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Developing Intimacy with God in an Anglican Context

A Research Portfolio
submitted in partial fulfillment
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by

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ABSTRACT

Spiritual growth is the development of an individual's relationship with God. It happens when an intimate relationship with God is nurtured. This portfolio looks at nurture that links corporate worship with the personal spiritual experience and particularly in a small group or mentorship. At Trinity Church (in Aurora, Ontario, Canada), as with most Anglican churches, the predominant mode for spiritual formation has been through corporate worship and private devotions. Without a venue such as a small group or a mentorship, lay leaders typically do not have the opportunity to speak about, nurture or integrate the spiritual experience. They are capable but lack confidence in exhibiting spiritual leadership behaviour and the spiritual life can stall or go dormant. This research portfolio explores: 1. the limitations of serving God without knowing God; 2. the strengths and weaknesses of classical mainline Anglican spiritual formation that relies only on corporate worship and personal devotions; 3. the limitations of a private faith that is not openly shared with other people; and 4. the significance of a praxis-based small group in developing confident spiritual leadership behaviour. The portfolio includes a spiritual autobiography (Chapter 2: Modern Girl Trying to Find the Holy) that traces the development of my relationship with God, highlighting the transition I made from helping a God I served to loving a God I know. It is followed by a spiritual formation model (Chapter 3: Closing the Sanctification Gap in Anglican Formation) that offers some insights into the strengths and weaknesses of spiritual formation within the Anglican Church. It

proposes a model to mitigate these weaknesses and suggests a way forward that includes a praxis-based small-group discipleship process. Finally, a field research project (Chapter 4: Fostering Spiritual Growth in Anglican Lay Leadership through an Action-Research Project) is offered as a way of testing the effectiveness of the praxis-based, small-group discipleship process within an Anglican Church setting. The process helps lay leaders establish a prayer life and builds confidence in leading public prayer and in sharing their faith with others. It demonstrated that lay leaders do not lack the ability to pray publicly but that they lack confidence in exhibiting spiritual leadership behaviour. This behaviour can be facilitated through a praxis-based small-group discipleship process. Ultimately, this portfolio points toward a significant truth, that spiritual maturity only comes by growing in intimacy with God and that is made possible through meaningful interactions with other people during which private spiritual experience is connected with the corporate spiritual experience.

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

“It’s all about the relationship!” was the mantra of an international church committee I once served on. For the longest time I was puzzled by the expression. Anglicans, with our emphasis on solemn liturgy, were more likely to say, “It’s about decency and good order.” Putting relationship first, with its intimacy, messiness and emotional demands, seemed unlikely for those who were once called “God’s frozen people” (Berton 1964). But I have since learned that, when it comes to our faith, it is in fact all about relationship. Growing in Christ, or spiritual maturation, is a process of spiritual formation where the individual deepens their relationship with God, others and the world.

This research portfolio combines two papers and a project that are connected by four central themes: 1. the limitations of serving God without knowing and being in a relationship with that God; 2. the strengths and weaknesses of classical mainline Anglican spiritual formation that relies only on corporate worship and personal devotions; 3. the limitations of a private faith that is not shared, nurtured or supported in the context of a relationship with others in a small group or mentorship; and 4. the balance between acquiring sufficient competence to confidently execute spiritual leadership behaviours, on the one

hand, and an over-reliance on individual competence in secular leadership abilities, on the other.

The portfolio is comprised of three main chapters that include a spiritual autobiography, a spiritual formation model and a field research project. The spiritual autobiography (Chapter 2: Modern Girl Trying to Find the Holy) traces the development of my relationship with God, highlighting the transition I made from helping a God I served to loving a God I have grown to know. It is followed by the spiritual formation model (Chapter 3: Closing the Sanctification Gap in Anglican Formation) that offers some insights into the strengths and weaknesses of spiritual formation within the Anglican Church. It proposes a model to mitigate these weaknesses and suggests a way forward that includes a small-group discipleship process. Finally, the field research project (Chapter 4: Fostering Spiritual Growth in Anglican Lay Leadership through a Praxis-Based, Small-Group Discipleship Program) is offered as a way of testing the effectiveness of a discipleship small-group process within an Anglican Church setting. The tested program helps lay leaders establish a prayer life and builds confidence in leading public prayer and in sharing their faith with others. Ultimately, all three chapters point toward a significant truth, that spiritual maturity only comes by growing in a relationship with Christ that is made possible through trusting relationships found in a small group that connect private spiritual practices, such as prayer, with public practices such as corporate worship.

