of that which has been devastated?

Finally, through the Lukan Gospel, the ministry of Jesus connects the practice of jubilee with the reign of God and brings the call for healing, reconciliation, and participation in the activity of God in our neighborhoods, our cities, and our world community. It invites the question: How do I see God's sacred work being done in my life and the lives around me? In this way, the practice of jubilee calls and brings us deeper into the reign of God and a Sabbath rooted in justice and the work of God.

Practice of Saying “Yes” and Saying “No”

Damascus Harris

MINISTRY SITE: SOUTH SHORE SCHOOL

Saying “yes” and saying “no” is probably the most relevant practice to me and to my ministry. In saying “yes” to a walk with God, I must say “no” to many other things in the world. An example of this is the very pursuit of a masters of divinity degree. To obtain this degree, I have said “no” to full-time work, to sleep in many instances, and perhaps most importantly, to a more lucrative masters of business administration or juris doctor degree that would have helped lift me out of financial malaise.

Thus, I feel the harshness of the no’s: loss of both current and potential income. And this harshness makes remembering the “yes” that I am pursuing more difficult—the pursuit of the masters of divinity is my way of saying “yes” to a call to ministry. That call also includes being present for those who need to be assured that God is in the midst of even the hardest times and advocating with and for those who are oppressed and often voiceless in our society. By saying “no” to the more lucrative financial choices, I have said “yes” to the learning that would prepare me for these practical aspects of ministry. And by examining my own struggle, I am better able to lift this practice before the “congregation” at South Shore high school—a community of youth who are lost in the educational and economic impoverishment of my fellow African Americans.

Proverbs 30:7–9 reads:

Two things I ask of thee; deny them not to me before I die: Remove far from me falsehood and lying; give me neither poverty nor riches; feed me with the food that is needful for me, lest I be full, and deny thee, and say, “Who is the Lord?” or lest I be poor, and steal, and profane the name of my God.

The writer of this Proverb articulates the struggle inherent in saying “yes” and saying “no.” We want to have relationship with God, but we must acknowledge our present needs in this world. This brings me to the challenge for ministry at large with respect to teaching the practice of saying “yes” and “no”: How do you engage people who already lack materially to give up the pursuit of material gain for a closer walk with God? This is particularly difficult if the ownership of material wealth seems to be evidence of such a walk.

Seventy-three percent of the students at South Shore suffer from poverty, and all of the associated ills. Their condition—and by extension my own—has taught me that dependence on people, and to some extent God, for the everyday needs of life—heat, food, shelter, lights—is disappointing and dangerous. I have this fact in mind while examining Copeland's assessment of the reaction of the rich man to Jesus' challenge to sell all he had and follow him.³ Copeland states that the rich man was "unable to affirm in his living the dependence on God and on other human beings that characterizes a holy and whole life."⁴ This statement has within it the danger of confirming the idea that there is a sense of holiness in poverty that is not the lived experience of the South Shore congregation or myself.

Yet I also want to counter the idea that holiness is in the experience of wealth. The entertainment media's portrayal of blacks through mediums such as videos (which represent rich companies and individuals) is less than holy. There is certainly a lifting up of the pursuit of wealth at the expense of all else within these systems. Saying "no" to such pursuits is both desirable and Christ-like; thus it should be introduced to the South Shore congregation with particular caveats.

By eliminating the apparent dangers of imputing wealth or poverty with some sort of self-evident Godliness, I can agree with Copeland that the strength of the practice is found in emphasizing the life affirming aspects of saying "yes." This would require a re-examination of everyday choices that would include: sobriety and cognizance over inebriation and unconsciousness, working out and reading over sedentary lifestyles and watching television, condom usage and abstinence over unprotected sexual forays. It could also include protest over silence and honest earning over income generation that harms the community (the stealing part of the scripture from Proverbs).

In this way, saying "yes" can move honoring God to the everyday and not just in the sanctuary. It is by breaking away from the emphases on the "no" that I believe that this practice can be implemented at my place of ministry. I affirm Copeland's observation that saying "no" for saying no's sake has replaced genuine no-saying in the church. That is why the world has the view that to draw closer to God is synonymous with the cessation of everything fun in life. The church and I by extension need to identify and keep fresh the "yes" on the flipside of every "no." In this way, I (and the church) can shift the focus off what is sacrificed and onto what is gained. By getting this right in my own life, I can guide others toward the positive aspects of this practice.

NOTES

1. Dorothy C. Bass, ed., *Practicing Our Faith: A Way of Life for a Searching People* (San Francisco, Calif.: Jossey-Bass, 1997).
2. Robert C. Tannehill suggests that this verse [4:43] integrates the mission of Jesus as presented in 4:18–19 with his later preaching of God’s reign and suggests that the two ways of describing the contents of Jesus’ preaching—the Lord’s acceptable year and God’s reign—are closely related if not synonymous. Tannehill, *The Narrative Unity of Luke–Acts: A Literary Interpretation*, vol. 1, “The Gospel According to Luke” (Philadelphia, Penn.: Fortress Press, 1986), 68.
3. M. Shawn Copeland, “Saying Yes and Saying No” in Bass, *Practicing Our Faith*, 59–73.
4. *Ibid.*, 67.

Tending to Trees of Life...and Hope

Peter Yuichi Clark

[T]he Bodhi-tree of the Buddha Amitayus [i.e., Amida Buddha] is four million li [1.43 million miles] in height and five thousand *yojanas* [35,000 miles] in circumference at its base. Its branches spread two hundred thousand li [71,000 miles] in each of the four directions. It is a natural cluster of all precious stones and is adorned with the kings of jewels, namely, moonlight mani gems and ocean-supporting-wheel gems. ...When a gentle breeze wafts through its branches and leaves, innumerable exquisite *Dharma*-sounds arise, which spread far and wide, pervading all the other Buddha-lands in the ten directions. Those who hear the sounds attain penetrating insight into *dharmas* and dwell in the Stage of Non-retrogression [i.e., a state in which final enlightenment is assured].

—The Larger Sukhavativyuha Sutra¹

Then the angel showed me the river of the water of life, bright as crystal, flowing from the throne of God and of the Lamb through the middle of the street of the city. On either side of the river, is the tree of life with its twelve kinds of fruit, producing its fruit each month; and the leaves of the tree are for the healing of the nations.

—The Revelation to John²

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PERSONAL INTRODUCTION

I was born in June 1965 in California, the second of two children and only son of a European American father and Japanese mother. My name tells much about me. My first name is also my father's given name and the name of the headstrong disciple with whom I most identify; my middle name, given by my maternal grandfather, means "first [grandson] of Yujiro" and represents my Japanese connection. The two names together mean that I blend dual cultures, races, and faiths.

For the first thirteen years of my life, I grew up in a nomadic nuclear family, moving every two or three years because of my father's Air Force career. I learned to excel in school, to keep my own counsel, and to live with loneliness, yearning for deeper roots. An Army chaplain introduced me to the Christian faith, and I embraced it eagerly, finding in the incarnate God a companion for my journey and a way of differentiating myself from my agnostic parents.

I finished high school in a Dallas suburb and went to Baylor University for my college years, and while there I joined an activist congregation named Seventh and James Baptist Church. At Baylor and at Seventh, I found a more enduring community, I reclaimed my Japanese ancestry (using my middle name and learning the language), and I clearly heard a call toward ministry. This calling grew stronger when I attended the Southern Baptist seminary in Louisville, where I stumbled onto clinical pastoral education (CPE). I discovered how repressed my own emotions were, how deeply I feared my mortality, and yet how knowing my loneliness and fear could connect me empathically with those I was serving. After my first two units, I grew convinced that my calling involved a dual intention—teaching and direct hands-on ministry. It was to this vocation that I was ordained at Seventh in 1990, being blessed by many hands, including those of my parents.

It was also at seminary that I met a European American woman who also felt a call toward ministry, and our intertwining lives led to marriage shortly after graduation in 1991. We moved to Atlanta a month later to begin CPE residencies in the Emory Healthcare system—and stayed for eight years, the longest either of us had ever lived in one location.

In my residency, I specialized in geriatric pastoral care, and upon finishing my residency I worked part-time as a chaplain and entered Ph.D. studies at Emory. I began researching older Japanese Americans' religious faiths, and I learned about the Pure Land Buddhist faith of my ancestors. I met Amida Buddha in that tradition, a being whose compassionate vow will assuredly bring all sentient beings to

enlightenment. In Amida I found another companion for my spiritual journey, and I saw no reason why he and Jesus could not be brothers. Again I realized how “blended” I am, since I consider myself now an American Baptist minister with a budding Japanese American Buddhist practice.

After four years of graduate school, however, I felt that I was neglecting part of my vocation—the side of me that was emotionally more alive. I entered supervisory training at Emory in 1997 and discovered in it the integration of my calling that I had been seeking. We moved to San Francisco in 1999 to diversify my training and to be closer to my ethnic roots. Shortly after moving, however, my wife discovered that she was lesbian, which led to our separation and eventual divorce—a period of deep grief, transformation, and healing, thanks in large part to supervisory colleagues who supported and challenged me. I have since remarried; my second wife is a medical librarian and native San Franciscan, and she has helped me to embrace joy and pleasure again.

Beyond my blended identity as a Christian minister, a student of Buddhist practice, and a Japanese American, however, I also am a proud father. My son Adam was born in 1996, and with him I continue to learn how to be more playful, how to be more connected to myself and to the world around me, and how to be rooted in greater wonder and hope.

PREFACE

The main theme that links all three papers is that of “trees of life,” which is a vital image in both the Christian faith and the Buddhist tradition that I practice. This metaphor reminds me that when people engage in clinical pastoral education, we participate in an organic, relational, and developmental process. CPE links us not only with a growing awareness of our own identity as humans and as ministers—our trunks—but also with our grounding—or roots—in a hoping relationship with ultimate reality, be that God, Amida Buddha, Allah, Brahman or so forth. In addition, CPE also promotes the growth of compassion as we learn how to be in authentic, caring relationship with others and to practice skills for ministry—the branches, leaves, and fruit. So I will speak of roots and hope, trunk and identity, and branches and fruit and compassion—see *figure 1* (p. 106).

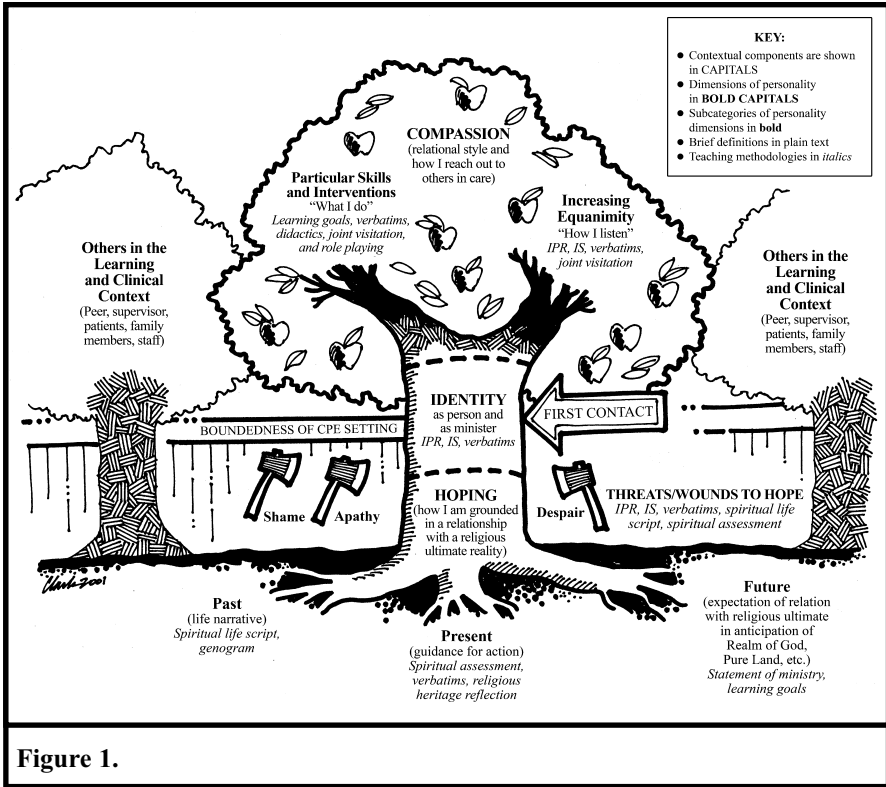


Figure 1.

Theology. I contend that human beings are continually changing through experience and relationship. This is based on the insights of Asian American theologian Rita Nakashima Brock, the theology of hope articulated by Andrew Lester and Donald Capps, and the teachings of the Pure Land Buddhist sage Shinran. The constant, however, lies in our capacity to hope, which I define as the ability to believe that there is a caring ultimate reality and, therefore, that the future has possibilities that can be realized. Our roots of hope are inevitably damaged in relationships because of our vulnerable nature, and that damage characteristically assumes one of three threats: despair, apathy, or shame. Salvation/enlightenment arises as we engage in a continuous relational education process in our lives (such as CPE) that acknowledges our histories and identities, attends to our wounded hope, and nurtures growth in compassion.

Personality. Drawing upon the theories of Erik and Joan Erikson as applied to pastoral psychology by Donald Capps, I assert that human beings continuously

negotiate the tension between basic trust and basic mistrust, which leads to a dynamic balance between hope and suspicion that is the key to how students offer spiritual care and learn about ministry. As this balancing occurs only within relationships, and because relationality entails vulnerability as well as growth, all of us develop an “imperfect” or “threatened” capacity for hope that typically manifests in one of three tendencies: despair (mistrust of the cosmos), apathy (mistrust of others), or shame (mistrust of self). Each of these dynamics calls forth a particular pastoral and supervisory stance: either as guide (for those who despair), as truth teller (for those who are apathetic), or as encourager (for those who feel shame). Through learning goals that address this wound and its impact on their ministry practice and through individual and group facilitation that focuses students’ attention on their “threats” and on alternative, intentional ways of relating with others, I seek to create a milieu in which students can reconnect to their hopeful roots (self-awareness and faith heritage) and expand the reach of their branches in embodying compassion with others (skills for ministry).

Education. Informed primarily by the adult learning theory of Donald Schön, the group developmental theory of Roy Lacoursiere, and the educational spirituality of Parker Palmer, my concept of education is like the Japanese art of *jodo-teien* (Pure Land gardening), in which trees are cultivated within clear yet hospitable boundaries. The artistry lies in both the gardener and the tree; it requires some shaping and pruning, but it also yields space for the tree to realize its own nature and potential within the limits of the garden or context in which it grows. Similarly, pastoral supervision is an artistically guided, mutual learning relationship in which students’ self-awareness and spiritual care competencies are evoked and nurtured within a clearly defined, hospitable environment. This occurs in CPE as participants realize their particular wound to hope and respond to the relational/caring dynamics that arise from that wound.

THEOLOGY

What theologians or theological resources inform my theological stance?

I am a person of blended ancestry and blended cultural heritages, and I am also a pastoral supervisor whose theology bears a blended, eclectic lineage. The threads of my childhood Southern Baptist piety, my adult American Baptist ecumenism, and my Pure Land Buddhist heritage all weave together in me, and I am discover-

ing for myself what feminist theologian Rita Nakashima Brock, a *hapa* (mixed-race Asian) like me, already knows: “I search all the places I feel rooted for my connections. I do not screen my sources for ideological purity, discriminating between Christian and pagan, Western or Eastern.”³ Brock is a role model for me because she incorporates Buddhist formulations and Asian American sensibilities into her Christological work. She helps me to see that human beings live and are defined in continually changing, interdependent relationships, and that we discover God, or ultimate reality, through being in those relationships. Because Brock does not concretely articulate how those relationships can be enhanced, however, I turn to theologies of hope—represented by Gabriel Marcel and applied to pastoral contexts by Andrew Lester and Donald Capps—to ground my understanding that relationships develop healthfully insofar as one learns basic trust, acknowledges one’s interdependence with others, and maintains a receptive openness to transformation through authentic interaction with others and a religious ultimate reality, by which I mean what Christians name as “God” and Pure Land Buddhists would call “the compassionate vow of Amida Buddha.”⁴

How do I understand persons as creatures of God?

In the Scriptures of both Pure Land Buddhism and the Christian faith, trees are used to symbolize new life.⁵ This imagery speaks to me because it yields a metaphor for understanding human beings in an organic, developmental, and interdependent way. I interpret the “trees” as individual human beings, whose selves are fluid, experiencing entities. Following the lead of modern Christian process theologies and Buddhist psychology, I contend that we are neither self-caused nor self-sufficient, and—rather than each person possessing a substantive, separative self⁶—our selves are continually changing as past moments of lived experience are structured into patterns of memory and meanings that influence our present aims, actions, and future hopes. Hence, we are defined and shaped by past experience, present choices, future goals, and relational contexts, including our relation with a religious ultimate reality. As a way of understanding these various dimensions of the self, I will use the metaphor of a tree for our “trees of life”: the roots are the grounding we have in relationship with a religious ultimate reality, the trunk is our sense of identity as humans and as ministers, and the branches are our relations with others and how we reach out in compassion. An illustration of these connections is seen in figure 1.

For a person who acknowledges and seeks connection with an ultimate reality, the roots of her or his tree of life are grounded in hope. I define “hope” by

turning to my Japanese heritage; in Japanese the word for “hope” is *kibo*, whose pictographs imply planning one’s present actions while looking expectantly toward the future. Thus, I see hoping as a way of being that is continually negotiated throughout my lifespan; it gives structure to the narrative I tell about my past experience, to my present aims and actions, and to my “future story.” This hope rests on a faith affirmation—a basic trust⁸—that there is a trustworthy ultimate dimension to human existence. In the two traditions that I practice, this dimension is expressed as God’s love incarnated in Jesus of Nazareth and as the vow of Amida Buddha that guarantees enlightenment to everyone through birth into the Pure Land. In both instances, what is central to hope is the trust that this ultimate reality acts toward us with grace and compassion. In Christian terms, God creates us, and God moves toward us with a changeless stance of love that yet adapts constantly in call and response to our action and experience, and we name that stance as grace. In Buddhist terms, Amida’s vow applies to all sentient beings, and so we can entrust ourselves completely to its fulfillment. Religiously, hope has both a future and a present orientation because I hope toward a future fulfillment (in other words, for the realm of God or for birth into the Pure Land) and also because my life in the present is influenced by my trust in that ultimate reality in this actual moment. Thus “the kingdom of God is among [us],” as Jesus said, or in the words of Pure Land Buddhism’s founder Shinran Shonin (1173–1262), “When true entrusting is settled, at that very instant Amida’s light grasps us and protects us, and we forever transcend birth-and-death.”⁹ Hope influences our aim toward the future and our action in the present, as well as the structure of our life stories (for example, I could tell how I have felt despair and how God has been gracious with me in the past). Because of its pervasiveness in human existence, I concur with the French Christian existentialist Gabriel Marcel when he asserts that “[w]e cannot help seeing that there is the closest of connections between the soul and hope. I almost think that hope is for the soul what breathing is for the living organism. Where hope is lacking, the soul dries up and withers.”¹⁰ Consequently, I believe that discerning the shape and content of a student’s hope—in past, present, and future—is crucial in my supervisory practice.

I believe that hoping serves as the root that nourishes or animates the branches of a human’s tree of life, which Brock poetically calls “journeying by Heart”¹¹ and which I name as compassionate action. The branches and fruit of compassionate action grow from one’s hopefulness that suffering can be challenged and changed toward good, or at least it can be accompanied significantly and helpfully. Thus, I believe that compassion is a gift given to us by God or through the working

of Amida Buddha's vow and that this gift can be cultivated through practice and reflection. Caring competencies can be ripened through the process of CPE. When supervising students to enhance their compassion, I combine a Christian emphasis on being a "Samaritan" who is compassionate with specific others (in other words, honing skills and interventions—"what I do") with a Buddhist emphasis on equanimity or broadening the scope of people with whom I can minister effectively (in other words, increasing awareness of attitudes, values, and assumptions about others—"how I listen"). Focusing on compassion also reminds me that my branches are woven together with those of all other beings—other "trees of life." It is in that interweaving of my life with others' lives that I experience what Buddhists call "dependent co-arising," which means that all beings and entities are mutually dependent on one another for their existence.¹² Thus, I must rely on others for my growth and development, and I can be grateful for what others have done and are doing on my behalf—which informs my theology of CPE as a process in which I learn together with you in a mutually transformative educational encounter. The community is thus the primary way in which human beings can experience what Brock calls "the incarnation of divine love" or simply "Heart,"¹³ and it is the arena where Heart can be practiced, hope discerned, and compassion exercised and offered. Hence, I see a theological underpinning both for the importance of pastoral care and for the group-oriented educational focus of CPE methodology.

What links hope with compassion, as the Preface illustration shows, is the identity of the human being as person and as minister—the trunk. This is the point of first contact for me as a minister and supervisor, where I can see the interaction of the person's hoping process with his or her relational style and expression of compassion—what Frederick Buechner, in another context, calls "the place where [one's] deep gladness and the world's deep hunger meet."¹⁴

Admittedly, I employ this "tree of life" metaphor to construct a vision of human existence both as I perceive it to be and how I believe it should be. I assume that human beings grow and develop over time as they continually encounter experiences, incorporate those moments, and meet new occasions as they arise. This does not mean that such growth cannot be frustrated, but I do assume that we will change, and that God or Amida's vow directs us toward the wholeness promised in the Pure Land or in God's realm, in which we become fully open, receptive beings. So, while I acknowledge the reality of hopelessness, my faith enables me to affirm a foundationally hopeful stance. Further, I assert that, to realize our fullest potential as human beings and to grow as spiritual caregivers, we need to be in connection with ultimate reality and with others. Such a connection may not involve an institu-

tionalized religious expression (or may, as in my case, involve multiple expressions), so I seek to remain aware of my own biases about what constitutes a healthy connection. Yet, in my pastoral supervision, it is critical to assess the student's connectedness to a religious ultimate and her or his relational stance with others. By doing so, I can help the student discern where his or her relationships with God and others need strengthening (through naming his or her "wound" to hope, as I explain below), and then I can encourage and challenge the student to do that healing work, celebrating as he or she tries new behaviors and stronger, more authentic relationships result.

How do I think theologically about interpersonal relationships and relationship with the transcendent?

I believe that all relationships are characterized optimally by mutuality and interdependence. My vision of sin and of salvation comes as a consequence of this assertion, which in many respects is a repudiation of Augustinian original sin theory (in which all human beings physically inherit the consequences of Adam's disobedience of God's law at birth and thus require Christ's atoning sacrifice). For example, against my traditional Baptist upbringing, I concur with Brock when she interprets sin in terms of damage rather than defect or violation. "I am suggesting," she writes, "that sinfulness is neither a state that comes inevitably with birth nor something that permeates all human existence, but a symptom of the unavoidably relational nature of human existence through which we come to be damaged and damage others. ...[W]e are, by nature, vulnerable, easily damaged, and that vulnerability is both the sign of our connectedness and the source of the damage that leads us to sin. ...*Sin is not something to be punished, but something to be healed.*"¹⁵ Consequently, I view sin as a breach in relationship, whether intended or unintended, and akin to an injury to the roots of our "trees of life"—with variations in intensity, severity, and depth of woundedness. These wounds disconnect us from our hope and from others, just as an axe blow can sever a tree's branches from the xylem and phloem that bring nourishment. As I will address in my personality theory, these wounds come in one of three characteristic forms: despair (because of mistrust of the cosmos), apathy (because of mistrust of others), or shame (because of mistrust of self).¹⁶ Thus, while I believe hope is resilient, I also assert that hope can be damaged, and that all of us carry some woundedness within our hoping that is manifested in our damaged relationships with others.

Salvation is found as we trust in the compassionate power of God's love or in the fulfillment of Amida's vow, and in that awareness finding the empowerment to

relate with the world in open and receptive ways. Hence, my understanding of salvation incorporates what Baptists typically have separated as salvation and sanctification. Instead of seeing salvation as a once-and-for-all event to be followed by a lifelong process of sanctification in which one seeks to purify one's life as a follower of Christ, I interpret salvation itself as the process by which grace or Amida's vow infuses us over the course of our lives. Salvation and sanctification grow together in us as we grow and become more receptive to the workings of grace or Amida's vow. Further, the use of the plural pronoun in the preceding sentence is intentional; I do not perceive salvation in the individualistic mode advocated historically by Baptists. While I do agree that individuals must make commitments to follow Christ (or the Buddhist path, for that matter), I believe that those commitments are made within relational contexts—I become a Christian and join “the communion of saints,” for example—and the healing must arise within relationships, since sin entails damaged relationship and a breach of our basic interdependence. The spiritual assessment models that I employ address these issues because I assess the strength and directionality of students' hope—do they believe they can be saved, that Amida's vow applies to them, or that God is trustworthy?—and because I also address the relational needs that students present because of their wounded hoping. Are they undervaluing themselves as participants (because of shame), do they need to reconcile with others (because of apathy), or do they need to find meaning and purpose in their lives so that they can make significant commitments (because of despair)? Since I hold this view of salvation, I see salvation as a continuing relational education process in people's lives. It is not a static decision, as my early Baptist theology would say, but rather a process of continually choosing or aiming toward the “abundant life” that Jesus promises or toward living as one whose birth in the Pure Land is assured or “truly settled,” as Shinran and Pure Land Buddhists would say.¹⁷ I envision CPE as a process in which that aiming can happen.

How does this understanding inform my supervision?

Given this understanding of theological anthropology, my pastoral supervision entails a threefold task. The first dimension involves assessment, discerning with the student the shape and rootage of her hope through discovery of the “wound” under which the student lives her life and through careful listening to the student's future stories for locus (what is hoped in) and direction (what future is hoped for). A second dimension incorporates goals and interventions, as I help the student to formulate learning goals that encourage the growth of compassionate action

through focused attention on developing pastoral care skills and through acknowledging attitudes, values, and assumptions that the student has about others. My interventions arise as I work with the student in role playing, analyze verbatim presentations, observe the student on her clinical assignments, and facilitate her interactions with peers. The third dimension involves challenging those relational stances that hinder or damage mutuality and connectedness, facilitating opportunities for the student to practice new behavior, and affirming the student when she enhances her relating abilities. The student and I acknowledge how the present circumstance prompts patterns (e.g., “tapes” from one’s family of origin) that influence her action in the present, and yet we also explore how that present can be influenced by the caring of a religious ultimate, which desires for us to practice new ways of being and relating. Some of the methodologies I utilize to achieve these three tasks are listed in figure 1, and I will elaborate on them in my other theory papers.