I am a cradle Anglican and I have had the opportunity to serve in many levels of the institutional church. I have participated in numerous committees, services and synods and have been spiritually formed as a child, young person, an adult in a seminary and eventually as an ordained priest. Throughout this experience and process I have always known that if there was to be a relationship with Christ it was accessed through liturgy and a personal devotional life. It was expected that this relationship would remain private and would manifest itself through attendance at church and in public works of benevolence and outreach ministry.

As a child formed in the Anglican tradition, I was not explicitly taught how to pray or how to share my faith experience. Consequently, I did not feel confident offering public extemporaneous prayer or sharing my faith journey with others. I often heard prayer talked about in sermons and conferences, but the specifics of how to pray remained obscure and unknown. I, like all the other Anglicans I knew, was a competent and effective leader in the community but felt anxious and uncertain in my relationship with God, in any public displays of that relationship and in my spiritual leadership abilities, overall.

Along with this, there was no normative assumption that parishioners would gather together to nurture their spiritual lives, to speak about their spiritual experience and attend to their relationship with God. It was assumed that Sunday school would take care of the essential spiritual formation while the Christian-influenced society around us would do the rest. Consequently, the spiritual

experience remained private and never benefitted from openly reflecting on the faith experience and hearing the wisdom of others in the community reflect on, support and hold accountable our experience. The result of this was that our spiritual experience was left to languish, stall and possibly die, leaving the church without the spiritual vitality of its people.

Our synods and conferences generally dealt with large organizational matters that involved discernment of critical social issues or governance changes. I don't ever remember sharing how my relationship with God was informing my decisions and guiding my life. Although I said the daily office frequently with bishops, priests, deacons and laypeople, I do not remember reflecting with them on how God was speaking into our lives at that moment. I had the implicit sense that a relational experience of faith that was spoken of openly would have somehow made others uncomfortable. Because of this, I learned to work within the institution from a rational, functional perspective, relying on my own strength and abilities not the empowerment of God's Spirit working in and through me. Consequently, I served God who was "my cause but not my consolation" as I deployed secular leadership skills effectively while I struggled to exhibit spiritual discipleship behaviours.

At a critical point in my life, this mode of operating no longer worked for me and I found my spiritual life stalled. I was a competent leader but I was spiritually hollow. It was not until I engaged in a spiritual direction relationship that I began to process my own spiritual experiences and grow deeper in my

relationship with Christ. Recently, the relationship with my spiritual director has been expanded to include a number of members of my DMin cohort who serve not only as student colleagues but as trusted members of an informal discipleship small group. My relationship with God has deepened because of the experience of these relationships that have challenged, supported and helped me process my spiritual experiences.

When I began my ministry as rector at Trinity, Aurora, in 2007, I observed that this was an affluent suburban community with above average education where most of the lay leaders held leadership positions at work and in the community. Despite this, they expressed feelings of incompetence when asked to exhibit a relatively simple spiritual leadership task such as opening a meeting with prayer or speaking about God's activity in their life. These leaders could capably organize effective structures and programs for ministry but were too anxious to lead in prayer, evangelism or speak openly about how God was working in their lives. I observed that they, like me, were spiritually formed primarily through the liturgy—the weekly Sunday eucharist. The long-held Anglican assumption was that the *Book of Common Prayer* or other authorized worship books contained all the prayers necessary to form church members. Corporate worship, it was assumed would educate and nurture the individual into the fullness of Christ. The effect of corporate worship was also understood to be self-sustaining—the individual's spiritual development would result in a commitment to church

attendance so they would continue to be formed through the act of common worship.

The eucharistic liturgy is a rich medium for spiritual growth, including music, movement, touch, taste, colour and drama. These affective elements, along with the sermon, are intended to spur the intellect and offer a deep resource for engaging in a relationship with God. The challenge, I discovered, was that the underlying assumption of a private spirituality left Trinity's parishioners feeling uncertain as spiritual leaders, unable to openly share their faith experience and, from what I observed, possibly stalled in their relationship with God. They, like me, were more likely to work from a rational, functional perspective and without a reflective process with others and training to build competence in spiritual practices like public prayer, these church leaders deeply faithful to the church and proficient in secular skills may never become confident spiritual leaders who serve as disciples of Christ.