An example of how this works in my supervision: E, a woman who identified with the Byzantine Catholic tradition, talked about feeling “numb” and “apathetic” toward finding a job after her CPE residency was completed, which was one of her learning goals that unit. She also demonstrated a reluctance to engage with her peers and resolve conflicts she had with them around her attitudes and assumptions, thereby damaging others further. In group interventions and in individual supervision, E and I began to understand that she was confessing a particular form of apathy, known classically as *acedia*, that manifested itself as an unwillingness to invest in the present moment or plan for the future.¹⁸ In addition, I utilized my Buddhist awareness to name that E was seeking to be “uniquely desperate” and avoid responsibility for her life by not resolving conflicts and not acknowledging her interdependence. Consequently, she was stuck in broken relationships with her peers, thus perpetuating relational damage, and felt stuck in her job search. I empathized with her around my own struggles with hopelessness and loneliness, yet I also challenged her to combat her *acedia* by cultivating inner strengths, such as diligence and courage in the present, as a way of opening a future. The way to cultivate those strengths, we learned, is by relating fully with her peers and resolving her conflicts with them so that she could free the energy she was using to keep everything repressed. With my prompting and the help of her peer group, E was able to work on reconciling her broken relationships, and she heard her peers’ feedback about her apathy as a concerned warning that helped her to look for work more intentionally. Thus, my supervisory strategy with E was to assess the nature of her hopelessness (*acedia*) and show its impact on her life and relationships,

facilitate her interactions with peers to help her build reconciliation, and challenge the relational stance E held that said “Hunker down and prepare for the worst,” encouraging the alternative of “Be open with others and see your horizons and your hope expand.” I helped E to reconnect with her roots of hope while at the same time urging and challenging her to reconnect with her relationships with others, and so I believe that E made progress that also enhanced the strength of her branches (i.e., her compassionate action as a pastoral caregiver) and honored her trunk (her professional identity).

PERSONALITY

Which personality theories enhance my understanding of human nature and development?

As is evident from the “tree of life” imagery in my theology paper, I embrace a personality theory that emphasizes the importance of hope (the roots), identity (the trunk), and care (or, as I call it, the branches of compassionate action), and the development of these dimensions in relation with others throughout the lifespan. Among psychoanalytic and developmental psychologies, thus, I feel the greatest affinity with the theory of Erik and Joan Erikson.¹⁹ Their work appeals to me because they display an abiding interest in how people mature psychodynamically within their social and historical contexts, and their perspective also honors the centrality of religious and spiritual concerns in human lives, particularly the life-long interrelated values of hope and care.

For the Eriksons, the formation of human personality occurs according to an epigenetic ground plan, in which each potentiality has a specific time when it must arise and be integrated into the functioning whole of the human psyche.²⁰ These potentials, which both encompass Freud’s psychosexual stages and supplement them with attention to psychosocial dynamics, are represented by developmental crises that highlight particular issues at various ages of human life. Each issue is present in some form before and after its “critical moment” arrives. Earlier developmental tensions can be revived in later crises, and elements of later developmental crises will be present in earlier stages. Consequently, I do not interpret the Eriksons’ grid as a strictly linear movement, thus avoiding the more commonly cited problems with their model.²¹ Instead, I assume some artistic license with Erik’s imagery of human development as a fluid “spiral,” “cogwheeling,” or “en-

semble,”²² and I contend that it is possible, at a moment of crisis, for several developmental issues to be active simultaneously in an adult learner’s life. Hence, as a pastoral educator, I seek to discern which developmental crises seem most operative in the lives of my students now and to address those in my supervisory interventions.

Yet, in addition to a less linear reading of Eriksonian theory, I also assume that attending to one developmental tension can illuminate how the others are being negotiated.²³ While the Eriksons’ eight developmental crises are familiar to many Americans—they include basic trust v. mistrust; autonomy v. shame and doubt; initiative v. guilt; industry v. inferiority; identity v. identity confusion; intimacy v. isolation; generativity v. stagnation; and integrity v. despair—in my pastoral supervision, I direct my focus onto the first tension because I believe that how a student has resolved (and continues to resolve) the crisis between basic trust and mistrust shapes the content of his hope and, consequently, his spiritual and psychological dynamics. Other developmental crises are important for pastoral formation and competence, but the dynamic balance of hope and suspicion in a student’s life is central to the way in which he offers spiritual care and learns about ministry. Thus, while I would consider myself an Eriksonian developmentalist, in my pastoral supervision I concentrate my attention on the first tension—the roots, to use our arboreal metaphor. In the language of the ACPE Standards, I utilize pastoral reflection (with the student, focusing on his hope) to nurture pastoral formation (of identity) in order to facilitate pastoral competence and specialization (in his provision of compassionate action as a minister).

Here is where my understanding of personality is inspired by the work of Donald Capps, who builds upon the Eriksons’ theories to discuss major threats to hope.²⁴ Capps and I define “hope” as a constellation of perceptive-cognitive and emotive responses to stressors in which one nevertheless anticipates that the future holds realizable possibilities. This capacity is grounded in a trust that begins in one’s childhood experiences of caring others (usually parents) and then expands to incorporate one’s relationship with a religious ultimate reality.²⁵ In Capps’s paradigm, there are three threats to the capacity to hope: apathy, shame, and despair. Because the balancing of hope and suspicion occurs only within relational contexts, and because relationality entails vulnerability and damage (as I noted in my theology paper), all of us develop “imperfect” or “threatened” capacities for hope in our childhoods. Hence an individual human being, depending on his or her early object relations and how he or she has resolved (and is resolving) the trust v. mistrust tension, will focus on one of these threats or “wounds” more than the others.²⁶ That

threat or wound will influence and shape how that person relates to the world; it will manifest itself in a dynamic style of perceiving and interacting with others. Based on these threats, I make three assertions. The first is that those students who, in their early object relations, did not enjoy a “holding environment” in which parents could be trusted to be “good-enough” and congruent in interactions with their children will tend to distrust others.²⁷ For such students, the threat to their hope is apathy, and what they must seek in order to heal the wound is reconciliation of broken relationships.²⁸ The second is that those students who experienced the gradually inadequate care of their parents (i.e., a necessary lessening of the caregiver’s exact adaptation to the child’s needs, according to Winnicott) and blamed themselves for the parental withdrawal will tend not to trust themselves. For such students, the threat to their hope is shame, and what they seek is increased self-worth and a sense of belonging to community. The third is that those students whose parenting was benevolent yet inconsistent and disillusioning (which means that the child was probably weaned abruptly and therefore has a reduced capacity to sustain the necessary illusion that her or his needs will be consistently met) will tend not to trust the cosmic order. For such students, the threat to their hope is despair, and what they seek is a renewed sense of meaning and direction. Again, I assume that all humans resolve the tension between trust and mistrust “imperfectly”²⁹ and will therefore be susceptible to these threats to their hoping, which typically will manifest itself in a characteristic relational dynamic. As a thumbnail summary, apathy tends to lead toward blaming of others and avoiding responsibility in one’s interpersonal relationships; shame manifests as a self-blaming lack of empowerment and a holding of false beliefs about the self; despair leads to indecisiveness and an unwillingness to make commitments. Each relational dynamic or style constitutes the “branches” that grow from the wounded roots of hope that, in turn, shape the trunk of a student’s identity as a human being and a minister. Further, those branches indicate not only how that student relates with others, such as peers and supervisor, but also how that student offers pastoral care.

Thus, while I begin by exploring students’ sense of identity, my pastoral supervision focuses dually on addressing their relational dynamics and participating with them in repairing the damage to their hope, since I believe that one must attend to the roots (hope) and the branches (compassionate action or care) concurrently in order to promote the health of the trunk (identity) and the tree as a whole (the human being).

Relational Style	Threat to Hope	Locus of Mistrust and Family “Message”	What is Being Sought (<i>Core Spiritual Belief</i>)	Healing Theme and Present Coping Strength	Pastoral Stance (<i>Being</i>)	Intervention Pathway (<i>Doing</i>)	Pastoral Communication
Blaming others and not accepting responsibility	Apathy	Others One was either too good or not good enough for parents; “I can only rely on myself”	Reconciliation of broken relations	Empowerment Ability to make insightful judgments and assessments	Truth-teller (Prophet)	Mirroring the Truth > Confrontation (<i>con- + frontare</i> = “to face together with”)	“You don’t have to be apathetic—you can take responsibility in your relationships”
Seeking information and avoiding decisions	Despair	Cosmos Benevolent but inconsistent; “I can’t decide”	Meaning and Direction	Discernment Ability to know a breadth of coping possibilities	Guide (Pastor)	Lighting the Path > Clarification	“You don’t have to despair—you can create a direction and commit yourself”
Blaming self and believing one is unworthy of attention	Shame	Self Blaming self for parental withdrawal; “You’re great—I’m not”	Self-worth and a sense of belonging to community	Equality Ability to communicate genuine humility	Encourager (Priest)	Hearing the Story > Support	“How have you known belonging in the past?”

Table 1.

How do these theories inform my supervisory practices, such as assessment, goals, and interventions?

Because I am a visual learner, I have included *table 1* (p. 117),³⁰ which shows the threats to hope and their corresponding pastoral interventions, as well as a “tree of life” illustration in figure 1, which shows the various dimensions of human personality I am describing along with the CPE methodology that “speaks” to each facet. Briefly put, however, each of the “threatening” dynamics and relational styles mentioned above calls forth a particular pastoral and supervisory stance: either as clarifying guide (for those who despair and are indecisive), confronting³¹ truth-teller (for those who are apathetic and blaming others), or supportive encourager (for those who feel shame and blame themselves). Here I believe that while support, confrontation, and clarification (as in ACPE Objective 309.3) are appropriate for all persons engaged in learning, the “mix” for any particular individual usually favors one modality more than the other two, depending on her or his threat to hope and relational style.³²

Through learning goals that address this wound and its impact on their ministry practice, and individual and group facilitation that directs students’ attention toward their “threats” and alternative, intentional ways of relating with others, I seek to create a milieu in which students can reconnect to their hopeful roots—namely, their self-awareness and sense of connection with a religious ultimate reality (309.1 and 309.6). Concurrently, I work with students to expand the reach of their compassionate branches toward others in two ways. First, the students and I seek to develop particular skills and interventions for ministry (309.5 and 309.8). Second, we intentionally examine our attitudes, values, and assumptions about others (309.2 and 309.4) so that we may increase our equanimity, which is a Buddhist term for extending compassion to others whether they are friends, enemies, or strangers—in other words, broadening the diversity of people with whom we can offer our pastoral presence.³³

In order for these processes to occur, however, I pay close attention in the development of a learning alliance with students, seeking to create an environment where they feel trust more than mistrust. Put another way, I recapitulate the first developmental tension, but work to make it a hope-nurturing context. I will elaborate on this facet in my educational theory paper, but I believe that this happens in the supervisory relationship through honest and direct feedback, demonstrated caring, and encouraging what Winnicott calls a “transitional zone,” an intermediate area of experience wherein playful insight may be cultivated and the student can claim her or his strengths and limitations.

As an example of how this works in my supervision: J, a woman who was a former Roman Catholic nun and school principal, came into a residency year with strong skills in attentive listening and providing pastoral support. Yet, in her peer group, she often cried and was apologetic for her tears and for how she expressed her thoughts to her peers. When she and I met for individual supervision and when she recalled some of her history, including her “future story” (her plans and hopes for the future), we identified a desire to “fix” or “take care of everyone” that related back to her mother’s death and to J’s desire to be embraced and held in her grief. She set up caretaking dynamics in her ministry encounters to compensate for the embrace she herself did not receive, and she did what she could to make sure that others were “happy and pain-free.” This propensity was related to J’s spiritual life script, an exercise that she completed with her peers in the first unit, which for her read along these lines: “O God, you will love me as long as I cause no tension or grief and I anticipate what everyone needs and do what needs to be done for them.” What we named together as the sin that she had to avoid at all costs was upsetting others by telling them what she thought or felt in the moment. While she was very able to name and live in her emotions, she would hold back for fear of imposing on others. She also allowed herself to become other-centered, which meant that she would surrender her authority to others and apologize for asserting herself. Then she would feel overwhelmed by everyone else’s needs.

Hence, my assessment of J was that shame was her major threat to hope. (From a nonlinear Eriksonian developmental perspective, I also assessed her as negotiating the tension between intimacy and isolation, with a dystonic balance in autonomy v. shame and doubt. Because I concentrate on a student’s threat to hope, however, that assessment was a secondary focus of my supervision with her.) J was prone to blaming herself, and what she sought was increased self-worth and a sense of belonging in which she could feel empowered to be who she was as a person and a minister. My supervisory interventions, therefore, were designed to affirm and support J’s work, while encouraging her in her learning goals to take some relational risks and counter a false belief she held: that it was inappropriate to express her frustration and anger with others. This emerged in her interaction with a patient who wanted to decline needed surgery and was avoidant in his conversation with J. I helped her to name that she had become impatient with him, but had decided to internalize that feeling and move it aside, instead of using it to tell him the truth about his behavior. At one point in her verbatim presentation, however, J did make a connection with the story of the paralytic at Bethzatha whom Jesus asks, “Do you want to be healed?” (John 5:1–9; emphasis mine), and when her peers and I

encouraged her to pursue that line of thought, she used it to frame her future interventions with the patient. J's growing edge was that she needed to disconfirm her life script that told her not to upset others, so that she could be prophetic in her pastoral care. As we worked on this area, what became clear to her was that her tears were safer than her anger. J was very good at deflecting anger in herself and she was skilled at not provoking anger in others, and her tears were a more permissible way for her to access her emotions. I, therefore, framed this assumption with her as "crying is not safe, but anger is even more unsafe." Consequently, as J felt empowered to voice her anger and learned that it was helpful in her pastoral care, she cried less often in her group interactions and became more confident and present with her patients—and more welcoming of herself.

How is my personality theory consistent with my theological understanding of persons?

Beyond the use of the metaphor of "trees of life," the major thread is that the centrality of hope in my theological understanding is mirrored by my emphasis on hope psychodynamically. Further, when I discuss "threats" or "wounds" to hope I am making both a theological and a psychological assertion—namely, that human existence is characterized by relationality and fluidity, and relationality entails vulnerability and damage. Thus, imperfections in our sense of hope and the emergence of "wounded" relational styles are inevitable, expectable situations. Yet I also believe that these wounds, while inevitable, are not irreparable; they can be ameliorated through a continuing relational education process. Thus, from both a theological and a psychological perspective, my theoretical grounding has a hopeful tone.

An additional (and related) connecting point between my theology and my personality theory is the assertion that a student's relationship with a religious ultimate reality—what I have called her roots of hope—will have a direct effect on how she relates with others and offers pastoral care. This parallels the Eriksons' argument that hope (as faith) and care (as generativity) are interwoven in adult life, and it is my way of paraphrasing Jesus' linkage of the love of God with the love of one's neighbor in the Great Commandment (Mark 12:28–34). I, thus, contend that compassionate action relies upon hope.

EDUCATION

In the preceding papers, I utilized the Christian and Buddhist imagery of “trees of life” to argue that people participate in continuous, dynamic, relationally based learning throughout their lives. For those who feel called to provide spiritual care, the CPE action-reflection model intentionally engages this process. This model enables students to explore their sense of personal and pastoral identity (their trunks), as well as their relationship with a religious ultimate reality (roots) and how they relate with and embody compassion toward others (branches and fruit).

This paper’s guiding metaphor is the ancient Japanese art of *jodo-teien* (creating gardens that evoke contemplation of Amida’s Pure Land), in which trees are cultivated within clear yet hospitable boundaries. The artistry lies in both the gardener and the tree; it requires some shaping and pruning, but it also yields space for the tree to realize its own nature and potential within the limits of the garden or context in which it lives. Similarly, pastoral supervision is an artistically guided, mutual learning relationship in which students’ self-awareness and spiritual care competencies are evoked and nurtured within a clearly defined, hospitable environment.

What is my understanding of how persons learn?

My educational theory is based upon four assumptions that I make about people and the process of learning. The first is that people learn most effectively within a relational or community context. As I note in my other two papers, the self is formed by continuously changing, interdependent relationships, and thus I envision education as an intentional effort to shape the self and its constituent components (identity, hoping, and compassionate action). As Parker Palmer writes, “Knowing of any sort is relational, animated by a desire to come into deeper community with what we know. . . . Knowing is a human way to seek relationship and, in the process, to have encounters and exchanges that will inevitably alter us. At its deepest reaches, knowing is always communal.”³⁴ Hence, in my supervision, establishing trust in both the learning alliance and the group process is vital, so that the students can feel connected to a community in which learning can occur.

This leads to a second assumption, which is that the learning environment needs to be hospitable, even toward conflict. Again I rely on Palmer, who notes that “[a] learning space needs to be hospitable not to make learning painless but to make the painful things possible, things without which no learning can occur—things

like exposing ignorance, testing tentative hypotheses, challenging false or partial information, and mutual criticism of thought.”³⁵ Because I assume that learning happens as people face and adapt to challenge, just as trees develop strength as they face and adapt to natural forces like high winds, I do not equate educational hospitality with an absence of confrontation. Rather, as Thomas Klink observes, “The real issue is one of timing or, as [Alfred North] Whitehead put it, rhythm. Sometimes education can best be accomplished by methods which sharpen conflicts, and at other times by methods which extend security.” Thus, I as a supervisor seek to provide a space in which conflicts can arise and be faced—fostering what Klink would call a “bounded situation” wherein students have a “cross-grained experience...in which one is confronted with demands calling for responses contrary to one’s presently ingrained character.”³⁶ In that space, students can practice resolution skills and counter familial “tapes” that say, for example, that anger must be avoided. By allowing conflicts to arise and facilitating resolution strategies with students, I help them to address the relational-caring style (compassionate branches) that emerges from their particular wound to hope, and then find ways of being and acting that are more hope-sustaining.

My third assumption is that people learn through a process of knowing-in-action that engages their curiosity. This is the bedrock of the CPE paradigm: that, as people get curious and reflect upon what they are doing and how they are being with others in their ministry, their learning process will enhance future actions. Donald Schön calls this “knowing-in-action,” in which a student’s initial response to a crisis elicits a surprising result (e.g., a confusing or “dead-end” response from a patient), which leads to reflection and critique (e.g., in a verbatim with peers and me), which then moves toward “on-the-spot experimentation,” in which the student tries new skills and approaches based on reflective learning.³⁷ I see this as an artistic, developing process in which both the student and I have roles as co-learners—a model that, as Daniel Jacobs and his colleagues state, “calls for mutual collaboration and joint discovery by supervisor and student and that seems less hierarchical and more collegial.”³⁸ I frequently encourage students to “be curious” as they engage in pastoral visits and allow their pastoral intuition to develop through attending to the “gaps” or questions raised in the stories they hear from patients and family members. As I model pastoral curiosity with students about their stories and about their ministry encounters, we learn together what the student needs and wants to know. I, thus, subscribe to two tenets in Malcolm Knowles’s andragogical model: (1) adults become ready to learn those things they need to know and to be able to do in order to cope effectively with their real-life situations (when their curi-

osity is engaged); and (2) adults are life-centered and problem-centered in their learning orientation (as they are surprised in ministry events).³⁹

Nuancing this mutuality in the action-reflection process, however, is a fourth assumption, which is that while the supervisor and students are on a mutual journey, the supervisor must lead students through the competencies they are to develop based on their learning needs. In *jodo-teien* terms, I as the gardener must listen to the trees to discern how they want to grow or how they learn and what they want to learn; but I must also guide the trees' growth through my assessment of their learning needs and be aware of the ways in which they resist change and growth. This entails helping students to develop learning goals, particularly addressing their wounds to hope, and guiding students as they practice pastoral reflection and increase in pastoral competence. This requires that I trust that the CPE process will work and that mutuality and empowerment in learning will grow as students become more proficient in the clinical method. Hence, I am intentionally more proactive and directive in the early stages of my supervision because "[t]he teacher who wants to teach at the intersection of all the stories, big and little, must continually make interpretations that students do not know how to make—until they have been 'heard to speech' often enough to do it for themselves."⁴⁰

What educational theory guides my goals and decision-making in supervisory practice both with individuals and with groups?

Based on my theology and understanding of human personality, my educational theory focuses on assessing students' identity, capacity to hope (with their accompanying wounds), and ability to relate compassionately with others. I rely upon Schön's understanding of learning as "artistic knowing," in which supervisor and student mutually improvise strategies that will address the student's learning needs, as well as Jacobs and colleagues and Knowles's assumption that adult learners are motivated and require an alliance with a supervisor that rests on trust (of each other) and investment (by both of us) in the educational process.⁴¹ A major element in maintaining this alliance, I believe, rests in my ability to bring myself—my limitations, strengths and potentials—into the supervisory relationship. Insofar as I am able to do so, it becomes easier to address the parallel process, resistances, and transferences between minister and patient and minister and supervisor in a fruitful, educative manner.⁴² Consequently, I place a lot of stock in being honest about my own weaknesses and strengths in ministry, as a way of building rapport in the learning alliance, and I emphasize curiosity and "experimentation" through verbatim sessions, joint visitation, role playing, and participating in religious heritage reflec-

tions (group sessions wherein I guide students in explicitly using their faith traditions to interpret a reported clinical event).

Because people develop and learn within the context of groups with whom they are in relationship, including identifying with and defining themselves against their families of origin, congregations, the larger society, and the even larger web of sentient beings,⁴³ I believe that the intense group interaction within CPE provides an educational “boundary” for personal and professional growth. Therefore, I work to cultivate an environment within which students may invest themselves, practice new behaviors, and gain new insights. In this task, I am informed by Roy Lacoursiere and Irvin Yalom, who each articulate a series of stages through which most groups grow. I perceive this process occurring in each CPE quarter and also throughout a residency year, an insight that dovetails with my concept of human development as an Eriksonian “spiral” in which discernable (and, to some degree, predictable) crises arise.⁴⁴

As students begin CPE, they enter a stage of orientation (or, if they expect to be injured by the process, of negative orientation), characterized by anxiety, hope, and anticipation. Here students ask, “Why are we here? Will this be worth the effort?” Their behavior can be regressive and dependent, with superficial interactions and reluctance to share deeper emotional content. The decision that students are making here is one of investment, or “in or out,” in which they must decide to cast their fate with the group (and the group must decide to accept them as members). Hence, I concentrate on building trust and encouraging investment. I engage students as they formulate learning goals and negotiate their group covenant, thus initiating the learning alliance. I make expectations clear, I assist students in drafting realistic goals, and I assess students’ wounds to hope and their relational-caring styles so that my interventions can be consistently responsive.

Then students experience a “bottoming out” as their expectations meet reality and they ask, “Why isn’t this what we had believed it would be?” This question leads to a phase of disappointment, in which students must reaffirm their decision to belong in the group, as well as determine “top or bottom”—how power is exercised. Often marked by discouragement, competition, anger, and depression, this stage usually entails members’ testing of limits, feelings of hostility toward me or the CPE program, resistance to the learning process, a desire to differentiate themselves, and a growing level of confrontation. In this stage, my interventions are geared toward helping students attend to their learning tasks and redefine their expectations of the program, themselves, and their peers. I seek to make boundaries clear and to remain nondefensive in my response to students’ wounds to hope.

Because I assume that most CPE students have not learned how to address conflict, I also facilitate a conflict resolution process when conflicts arise, and I teach students what they can do to initiate reconciliation. I model both pastorally motivated care and confrontation in group sessions, tailored toward the particular wound to hope that each student bears, as discussed in my personality paper and illustrated in the figure 1 and table 1.

Around mid-unit, the group typically moves from disappointment toward a more introspective posture of resolution, in which students implicitly ask, “How can we work together?” There is usually a growing comfort level in personal sharing and a progressive internalizing of skills and group goals at this point, as students feel greater group cohesion and experience more clarity about their roles and the covenant they have negotiated with one another. This can be accompanied often with some ambivalence about the group and its understood task, which can affect a student’s decision to be “near or far” with the group—whether he or she will be emotionally close or distant with peers. My interventions at this point involve giving students the space to reflect on their experience thus far, while at the same time encouraging them to stay engaged (“near”) with their peers and to re-evaluate their learning contracts, releasing goals that are unrealistic, celebrating goals that have been achieved, and forming new ones if needed.

In the latter part of the unit, groups normally enter a period of production in which students practice new behaviors, feel increased cohesion, and offer deeper support and more direct feedback to one another. The dominant theme is usually not a question, but rather a mutual invitation of “Let’s get to work.” Trust is high and individual autonomy is growing, but so is fatigue. Hence, I affirm students as they try new behaviors, offer guidance on how they use those behaviors, and encourage them to keep practicing. As they work on production, though, groups also begin to realize that their time together is concluding.

In the termination stage, students may feel grief for the ending of the group and happiness for what they have accomplished. “What have we learned? Where do we go now? How do we say goodbye?” are the salient questions at this stage, and my task here is to help students review and evaluate their work, assist them in surfacing and integrating their feelings as they near the end, and model a good farewell.

How does my educational theory affect evaluation of students and their work? My evaluation of students centers on how they engage in their learning process—particularly how they are dealing with their wounds to hope and with the relational implications of those wounds in their ministry. I evaluate them specif-

ically using the ACPE objectives and criteria devised by Knowles to describe “self-directed learning,”⁴⁵ including the ability to develop and be in touch with curiosities (the frequent focus of my pastoral supervision of skills; cf. ACPE outcomes 311.9 and 312.7); the ability to perceive oneself objectively and accept feedback about one’s performance non-defensively (the focus of my supervision of personal dynamics, especially their hoping; 311.3 and 312.8); and the ability to formulate and implement learning goals (311.8).

As an example of how my theory works in supervision: L, a woman affiliated with the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), was an articulate and eager student who nevertheless was reluctant to engage fully with her peers in group sessions. As she and I met for individual supervision, it became clear that she feared being perceived as ignorant, incompetent, or offensive. Her spiritual life script seemed to be “I know I am loved by God if others believe me to be on the right path,” and I therefore assessed her wound to hope as being that of despair. As long as she operated predominantly from that script and wound, her locus of control and direction remained external, and she would not have to commit herself to a choice (which was the way in which her resistance to learning manifested itself). As we explored it in individual and group supervision, though, she discovered that the deficit of not committing herself to a belief is that she muted her own voice, remained unclear to herself and others, and thus did not relate with people in full authenticity. I nurtured a learning alliance with L by sharing how I had this wound to hope as well, and I mixed empathic support with clarification about her relational style and confrontation to call her to commitment. In our supervisory relationship, L and I talked about her “diving into the waters” of relationship, even if it meant being “offensive,” and trusting its buoyancy for her soul: “To truly be a prophet (truth teller),” she wrote at one point, “I need to assert myself, instead of waiting to follow the lead of others.” As she practiced being clear about what she wanted and needed to do, she took risks in her interactions with peers, stated her needs and opinions more explicitly than she had ever done, and enjoyed the benefit of being forthright and clear in her relationships, which I celebrated with her in her evaluation. She thus addressed her wound to hope (her roots) and enhanced her relational style and compassionate action (her branches), which bolstered her sense of pastoral identity (her trunk).