To illustrate this dynamic consider the image of an inflated balloon on a string. A balloon on a string has three sections: a bright coloured ball filled with helium or air, the string that holds it in place and the knot that joins the two together. The balloon represents the personal spiritual experience, the string represents the institutional church as expressed through corporate worship, while the knot represents what holds the two together—a conversation about the spiritual experience in the context of a mentor, director or small group where the experience can be discussed and processed. The personal spiritual experience, like

the balloon, is the focal point and includes the many spiritual practices individuals adopt to nurture their relationship with God. The string represents the supportive community of faith that anchors the spiritual experience in place. It gives the spiritual experience context, language, structure, support and accountability. The knot, like a reflective small group or mentor, links the string—the community—with the balloon—the individual spiritual experience—and serves to keep both connected. Through speaking about the spiritual experience in a trusting relationship words are formed, experience is integrated, meaning is shaped, confidence increased and the relationship with God deepens. If the balloon and string separate, the balloon floats off without purpose or direction and the string falls into a heap. Likewise, if personal spiritual experiences separate from the community of faith, they drift off aimlessly while the community becomes lifeless, leaving the church—as expressed through the liturgy—a hollow function, devoid of the spiritual vitality of its people.

From my experience in the Anglican Church, the reliance on liturgy and personal devotions for spiritual formation means that either there is no knot to hold the two together, or the knot that is there is so loose that the hold is tenuous. This dynamic results in a church—like the mass of tangled string—that does not fulfill its purpose, which is to enliven and provide community support for the individual faith experience. Nor does it benefit from the individual faith experience that is meant to form and shape God's ongoing activity and call for the community.

I am clearly not the first person to notice this Anglican formational deficiency. John Wesley, a 17th-century Anglican priest and co-founder of Methodism, grieved that his church did not sufficiently respond to the spiritual awakening of the people. To address this problem he developed a small-group system that was both supportive and accountable, so that parishioners would regenerate and not spiritually languish between Sunday services. Despite this, church historian David Watson (1984) believes the real appeal of Methodism lay in its preaching. He argues that the small groups, which were rigorous and spiritually intrusive, waned over time. Today, there are those who are beginning to reclaim the formational significance of Wesley's mutually accountable small-group system (Mobley 2016, 104-108; Watson 2014, 26-27).

In response to this perceived need I developed a program called *Lift High the Cross: Empowering Spiritual Leaders*. The program was structured as a small-group, discipleship training course for 12 lay leaders. The course was led jointly by me and an ordained co-facilitator who was an accredited spiritual director. Participants in the program learned how to speak about their faith journey, pray in public, develop a personal prayer practice, engage in scripture as a spiritual practice and discern their call as a spiritual leader. The program was spread over 10 months and included an opening and closing retreat and three six-week modules titled Communicating with God, Engaging in Scripture and Called for Ministry.

The pedagogical principles used in the program were based on praxis-learning and social-cognitive learning. Praxis learning theory was developed under Jean Piaget (1896-1980) and later David A. Kolbs (b. 1939). It says people learn through a process of reflecting on an idea or behaviour that is then tested against their experience. This concept was expanded upon by Andrew Wilkinson (1965), a British educator, who said that experiencing a new idea or behaviour wasn't enough but that people needed to speak about it for effective learning to take place. He called this process "oracy." Finally, research from the book *Women's Ways of Knowing: The Development of Self, Voice, and Mind* showed that in order for there to be meaning "oral and written forms of language must pass back and forth between persons... sharing, expanding, and reflecting on each other's experiences" (Belenky, Clinchy, Goldberger and Tarule in 1986, 26). It was shown that without personal interaction, learning fails to integrate into a person's understanding and experience, resulting in a sense of isolation and a lack of meaning.

Studies in self-efficacy were developed primarily by Albert Bandura (b. 1925). They suggest a way to address the need for experiential learning is to provide a learning environment where individuals can: 1. see a behaviour modelled, 2. master the behaviour in an incrementally challenging setting, 3. receive encouragement and feedback from peers, and 4. attend to the negative feelings associated with the new behaviour (Bandura 1994). Bandura said that people will not integrate a new behaviour or learning if they assess that they are

not likely to succeed. This self-assessment however is not reliable, because it is just an emotive reaction to something unfamiliar. Individuals may in fact be capable of executing a new behaviour, but their negative feelings of anxiety and fear stop them from trying. As I will explain, this is likely what happened with Trinity's lay leaders who exhibited leadership skills in their work and community life but were unwilling to demonstrate spiritual leadership skills, such as praying in public and speaking about their faith with others in their church.