NOTES

1. Hisao Inagaki, *The Three Pure Land Sutras: A Study and Translation from Chinese*, chap. 15 (Kyoto, Japan: Nagata Bunshodo, 1995), 259.

2. Rev. 22:1–2 (NRSV).

3. Rita Nakashima Brock, “On Mirrors, Mists, and Murmurs: Toward an Asian American Theology,” in *Weaving the Visions: New Patterns in Feminist Spirituality*, Judith Plaskow and Carol P. Christ, eds. (San Francisco, Calif.: Harper and Row, 1989), 240. The spelling of “thealogy” is intentional. Like Brock herself, I also have been greatly influenced by the work of John B. Cobb Jr., whose “transformationist” paradigm in interfaith dialogue informs this paper. See John B. Cobb Jr., *Beyond Dialogue: Toward a Mutual Transformation of Christianity and Buddhism* (Philadelphia, Penn.: Fortress Press, 1982).

4. I employ the term “religious ultimate reality” because it allows me to remain more open to the diverse faith traditions and perspectives of my students, who may affirm that God is a personal deity, who may understand God as a creative transpersonal Force (for example, see Sallie McFague, *Models of God: Theology for an Ecological, Nuclear Age* (Philadelphia, Penn.: Fortress Press, 1987) or, as with Buddhists, who believe that ultimate reality is found in a creative emptiness with which all of us are linked interdependently. For more about how Amida Buddha is understood in Pure Land Buddhism, see Taitetsu Unno, “The Nature of Religious Experience in Shin Buddhism,” in Peter L. Berger, ed., *The Other Side of God: A Polarity in World Religions* (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday Anchor, 1981); and Taitetsu Unno, *River of Fire, River of Water: An Introduction to the Pure Land Tradition of Shin Buddhism* (New York: Doubleday, 1998).

5. See, for example, Ezek. 47:12 and Rev. 22:1–2ff, as well as chap. 15 of the “Larger Sukhavativyuha Sutra” in Inagaki, *The Three Pure Land Sutras*, 259. I cite two of these passages in the epigraph.

6. For an incisive critique of Western philosophy because it maintains that the self is a separative entity that is fully autonomous and ultimately unconnected to others, see Catherine Keller’s *From a Broken Web: Separation, Sexism, and Self* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1986), passim.

7. This term comes from Andrew D. Lester, *Hope in Pastoral Care and Counseling* (Louisville, Ky.: Westminster John Knox Press, 1995), especially chap. 7.

8. This foreshadows my reliance on Erik and Joan Erikson’s work in my personality theory paper.

9. The gospel quotation is from Luke 17:21. Shinran's words are from a poem cited by Taitetsu Unno in the work *Tannisho: A Shin Buddhist Classic* (Honolulu, Hawaii: Buddhist Study Center Press, 1996), chap. XV, 27.

10. Gabriel Marcel, *Homo Viator: Introduction to a Metaphysics of Hope*, trans. Emma Craufurd (Chicago, Ill.: Henry Regnery, 1951; reprint, Gloucester, Mass.: Peter Smith, 1978), 10–11.

11. Rita Nakashima Brock, *Journeys by Heart: A Christology of Erotic Power* (New York: Crossroad, 1988), 105.

12. I believe that this interdependence is as true of God or the religious ultimate as it is of human beings. Here I would side with Brock against theist constructions that insist that God is impassible, i.e., beyond feeling or influence; process philosopher Alfred North Whitehead states this as a truism: "It is as true to say that God creates the World, as that the World creates God" (*Process and Reality*, corrected edition, David Ray Griffin and Donald W. Sherburne, eds. (New York: Free Press/Macmillan, 1978), 348). Along the same lines, Pure Land Buddhists insist that Amida linked his enlightenment with all beings—he will attain enlightenment only when everyone does.

13. Brock, *Journeys by Heart*, 25, 88.

14. Frederick Buechner, *Wishful Thinking: A Theological ABC* (New York: Harper and Row, 1973), 95.

15. Brock, *Journeys by Heart*, 7, emphasis mine.

16. These three "wounds" are derived from Donald Capps's book *Agents of Hope: A Pastoral Psychology* (Minneapolis, Minn.: Augsburg Fortress, 1995), 98–136.

17. The biblical phrase is derived from John 10:10. The phrase "truly settled" appears numerous times in Shinran's writings; for example, see Dennis Hirota, Hisao Inagaki, Michio Tokunaga, and Ryushin Uryuzu, trans., ed., *The Collected Works of Shinran, Shin Buddhism Translation Series*, vol. I (Kyoto, Japan: Jodo Shinshu Hongwanji-ha [Sect of the Temple of the Original Vow of the Pure Land], 1997), 475.

18. *Acedia* was a term that came into Christian theology through the spirituality of the Desert Fathers and Mothers in early Christian history. For more on this form of apathy, see Capps, *Agents of Hope*, 107–117.

19. While Erik Erikson is commonly cited as the originator of the “eight stages” developmental paradigm, his wife Joan played an indispensable role in the shaping of Erikson’s ideas throughout his writing career, and some of his later books explicitly credit her as a co-author. For more on their relationship, see Lawrence J. Friedman, *Identity’s Architect: A Biography of Erik H. Erikson* (New York: Scribner, 1999).

20. Erik H. Erikson, *Identity: Youth and Crisis* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1968), 92. Erik H. Erikson, *The Life Cycle Completed: A Review* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1982, 1997), 26; the 1997 edition includes additional chapters by Joan M. Erikson.

21. The Eriksons have been critiqued for gender bias, assuming middle-class privilege, and championing Western modernism. See Carol Gilligan, *In a Different Voice: Psychological Theory and Women’s Development* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1982), 12–13; Bonnie J. Miller-McLemore, “Produce or Perish: A Feminist Critique of Generativity,” *Union Seminary Quarterly Review* 43 (1989): 201–221; and Alan Roland, *In Search of Self in India and Japan: Toward a Cross-Cultural Psychology* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1988). All of these critiques depend on a reading of the Eriksons’ work that emphasizes the “staircase” of human development, a reading that Erik himself perpetuated to great extent. However, a “spiral” or “ensemble” reading of Erikson is also possible (see next endnote), and such a reading allows me to remember that each human being travels a unique developmental road. We negotiate similar developmental crises, and there may be a similar order in which those crises arise, but the shape and sequence of those crises are suggested rather than determined by an Eriksonian model.

22. The “spiral” imagery is not explicitly Erikson’s but derives from Robert Kegan, *The Evolving Self: Problem and Process in Human Development* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1982), 73–110, and James W. Fowler, *Stages of Faith: The Psychology of Human Development and the Quest for Meaning* (San Francisco, Calif.: Harper and Row, 1981), 269–291. The “cogwheeling” and “ensemble” images come from Erik H. Erikson’s *Insight and Responsibility: Lectures on the Ethical Implications of Psychoanalytic Insight* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1964), 140–141, 152; and Erikson, *Life Cycle Completed*, 8, 29, 59.

23. I see this as a corollary to the Buddhist concept of dependent co-arising (mentioned in my theology paper), wherein all beings and conditions are interdependently connected. Concentrating on one developmental tension inevitably means addressing many or all of them, because they mutually influence and inform one another.

24. For more on these threats, see Capps, *Agents of Hope*, 98–136. Capps matches each of these threats with a corresponding virtue or “ally to hope.” However, I frame my interventions more in terms of a pastoral stance, as I discuss later in this paper.

25. See Erikson, *Life Cycle Completed*, 60 ff. The term “religious ultimate reality” is defined in my theology paper.

26. Because I assume that these threats to hope have a basis in our early relationships with parental caregivers (particularly mothers) and continue to affect our adult lives as we internalize them, I admit that I am reading the Eriksons with a lens that is colored by object relations theory, e.g., see N. Gregory Hamilton, *Self and Others: Object Relations Theory in Practice* (Northvale, N.J.: Jason Aronson, 1988) and Jay R. Greenberg and Stephen A. Mitchell, *Object Relations in Psychoanalytic Theory* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1983). I assert, however, that Erikson stressed the importance of relationship with objects for the development of the self (cf. Robert S. Wallerstein, "Erikson's Concept of Ego Identity Reconsidered," *J. Amer. Psychoanalytic Assoc.* 46, no. 1 (1998): 229–247). Not coincidentally, given my Pure Land Buddhist practice, this focus on the importance of relational contexts in constructing the sense of a fluid, experiencing self—and its orientation toward hoping—is also emphasized in Buddhist psychologies, such as those developed by David J. Kalupahana in *The Principles of Buddhist Psychology* (Albany, N.Y.: State University of New York Press, 1987) and Anne Carolyn Klein in *Meeting the Great Bliss Queen: Buddhists, Feminists, and the Art of the Self* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1995).

27. For the parental styles and terminology that I underscore in this paragraph, I borrow from D. W. Winnicott, *Playing and Reality* (London: Tavistock, 1971), 1–25, and from John Byng-Hall's work in *Rewriting Family Scripts: Improvisation and Systems Change* (New York: Guilford, 1995), 101–120.

28. While he would disagree with my application of his work, I am indebted to Dennis Kenny for his delineation of spiritual needs, which I have associated with each of these threats. For further elaboration of his paradigm, see his *Promise of the Soul: Identifying and Healing Your Spiritual Agreements* (New York: John Wiley and Sons, 2002), *passim*.

29. The Eriksons assumed this too. They stress that none of these developmental crises are resolved fully at one extreme or the other. All people carry both poles (the syntonic and the dystonic) of each crisis with them into the next crisis, and even what they call "core pathologies" have their adaptive benefits. What is crucial, in their view, is the pole toward which the scales are tipped. See Erikson, *Life Cycle Completed*, 80–81.

30. I am grateful to Tom Harshman for his assistance in creating this matrix.

31. I should note that my definition of "confrontation" is strongly influenced by its Latin etymology. While it often carries the connotation of "to oppose," *con-* + *frontare* also can be read to mean "to face together with," which emphasizes how pastoral confrontation intends to support authentic relationship and caring. Here I am indebted to David Augsburg's *Caring Enough to Confront* (Ventura, Calif.: Regal Books, 1981), especially chapter 1.

32. ACPE Objectives cited in this paper can be found in: *Standards Committee, Standards of the Association for Clinical Pastoral Education, Inc.* (Decatur, Ga.: ACPE, 2005), available

from the ACPE web site, accessed 9 March 2006, <www.acpe.edu/acroread/2005_standards_manual.pdf>.

33. In the Dalai Lama's commentary on the teachings of Jesus, *The Good Heart*, the concept of equanimity is explored in more detail (Dalai Lama, His Holiness the XIVth [Tenzin Gyatso, Bstan-'dzin-rgya-mtsho], *The Good Heart: A Buddhist Perspective on the Teachings of Jesus*, trans. and annotated Geshe Thupten Jinpa, Robert Kiely, ed. (Boston: Wisdom, 1996), 62–68). Eriksonian theory would speak of this quality as the ability to be generative, having a “widening concern for what has been generated by love, necessity, or accident; it overcomes the ambivalence adhering to irreversible obligation” (Erikson, *Insight and Responsibility*, 131).

34. Parker J. Palmer, *The Courage to Teach: Exploring the Inner Landscape of a Teacher's Life* (San Francisco, Calif.: Jossey-Bass, 1998), 54. This is analogous to what Paulo Freire advocates when he links true education to dialogue, which he then connects to five biblically derived virtues: love, humility, faith, trust, and hope, which are all nourished in community (see Paulo Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, trans. Myra Bergman Ramos (New York: Seabury Press, 1970), 75–118.).

35. Parker J. Palmer, *To Know As We Are Known: A Spirituality of Education* (San Francisco, Calif.: HarperCollins, 1983), 74. According to Malcolm Knowles, this means that the learning environment must be characterized by physical comfort, mutual trust and respect, helpfulness, freedom of expression, and acceptance of differences (Malcolm Knowles, *The Adult Learner: A Neglected Species*, 4th ed. (Houston, Texas: Gulf Publishing Co., 1990), 85–87).

36. Thomas W. Klink, “Supervision,” in Charles R. Feilding, Thomas W. Klink, W. John Minter, and James D. Glasse, *Education for Ministry* (Dayton, Ohio: American Association of Theological Schools, 1966), as reprinted in *J. Supervision and Training in Ministry* 11 (1989): 198, 164, and 176. Page citations refer to *JSTM*.

37. Donald A. Schön, *Educating the Reflective Practitioner: Toward a New Design for Teaching and Learning in the Professions* (San Francisco, Calif.: Jossey-Bass, 1987), chap. 2; cf. Rudolf Ekstein and Robert S. Wallerstein, *The Teaching and Learning of Psychotherapy*, 2nd ed. (Madison, Conn.: International Universities Press, 1972), 92. Daniel Jacobs and others (Jacobs, Paul David, and Donald Jay Meyer, *The Supervisory Encounter: A Guide for Teachers of Psychodynamic Psychotherapy and Psychoanalysis* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1995), 59–60) note that this process requires several different styles or modes of thought in order to be effective: inductive (or analogous), associative, creative (metaphorical, meaning-making, and co-constructive), and self-reflective thinking. In my own supervisory practice, I tend to lay great stress on self-reflective and creative thought, some stress on inductive thought, and the least stress on associative thought.

38. Jacobs, David, and Meyer, *Supervisory Encounter*, 27; cf. Ekstein and Wallerstein, *Teaching and Learning of Psychotherapy*, 80.

39. In other words, the learning processes relate to and utilize the students' experiences, and they feel motivated to learn as they sense growth in their mastery of competencies (Knowles, *Adult Learner*, 57–63, 85–87, 127). Knowles mentions four other tenets with which I agree in essence, but they are not relevant to my discussion at this juncture.

40. Palmer, *Courage to Teach*, 81, alluding to Nelle Morton. Schön (*Reflective Practitioner*, 93) makes a related point: "The paradox of learning a really new competence is this: that a student cannot at first understand what he [sic] needs to learn, can learn it only by educating himself, and can educate himself only by beginning to do what he does not yet understand." This is substantiated by a growing body of research data that suggest that students are not able to accurately assess their liabilities until they first acquire a certain level of competency; e.g., see Justin Kruger and David Dunning, "Unskilled and Unaware of It: How Difficulties in Recognizing One's Own Incompetence Lead to Inflated Self-Assessments," *J. Personality and Social Psychology* 77, no. 6 (December 1999): 1121–1134.

41. See, e.g., Jacobs, David, and Meyer, *Supervisory Encounter*, 54, and Knowles, *Adult Learner*, 86–87.

42. See Palmer, *Courage to Teach*, 6–10; Schön, *Reflective Practitioner*, 252; Ekstein and Wallerstein, *Teaching and Learning*, 130; and David A. Steere, ed., *The Supervision of Pastoral Care* (Louisville, Ky.: Westminster/John Knox, 1989), 76 and 205ff.

43. This expands Ekstein and Wallerstein's concept of the "clinical rhombus" within supervision (counselor [minister]-patient-supervisor-context; see *Teaching and Learning*, 11ff.). By contrast, I see it as being more like a "clinical heptagon" that also includes family, culture, and the minister's relation with a religious ultimate reality.

44. Lacoursiere's stage theory is my primary guide here, although he succumbs to the tendency to make his theory apply too broadly for a range of phenomena; see Roy Lacoursiere, *The Life Cycle of Groups: Group Developmental Stage Theory* (New York: Human Sciences Press, 1980), chaps. 1 and 5. Yalom is helpful because he consolidates a number of different theorists and concentrates (in this context) on issues of group membership and affiliation; his eclectic approach to theory is as much liability as it is strength, however. See Irvin D. Yalom, *The Theory and Practice of Group Psychotherapy*, 3rd ed. (New York: Basic Books/HarperCollins, 1985), chaps. 11 and 12.

45. Knowles, *Adult Learner*, 174.

One Small Step: Creative Art and the Art of Supervision for Ministry

Colin J. Hunter

Art has always held a certain mystique, even threat, for me. The dismissive judgments of my high school art teacher of my pitiful attempts at producing what I regarded as my best artistic effort crushed my inner artist for decades. Producing a half-recognizable likeness of a human face or natural landscape was beyond my imagination and technical skill. To complicate matters, there was amongst my high school peers a student who would one day exhibit in prestigious galleries around the world. My fragile artistic self-esteem suffered an almost mortal blow when I made the inevitable comparisons between my gauche efforts and her already remarkable portraits and landscapes. And so I have since hidden behind the excuse, “I haven’t an artistic bone in my body” to explain my seeming lack of interest in all things artistic and my embarrassment if invited to apply paint to paper or fashion clay at prayer retreats or church camps. Needless to say, visiting art galleries did not become my recreational activity of choice, and yet...there were times when a

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Turner or a Picasso or a Rembrandt would arrest my attention and stir deep longings to express myself in wordless languages of the soul.

It was not until I undertook a master of arts (M.A.) degree by supervision through the Melbourne Institute for Experiential and Creative Arts Therapy (MIE-CAT) that I experienced some degree of liberation from the destructive inhibitions induced by those early influences. I learned that the use of artistic modes of expression in therapy and in supervision do not require a particular skill or aptitude, but rather an attitude of intentional focus upon experience and a reflective representation of that experience that might employ a variety of modes—painting, sculpture, poetry, mask-making, collage, drama, movement, music. Once liberated from the fear of humiliation, the power of creative expression to reframe one's interpretation of experience became apparent. Art was no longer the domain of the "gifted other" whose completed work I could observe and venerate. It was transformed into a menu of dynamic and symbolic modes of depicting experience, far removed from the prosaic and exclusively verbal modes with which I had become familiar and comfortable.

The context of these musings and my motivation for enrolling in the MIECAT M.A. was my prior enrollment as a candidate in the doctor of ministry studies degree through the Melbourne College of Divinity (MCD). My vocation then and now is director of the Supervised Theological Field Education (STFE) program at Whitley College, the Baptist College of Victoria in Australia. STFE is a relatively recent partner in theological education and ministry formation programs in Australia, and not an unambiguously respected or universally welcome partner at that. Whilst I have always had support and encouragement from the faculty in which I teach, I am aware that not all of my STFE colleagues experience the same degree of affirmation. Thus, my interest in developing a research project for the doctor of ministry students was to inquire, using phenomenological methodology, into the experiences of students engaged in a unit of STFE—what was it like to prepare a case study, present it to a peer group, discuss evaluations with a supervisor, and so forth—and to then hopefully provide a solid pedagogical and theological defense for this experiential mode of theological education. The MIECAT experience provided me with a methodology for inquiring into human experience, of which creative modes of representing the experience were a small, but not insignificant, part.

ART AND THEOLOGY

Christian faith has always sought to interpret its understanding of existence through art as well as through narrative and dogma. Whether it be the elegant and tender *Crucifix* of Michelangelo or the confronting and controversial *Piss Christ* of Andres Serrano, each work represents something of the inner life and faith of the artist, his or her understanding of Jesus as the Christ, and something of the contemporary life situation and worldview of the artist's community. Recognizing art as theology and applying the discipline of hermeneutics to art, however, are more recent developments.

The modern discipline of hermeneutics emerged as a response to the questions raised by the Reformation about the authentic meaning of the biblical text and by the Enlightenment about epistemology and philology. The Reformers challenged the understanding that the text could only be interpreted through the lens of tradition and that its true meaning was not accessible to the contemporary lay reader. They asserted that truth was accessible to the contemporary reader and that the basis for faith and doctrine could be developed *sola scriptura* without reference to tradition.¹

While not advocating a return to the authority of tradition as the interpretive framework of Scripture, Friedrich Ast (1778–1841) recognized that hermeneutics involved more than merely reading and understanding the language of the text. He proposed three levels of interpretation—the hermeneutic of the:

- letter (grammatical interpretation);
- sense (the matter addressed within the text); and
- spirit (both the spirit of the age in which the document was written and the individuality or 'genius' of the author).²

Hermeneutics, for Ast, required an understanding of the worldview of the author and the author's community and of the particular "controlling idea" embodied in the text. It was an attempt to recreate, as far as possible, the original intention of the author, liberated from the contamination of traditional interpretations and contemporary culture.

Friedrich Schleiermacher (1768–1834) similarly thought that hermeneutics required that the hearer engage the mind of the speaker as well as the text. In his concept of the "hermeneutical circle," Schleiermacher grappled with the complex issues of how humans understand the world. We understand, he claimed, by comparing the object of inquiry with what we already know. Schleiermacher, therefore,

understood learning to be analogical in character. But human beings cannot fully understand a finite object (a sentence or a statement) unless they relate it to the whole context in which it exists (the intention or idea of the author). It was this dialectical movement between text and context, part and whole, that constituted Schleiermacher's hermeneutical circle. His purpose in the practice of hermeneutics was not so much to seek understanding as to "avoid misunderstanding," misunderstanding being the default outcome when interpreting a text. His dual grammatical and psychological approach to interpretation recognized that the text had to be understood as the author would have intended, and this required rigorous literary and historical analysis. The author's intention, however, could not be fully conveyed through the medium of language; therefore, the interpreter had to, as far as possible, understand the mind of the author. What made this re-experiencing of the author's thinking possible for Schleiermacher was what he termed the "shared human spirit" of the author and the reader. It required a rigorous method to bridge the gap and avoid the misunderstanding that was the inevitable consequence of a "lax practice of understanding."³ Schleiermacher's concern with hermeneutics was still essentially to provide a method of interpreting Scripture for the modern mind in a way that had integrity and relevance.

Wilhelm Dilthey's (1833–1911) contribution to the development of hermeneutics was to expand the horizon of interpretation to include the humanities and social sciences—"that is...all those disciplines which interpret expressions of man's inner life, whether the expressions be gestures, historical actions, codified law, *art works* or literature."⁴ All of these expressions of life were open to inquiry as to their meaning, but the methods differed from objective scientific investigation: "Scientific experiments seek to know and explain. Inquiry into human affairs seeks to understand."⁵

Dilthey set great store on "lived experience" (*Erlebnis*) and on the possibility of interpreting expressions of lived experience because "all humans participate in a common Spirit"⁶ (as for Schleiermacher). He moved the locus of understanding from sacred text to human experience, although that experience was more than the subjective experience of an individual. Each individual had a worldview (*Weltanschauung*) that was shaped, not only in the intellect, but also in the whole of life; it included feelings and will, as well as thinking. Dilthey had a strong sense of humans as historical beings in which the worldview of the individual developed within a society and culture, so that relationships and the sensations and feelings engendered by our experience in the world all contributed to our worldview. The texts humans produced, whether written or artistic, were expressions of that world-

view, and the task of hermeneutics was to create in the mind of the reader, the worldview of the author.⁷

This understanding of the task of hermeneutics would change radically in the later twentieth century, arising particularly out of the thinking of Martin Heidegger. According to Heidegger, “interpretation is not an isolated activity, but the basic structure of experience,”⁸ i.e., to be human was to be an interpreter of experience. Hermeneutics presupposed a text, which, in Schleiermacher’s understanding, would mean the biblical text, and the text became a lens through which experience was interpreted. Subsequent hermeneuticians have recognized that the principles of hermeneutics that evolved to interpret Scripture for differing contexts could apply to any text, including works of art that are also expressions of meaning. Spinelli used the example of the irritation that abstract art induces in many people—because of its seeming “meaninglessness”—to make the point that artistic expression is in fact “meaningful.”⁹ The almost hysterical reaction to the exhibition of Serrano’s *Piss Christ* at the National Gallery of Victoria, Australia, in 1997 is testament to the truth of Spinelli’s thesis.¹⁰

So then, as recently as the late nineteenth century, the nexus between art and theology, and the possibility that art might be a medium of interpreting human experience, had been recognized. It would be fair to say, however, that the emphasis of most theologians and philosophers would have been on “significant” works of art by recognized artists, e.g., Picasso’s *Guernica* has been widely recognized as one of the finest interpretations of the obscenities and absurdities of the Spanish Civil War.¹¹ Such a construction opens the door to engaging art in “the theological interpretation of situations,”¹² but still leaves me with my adolescent insecurities and phobias and excludes me from this hermeneutical medium unless I become a student of the history of art.

Hans Georg Gadamer virtually sealed this arcane use of art as a scholarly object for interpretation rather than an accessible medium for representing experience. He was suspicious of the merit of personal reflection as a way of accessing the meaning of human experience. Like his teacher, Martin Heidegger, Gadamer saw humankind as an intrinsically historical being, and all interpretations of existence, including art, needed to be framed in terms of historical consciousness. Gadamer was convinced of the importance of the close link between aesthetics and hermeneutics,¹³ but at the same time did not believe that the meaning of a work of art was immediately accessible. Only historical works of art were open to interpretation, and interpretation came as much from the evaluation of the community as it did from individual reflection. Gadamer wanted to rescue the concept of

prejudice from the pejorative connotations that now attach to it, and believed that “the prejudices of the individual, far more than his judgments, constitute the historical reality of his being.”¹⁴ It was these prejudices that were formed by the participation of the individual in a family, a society, and a state; they were, thus, historically constituted and facilitated interpretation. Subjectivity, according to Gadamer, was a “distorting mirror.” The task of hermeneutics was to bring about a “fusion of the horizons of the past and the present,” but it was the horizon of the past that needed to inform the horizon of the present.

CREATIVE ART AND THEOLOGICAL REFLECTION

European theologians and philosophers, principally, articulated the relationship between art and theology outlined above, perpetuating the impressions that theology was the province of the professional theologian and that art appreciation was the province of the professional artist or art historian. De Gruchy made a distinction between “religious art,” which would fit within the categories described above, and “spiritual art,” so labeled by Wassily Kandinsky and “intended as a focus for meditation.”¹⁵ De Gruchy wrote:

“Spiritual art” expresses the quest for transcendence and as such it reflects the search for spirituality that has become important to our post-modern world. . . . A spiritual work of art will arrest us, prize open our minds and hearts, and bring us into relation with a world beyond the ordinary.

While this is an admirable attempt to liberate art from the custody of the ecclesiastical institution, it does not necessarily render art accessible to the participation of the seemingly non-artistic—like myself. With this view, art still belongs to an aesthetic elite who have the talent to produce works capable of inspiring awe and wonder in the viewer. My intention in this paper is not, as it might seem, to diminish the significance of religious art or spiritual art, nor is it to question the valid insights of Tillich and others who have drawn connections between theology and art, aesthetics and spirituality.¹⁶ Rather I want to explore ways in which different modes of artistic expression can be enlisted in the enterprise of theological reflection—particularly in the context of supervision for ministry.

One starting point for this quest might be the renewal of interest in art as worship in Protestant faith communities. (It might be argued that it was never lost in Orthodox and Roman Catholic traditions.) The combination of Reformation

iconoclasm and Enlightenment rationalism led to what Begbie described as “the alienation of art”¹⁷ in Western society, the outcome of which was “the [isolation] of a work of art from the particularities of everyday life.”¹⁸ The catch cry “art for art’s sake” reflected this sense that art and aesthetics were unrelated to everyday life and thus divorced from the tasks of understanding and meaning-making,¹⁹ which had become restricted in the modern era to rational processes. In recent decades, Protestant churches have experienced their own renaissance through the recognition that art—often in the form of banners, flower arrangements, liturgical dance, and the like—could breathe new life into worship practices that may have become sterile. Dyrness described art as a form of meditation, like Kandinsky’s spiritual art: “Like the biblical notion of Sabbath (which means at its root to ‘stop’), art stops us in our tracks and forces us to pay attention to life in a way that we had not previously done.”²⁰ It is this paying attention that makes creative art a potent instrument in the processes of supervision and theological reflection. In their classic work *Method in Ministry*, James and Evelyn Whitehead identify “Attending” as the first stage in their method of theological reflection.²¹ Attending means listening to the necessary sources for theological reflection that they identify as Tradition, Experience, and Culture (other models add Reason, Scripture—as a separate source from Tradition—Revelation, and so forth). Attending also includes listening to the community and listening to oneself, and it is in the latter task that the use of creative art can be especially helpful. Reflection on experience, especially when written up in a case study or verbatim, is always revelatory. Representation of the experience in some artistic form adds a dimension of depth not always accessible through conscious reflection or written description and analysis.

So then, having begun to establish a case for the employment of modes of art in theological reflection, I need to suggest some ways in which this can happen. In doing this, I am indebted to Dr. Warren Lett, the director of MIECAT, for his published material and for modeling procedures of inquiry with the M.A. students. In the early 1990s, Lett conducted research, which he described as “a process as near as possible to a purely phenomenological journey,” with a group of therapists.²² He wrote:

Four conceptual blocks were combined to underpin this research.

1. The arts, as modes of knowing, are conceived of as vehicles for carrying meaning in supervision, as in therapy.
2. It is an assumption that emotion is significantly attached to experience, often disconnected from full awareness, and acts as signifier for access.

3. The experiencing self is the experiential container of awareness and can be refocused into fuller awareness.
4. A phenomenological process can be adopted to encounter the essence of experiential structures, leading to the acquisition of meanings in an amplified self-awareness.²³

The arts “as vehicles for carrying meaning in supervision” needed to stand apart from other sources for theological reflection so that meaning was allowed to emerge from the experience and not from any external interpretive framework (such as Scripture or Tradition). Lett argued, “A hermeneutic interpretation that goes outside the text for paradigms of meaning is not phenomenologically pure in this writer’s view.”²⁴ By “text” he meant the text created through the processes of phenomenological inquiry.

Mala Betensky suggests a practical method for interpreting a work of art: a four-sequence process of creating a piece of art and then using it as a focus for a phenomenological description of experience.²⁵ Betensky starts with the art materials, becoming familiar and relaxed with them, feeling them and “tuning in” to their possibilities. This is also an important stage in using art in theological reflection, but requires a prior stage of focusing on an experience of ministry through discussion of a case study or verbatim with a supervisor or peer group. The next sequence is the creation of the artwork itself, a reflective and “unknowing” exercise, i.e., setting aside the rational cognitive processes in favor of an intuitive and creative depiction of the experience. The third sequence is about viewing the art, selecting and describing what is seen. It is about detailed description and the gradual emergence of meaning. The fourth sequence is about integrating new meanings emerging from the exercise with prior understandings and interpretations. There are three aspects to this final sequence: (1) the student’s reflections, (2) the search for similarities across a number of the student’s artworks, and (3) the parallels between the struggle with the process of art expression and the struggle to cope with ministry experiences, i.e., discerning where the art mirrors life. While this method was developed as a tool for art therapists, with adaptation it has much to offer as an aid in the theological interpretation of experience, and therefore in the process of theological reflection.

Obviously in supervision for ministry, theological reflection must make significant reference to the tradition, but the quality of reflection will be greatly enriched, and will be more authentic, if the tradition is in a dialectical conversation with the meaning that emerges from a rigorous phenomenological inquiry into experience. Describing experience through some mode of artistic representation

will enhance the inquirer's ability to discern intrinsic meaning in an experience before passing it through the filters of other sources for theological reflection. In this way, not only does tradition inform one's interpretation of contemporary experience, experience (phenomenologically interpreted) informs one's interpretation of tradition and may lead to a reframing of one's "operational theology."²⁶

ONE SMALL STEP

I mentioned at the beginning of this paper that my renaissance in matters artistic was triggered by my involvement in a MIECAT masters of arts by supervision, which was a precursor to a doctoral research project that inquired into the experience of students undertaking a unit of STFE. The MIECAT program introduces students to processes that allow inquiry into human experience using a variety of recognized qualitative research methods, such as interviews and focus groups, as well as different modes of artistic representation of experience. I incorporated some of these MIECAT processes into the research design, and what follows is a description of some of the actual experiences of using art in the research process to demonstrate how art might be used as a tool for theological reflection in supervision for ministry.

STFE provides supervision for ordination candidates with the Baptist Union of Victoria at two levels. Each student has a personal supervisor who has been trained to standards established by the Victorian Association for Theological Field Education (VATFE) and accredited with the Melbourne College of Divinity (MCD). The students also meet weekly for peer supervision facilitated by myself or another qualified facilitator. In each mode of supervision, the students set goals for their learning in the field placement, prepare and present case studies, and evaluate their learning during the semester and achievement of their goals. My interest in the research was to inquire into the various experiences that constitute STFE, such as presenting goals to the supervisor or presenting a case study to the peer group.

I was able to enlist one of the peer supervision groups, comprising four students, as co-researchers. There were five research segments, each inquiring into a different aspect of the program, and each comprising a questionnaire and a one-hour group session. The basic questions were the same for each questionnaire:²⁷

1. In as much detail as you are able, write a description of your recollection of this experience. What happened as you presented the goals? Please underline in your description any keywords or phrases that represent what was most important about the experience.
2. Do you recollect any particular sensory responses? Do you associate these with any particular point in the presentation?
3. Do you recollect any particular emotional responses? Do you associate these with any particular point in the presentation?
4. Represent the whole experience of presenting the goals in some form that is comfortable to you (prose, poetry, drawing, and so forth).
5. Complete the following sentence in 35 words or less: *Presenting goals to the peer group is like...*

The research process allowed the participants at least a fortnight to complete the questionnaire. In the research session, they would review their responses to the questionnaire and individually identify the keywords and phrases in their material—including the artistic representation—that they felt most aptly described the experience. As a group, they then gathered their keywords and phrases into clusters of similar descriptors of the experience and named each cluster. The naming of the clusters of keywords represented the first stage in developing themes to describe their experiences of STFE, and, up to this point, the participants themselves undertook all of the work in producing and processing the data.²⁸ I then gathered all of the data from the five research sessions, identified the themes for each session, and developed overarching themes, or “metathemes,” for the overall experience of undertaking a unit of STFE.²⁹

This is the context within which I took my one small step into the use of art as an instrument, in this instance for research, but with implications for supervision for ministry. The participants’ responses to Question 4 (represent the experience in some creative form) were varied and imaginative. One favored drawings (though not exclusively) whereas the others favored poetry.

When describing the experience of preparing a case study, Chris Turner wrote the following poem:³⁰

Snatching Moments

*Can one moment ever really
find itself snatched from
the fabric of time,
to be relived, rejoiced, rehurt,*

*relost, like an eternally
rotating rhyme?*

*What are tears if they
fall for a moment lost?
Was not anxiety wasted?
Spent on events unchangeable
like prayers for a fallen
forest; like warmth after
a fatal frost.*

*Yet time boasts many
dimensions.
Memories are never frozen,
and the heart of creation
beats to the rhythm of
a million moments snatched
from the fabric of time.*

*Savoured like a
smooth red wine,
bitter and sweet,
dancing on a palette of eternal horizon.
Memories of moments snatched from the past.*

*Moulded into a single
reflection, mirrored in an
empty stained glass,
swallowed by the soul of creation,
thirsting for a healing past.*

Chris's written description of the experience (Question 1) focused on what the particular choice of case study revealed about himself, but his poem led him much more deeply into a profound reflection on the complex interaction of experience, memory, and time.

By contrast, David Enticott described the experience of preparing a case study as a "precious sanctuary where time can be given for reflection and growth" and represented it in poetry thus:³¹

A Place to Call Home

*So much ministry
takes place in the market
here items are bought and sold
A conversation here
Administration there*

*A cycle of
increasing intensity
that builds to a storm
on Sunday*

*But into these
rushed moments
come small pockets
of precious sanctuary*

*Here the noise
of pressing needs
& blaring phones
is replaced by
the simple
sound of running water*

*There is green grass
flapping birds
dancing children
and clouds*

Time to reflect

Peace

A place to call home.

When asked to describe an experience, most of the participants produced material that was somewhat self-conscious and mono-dimensional. When invited to express themselves creatively, their material became lively and vital, with drawings

or poetry that had colorful expression and passion and identified new dimensions of the experience not evident in their prosaic descriptions.

THE NEXT STEP

The scope of the research did not allow for a greater exploration of the use of art in supervision for ministry. The research participants, however, were unanimous in their affirmation that this small step was a significant part of the phenomenological exploration of their experiences of STFE, and that the use of creative art in the representation of experience would greatly enhance theological reflection in supervision. I am acutely aware that art has been widely used in supervision for other disciplines, such as psychology and social work, as it has been as an aid to therapy in palliative and aged care, grief counseling, and a plethora of other helping contexts. I am also aware that some of my colleagues in STFE have begun to use art in supervision and may well have taken many more and bigger steps than I have.

My hope is that this small step will encourage others whose creative urges may have been repressed to explore this rich resource for theological reflection, and in the process find their vocation of supervision for ministry greatly enhanced. Another hope is that this paper might open a conversation amongst practitioners in both the Clinical Pastoral Education and Supervised Theological Field Education disciplines about the possibilities of creative art enriching the practice of supervision.

NOTES

1. Bernhard Lohse, *Martin Luther: An Introduction to His Life and Work*, trans. Robert C. Schulz (Philadelphia, Penn.: Fortress Press, 1986), 159f.
2. Richard Palmer, *Hermeneutics: Interpretation Theory in Schleiermacher, Dilthey, Heidegger, and Gadamer*, *Northwestern University Studies in Phenomenology & Existential Philosophy* (Evanston, Ill.: Northwestern University Press, 1969), 78f.
3. Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Philosophical Hermeneutics*, trans. David E. Linge (Berkeley, Calif.: University of California Press, 1976), xiii.

4. Emphasis mine. Palmer, *Hermeneutics*, 98.
5. Michael Crotty, *The Foundations of Social Research: Meaning and Perspective in the Research Process* (St. Leonards, New South Wales, Australia: Allen and Unwin, 1998).
6. Zygmunt Bauman, *Hermeneutics and Social Science: Approaches to Understanding* (London, U.K.: Hutchinson, 1978).
7. Palmer, *Hermeneutics*, 123.
8. Clark Moustakas, *Phenomenological Research Methods* (Thousand Oaks, Calif.: Sage Publications, 1994), 10.
9. Ernesto Spinelli, *The Interpreted World: An Introduction to Phenomenological Psychology* (Thousand Oaks, Calif.: Sage Publications, 1989), 6ff.
10. Rita Piteri, *The Andres Serrano Controversy* (2003), accessed 1 March 2006 from <home.vicnet.net.au/~twtserrano.html>.
11. Paul Tillich, *Theology of Culture*, 1st ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1959). Tillich regarded *Guernica* as the outstanding example 'of an artistic expression of the human predicament in our period.'
12. Edward Farley, "Interpreting Situations: An Inquiry into the Nature of Practical Theology," in *Formation and Reflection: The Promise of Practical Theology*, Lewis S. Mudge and James N. Poling, eds. (Philadelphia, Penn.: Fortress Press, 1987). Farley was critical of the structure of theological education in the modern era and its inability to equip students to interpret situations theologically.
13. Gadamer, *Philosophical Hermeneutics*, 95ff.
14. Crotty, *Foundations of Social Research*, 103.
15. John W. de Gruchy, "Visual Art in the Life of the Church," *Journal of Theology for South Africa*, no. 107 (2000): 37–52.
16. See particularly Jeremy S. Begbie, *Voicing Creation's Praise: Towards a Theology of the Arts* (Edinburgh, Scotland: T&T Clark, 1991).
17. *Ibid.*, 186ff.

18. Ibid., 193.
19. Ibid., 201f. Gadamer's call to interpret art according to the "horizon of the past" was a protest against the estrangement of art from culture.
20. William A. Dyrness, *Visual Faith: Art, Theology, and Worship in Dialogue* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Academic, 2001).
21. James D. Whitehead and Evelyn Eaton Whitehead, *Method in Ministry: Theological Reflection and Christian Ministry*, revised and updated ed. (Kansas City, Mo.: Sheed & Ward, 1995).
22. Warren Lett, "Therapist Creativity: The Arts of Supervision," *The Arts in Psychotherapy* 20 (1993): 371–86.
23. Ibid.
24. Ibid.
25. Mala G. Betensky, "Phenomenology of Art Expression and Art Therapy," in *Approaches to Art Therapy: Theory and Technique*, Judith Aron Rubin, ed. (New York: Brunner/Mazel, 1987).
26. I understand operational theology to be the core beliefs and values, recognized or unrecognized, by which a person instinctively makes judgments and takes action in response to situations. One's operational theology is formed cognitively, affectively, aesthetically, and socially through one's life experiences. It may well embody contradictory values (e.g., "I value the rule of law and I value justice.") assimilated from different sources—family, church, popular culture—that create dissonance in the face of a given situation.
27. Colin J. Hunter, "Supervised Theological Field Education: A Phenomenological Enquiry" (D.Min. studies thesis, Melbourne College of Divinity, 2003).
28. As an example, the clusters of keywords for the research session enquiring into the experience of presenting a case study to the supervisor were named Challenge, Affirmation, Choices, and Discovery.
29. For a description of "metathemes," see Renata Tesch, "Emerging Themes: The Researcher's Experience," *Phenomenology + Pedagogy* 5, no. 3 (1987): 230–41. The metathemes identified were mutuality of learning (all participants in STFE are learners), intersubjective learning (learning in STFE is principally intersubjective), chosen vulnerability (the greatest learning

occurs when students choose to make themselves vulnerable), revelation as a path to new understanding (revelation of self to others leads to new understanding), and experience as a locus for learning (experience is a primary source for learning).

30. Permission granted to identify the author.

31. Permission granted to identify the author.

John Shea, *Spirituality and Health Care: Reaching Toward a Holistic Future*. Chicago, Ill.: Park Ridge Center for the Study of Health, Faith, and Ethics, 2000. 168 pp.

In the early 1970s, a homegrown prophet named “Ram Dass” (formerly Richard Alpert) urged us Americans to “Be here now!” Through his book of that title, this former Harvard professor, who had experienced a spiritual awakening during his travels through India, both invited and exhorted us to wake up to the potency of life poured into the present moment. Informed by the wisdom of Eastern philosophies, meditation practices, and religions, he realized that much of our experience of the sacred is lost to thoughts about the past and the future. Although author John Shea is not another Ram Dass, his book *Spirituality and Health Care: Reaching toward a Holistic Future*, published by The Park Ridge Center for the Study of Health, Faith, and Ethics, contains within it seeds of that urgent invitation to “Be here now!” In this case, he invites us to be quite conscious of the powerful spiritual dimension always present within the health care setting.

How might those of us working within health care “be here now”? How might we more fully integrate the power of both scientific knowledge and spiritual awareness? Much scientific study has been done in recent decades to better understand the interweaving of mind and body, body and spirit. The effects of prayer on healing are no longer summarily dismissed by scientific minds. Our society no longer immediately scoffs at the idea that our spiritual experience is somehow intertwined with our physical experience. Books, articles, and studies about the subject abound. But to what extent does our health care industry integrate our experience of this intertwining? Shea recognizes many ways by which this integration can be embraced by physicians, nurses, patients, chaplains, and others who find themselves engaged in a health care setting.

Shea’s premise is that the spiritual is an ever-present dimension of human experience, including experiences of illness, injury, disease, rehabilitation, and physical wellness. Health care considerations now routinely include physical, psychological, and social dimensions. Nowadays it would seem naïve for a physician or nurse to consider only the physical aspects of a patient’s concern. We know now that psychological and social issues can have a profound impact on cause, diagnosis, treatment, and healing of illness or injury. Our health care practitioners would be viewed as somewhat careless if they failed to consider how their patients’ psychological and social issues affected their physical health.

The time is ripe to more fully integrate into our health care a fourth dimension of human experience, the spiritual dimension, according to Shea. To counterbalance the effects of isolationism between disciplines, he sets forth a multi-dimensional

model of health care, a model reflecting several rivers that flow within human experience: the physical, the psychological, the social, and the spiritual. Describing a “Dimensional Model of Health Care,” Shea posits:

These four aspects of the human—physical, psychological, social, and spiritual—can be considered as interlocking dimensions. Each has its own distinctiveness and yet each is capable of influencing the others. Together they form a dimensional model that is increasingly used in health care settings. (p. 79)

Shea believes this model can effectively serve in health care because he believes the four dimensions are present in every human experience. In Shea’s opinion, “[w]hen these dimensions are not taken into account in health care settings, there is a danger of reducing a person to their physical status” (p.81). Further “[w]hen a dimensional understanding of the human person does not direct our health care efforts, we become whatever is happening to our bodies. This reduction is the chronic temptation of the biomedical approach” (p.82).

Shea’s book brings to the surface a deeply rooted, historical tension between science and spirituality. Once upon a time, human health care was observed, interpreted, and addressed primarily through a spiritual view:

...the events of each dimension—the physical, the psychological, the social, and the spiritual—were interpreted from a spiritual perspective. The response to infertility was prayer, the response to mental illness was exorcism, defeat in battle could be traced to the sinfulness of people. The spiritual dimension was monolithic, exercising control in every other dimension. — The spiritual was infringing on all the other dimensions. (p. 84)

However, people “...began to see that the physical, psychological, and social dimensions had an integrity of their own. The events of these dimensions could be interpreted on their own terms” (p.84). To allow room for these dimensions to be considered in their own right, the spiritual dimension was alternatively muted, disinvited, scoffed at, scowled at, or ignored. Now, the time has come to open the door to the spiritual dimension as one among equals.

Shea suggests that if the spiritual is to be welcomed in the health care “enterprise,” certain considerations, discussions, and efforts need to occur. For example, the language of spirituality has a long history, often reflects particular religions, and is often imbued with words that sound foreign to the scientific mind. If a four-dimensional model of health care is to thrive, the language from each dimension needs to be more accessible to the other.

The author also offers a warning to those who want to proactively integrate spirituality and health care. At the same time we consider taking steps to more fully integrate the spiritual dimension into health care, we must not attempt to use spirituality to increase profits, enlarge market share, or to accomplish other aims. “Placing the

spiritual interest within this complex of concerns does not mean it becomes a mere instrument, a tool of other purposes, a means to other goals. It is not reduced to a strategy" (p.30). Why not? Because, "...the spiritual is not subservient to the other interests. It is an end in itself" (p.31). If it is an end in itself, why is there a need to integrate it into health care?

Shea answers this question by naming "Six Spiritual Interests Within Health Care," six related areas reflecting the powerful presence of the spiritual even when no overt steps are taken to acknowledge or nurture it: (1) the experiences of patients, (2) health caregivers' interests in how to support patients' spiritual needs in health care, (3) spiritual interest of caregivers themselves, (4) how chaplains and pastoral care providers offer spiritual care to patients, particularly within an interfaith context, (5) how a health care organization's policies and procedures honor spiritual interests of patients and health caregivers, and (6) the role of ethics in pursuing the personal grounding of human decisions and actions in health care settings.

In his discussion of the fourth spiritual interest, Shea distinguishes pastoral care from spiritual care, noting that pastoral care has historically been offered within the context of particular religions, whether by pastors of Lutheran, Roman Catholic, Muslim, Jewish, or other faith communities. Spiritual care, on the other hand, is rooted more deeply, in the anthropological nature of human spiritual experience. This spiritual birthright can include, but does not necessarily pertain to, a specific religion.

Thankfully, Shea does not skimp on the practical. In part three of his book, he offers many ways by which health care organizations might explore how spiritualities can be welcomed and developed in health care settings. Here, and at various times throughout the book, he asks: "What spiritualities—beliefs, stories, and practices—will critique and develop this interest?" Generously, he also lists a number of questions that could easily launch intra-organizational discussions about spirituality in health care (p. 123–125). Many of these questions could be used to facilitate honest discussions about congruity, or lack thereof, between a health care organization's espoused mission and values, on the one hand, and its actual practices, on the other. Leaders of health care organizations could also use these questions to facilitate the creation of that organization's long-term vision among employees or associates.

Shea ends his book with "Eight Injunctions" that arose from his exploration of health care and spirituality. "As a whole, they are meant to initiate or continue the spiritual path of those who are interested and involved in the relationship between health care and spirituality" (p. 162–163). His injunctions sound more like an encouragement to experiment with the concepts presented throughout the book. Some injunctions relate to an organization, some pertain to individuals. Some might interest patients, while others might interest leaders of health care organizations, or health caregivers.

By offering these, Shea displays a hospitality of spirit that encourages imagination and experimentation for a humane and spiritual cause.

As a CPE resident chaplain, I find Shea's book helpful in a number of ways. First, it does not appear to be intended as a highly analytical scholarly work (thus not unduly burdensome reading for those of us engaged at full throttle in residency), but rather what I call a "bridge book." It gathers together a number of thoughts, ideas, suggestions, and perspectives to help organizations and individuals take another step, to create a bridge, from one way of being toward another way of being. It is a basket full of ripe fruit, food for thought offered as a possible catalyst for a much larger, robust discussion within health care. Second, it offers a framework for better understanding of some of the larger, systemic issues operating in health care and how spirituality is "positioned" within the context of these issues. Third, it sheds light on challenges we may face as chaplains as we navigate our way through those larger, systemic issues. Many times I found myself nodding my head in agreement as I read his examples of both less-than-integrated spirituality in health care, and those inspired moments when the tango between spirit and body suddenly revealed itself in a medical setting.

Shea's book could also benefit supervisors of students in ministry who are engaged in field education for parish work, and supervisors of students in pastoral counseling and spiritual direction. A student in any of these ministries could well find himself or herself suddenly called to respond within the setting of a hospital room, ministering to a parishioner, a client, or a directee. Reading Shea's book prior to serving in this setting could help the student discern some of the factors he or she may encounter—a kind of "heads up" from a caring coach. Reviewing his thoughts afterwards could also offer a source of reflection questions around which students, and supervisors, could explore spiritual issues more deeply.

Our health care organizations and systems can provide a more holistic approach to health care by further integrating spiritual awareness and spiritual resources into patient health care. With quiet wisdom, Shea points out that the spiritual is an everpresent dimension of human experience, including experiences in a health care setting. The spiritual does not wait in a backroom while the physical, psychological, or social are treated. Recognizing this, Shea invites us to a spirituality of hospitality in health care, where the spiritual dimension of our being is acknowledged, welcomed, and embraced.

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Lorraine M. Wright, R.N., Ph.D., *Spirituality, Suffering, and Illness: Ideas for Healing*. Philadelphia, Penn.: F.A. Davis Co., 2005. 229 pp.

Although other professional books have focused on either suffering or spirituality, *Spirituality, Suffering, and Illness: Ideas for Healing* is described as the first text for nurses and other health care professionals that explicitly acknowledges the relationship between suffering and spirituality. Author Lorraine M. Wright, R.N., Ph.D., who in addition to her role as professor emeritus of Nursing at the University of Calgary is a family therapist, provides a comprehensive discussion of the importance of these concepts within the context of illness.

Wright begins by presenting definitions of suffering, spirituality, and religion. She then illuminates the connection between suffering and spirituality through personal narratives and clinical examples. From these compelling and heartfelt stories of suffering and illness in everyday life, Wright concludes that although suffering can be life-wrenching and life-altering, it can also be life-giving.

A common theme running through these stories is the notion that suffering invites us into the spiritual domain—that serious illness often leads one on a spiritual journey in the hope of being able to make meaning out of suffering. While arguing that suffering inevitably becomes a spiritual matter, Wright is quick to point out that no one person's suffering is the same as another's, nor do people necessarily arrive at the same meaning as a result of their experiences with illness and suffering.

What are the implications, according to Wright, of recognizing the intricate connection between suffering and spirituality? First, from a personal perspective, is the need to develop our own spirituality and to realize that it has tremendous potential to help us when suffering arises in our own lives. From a professional perspective, Wright urges us to remember that having “meaning-centered conversations” with our patients and clients can provide a critical boost to them as they struggle to manage serious illness. As a first step in helping a patient to understand and cope with suffering, it is important for the health care provider or therapist to explore the patient's religious and spiritual beliefs.

Consistent with the author's training and expertise in family systems, she strongly emphasizes the impact and influence of the family when serious illness arises, rather than focusing on only the individual who is directly experiencing the illness. Illness, says Wright, “is a family affair, and all family members suffer.”

Wright goes on to propose a new model of care, the Trinity Model, whose theoretical foundation is drawn from postmodernism, systems theory, and a biology of cognition. She conceptualizes this model as the inter-relatedness and interconnection of beliefs, suffering, and spirituality. She suggests that, when caring for

persons and families experiencing serious illness, it is at the intersection of these three concepts that issues of life, meaning, and purpose should be examined.

Although written from the perspective of nursing, the insights in this text are equally applicable to a wide range of helping professions, including pastoral counselors, clinical social workers, clinical professional counselors, and other mental health professionals. If nothing else, the chapter “Clinical Practices that Optimize Healing” should be required reading for any professional who deals with those suffering from illness. The seven “clinical guideposts” presented by Wright offer a valuable roadmap for the kinds of conversations about suffering and spirituality that offer the best opportunity for healing body, mind, and spirit.

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The Journal of Supervision and Training in Ministry

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