A heightened sense of behaviour competency in secular leadership skills fosters rational functionalism in the church setting because people rely on behaviours that have brought them success in their work, instead of trusting in God. At the same time, private spiritual experiences fail to build a parishioner's confidence because the individual is unable to speak about the faith experience and meaningfully integrate it into their life. The result of this was that the ministry of lay leaders came from a transactional, achievement mode as opposed to having trust in the Holy Spirit's power to transform and inspire.

The research project was developed to assess the effectiveness of the prayer module of the *Lift High the Cross* program in fostering confident spiritual leadership and nurturing a relationship with God. Twelve lay leaders were invited to participate in a seven-week course that introduced them to 10 different prayer forms, helped them tell their spiritual life story and coached them in learning how to offer a prayer in public.

Four data sources were used to determine if the course increased the self-efficacy and fostered spiritual growth. Qualitative data was collected from participant observations from each of the seven sessions by both facilitators. Solicited and unsolicited emails sent by the participants also served as a qualitative data source. A prayer-behaviour test was developed by me and taken by the participants at the beginning of the first session and at the end of the last session. It provided both qualitative and quantitative data, recording changes in the negative feelings of the participants about public prayer, changes in the type, time, structure and content of their private prayer practices and a sample of a written prayer they would use in response to a public praying scenario. Finally, a third-party online spiritual vitality survey called the Episcopal Spiritual Life Index (ESLI), was completed by the participants during the first week and the week that followed the end of the course. This spiritual vitality inventory from RenewalWorks, a ministry of Forward Movement provided quantifiable data about changes in the spiritual health of the group.

The findings from this research project showed that lay leaders at Trinity Anglian Church, Aurora, by participating in the *Lift High the Cross* course were able to manifest spiritual leadership behaviours such as taking on a regular prayer practice and leading prayer in public. Seeing both the 10 prayer forms and public prayer modelled for them; rehearsing the prayer forms, receiving feedback and support from fellow participants and incrementally increasing the size of the

group being prayed to enabled the participants to exhibit the desired spiritual leadership behaviours.

Data from the first prayer-behaviour test showed that prior to taking the course, participants had the ability to pray in public but their negative feelings of anxiety and nervousness prevented them from doing so. This finding is consistent with Bandura's assertion that people cannot be relied on for accurately predicting their own capacity to successfully execute a behaviour. The finding also challenged me to consider the biases I brought to ministry. I had assumed these lay leaders were unable, not merely unwilling, to pray in public. It turns out that they were as capable as people with prior experience praying in public. Typically lay leaders deferred to me when asked to offer a prayer. What I realized after seeing the test results is that this was because they were lacking confidence not because they were lacking ability. This has changed my perspective on lay ministry, forcing me to reassess my assumptions about my lay leaders' abilities. Instead of accepting the request to lead in prayer on their behalf, I need to use my role to encourage and equip their latent spiritual leadership behaviours.

Finally, the research project, through the prayer-behaviour data, showed that when people prayed regularly their prayers, began to shift from episodic petitionary prayers to regularly scheduled times of solitude. The increase in prayers of solitude and the concomitant decrease in petitionary prayers indicated participants were moving along the spiritual continuum and deepening their relationship with God. Along with this, participants said in their participant

observations that their prayers brought them closer to God in the last few sessions of the program, a reflection of them moving from doing God's ministry to being in a more intimate relationship with God. Finally, these findings were supported by the Episcopal Spiritual Life Inventory surveys that showed an increase in the spiritual vitality index, indicating that participation in the praxis-based, small-group discipleship program, *Lift High the Cross*, for seven weeks acted as a catalyst to improved spiritual health for lay leaders at Trinity Church Aurora.

The findings of the research project described in Chapter 4 supported the spiritual formation model proposed in Chapter 3 and confirmed the issues raised in my spiritual autobiography of Chapter 2. I have learned that:

1. spiritual growth happens in the context of an intimate, close relationship with God and others that requires a willingness to be vulnerable;

2. corporate worship and private devotions help facilitate an intimate relationship with God but alone they are insufficient without a mediating conversation in a small group or with a mentor who helps process the spiritual experience and integrate meaning.

3. the *Lift High the Cross* praxis-based, small-group discipleship program facilitates confidence in spiritual leadership behaviours by providing a place where behaviours, such as praying in public and sharing the faith story, can be modeled, mastered and encouraged, and where anxious negative feelings can be lessened.

4. there is a level of confidence required to execute spiritual leadership behaviours but ultimately spiritual growth requires surrendering confidence and personal abilities to trust and reliance on God.

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CHAPTER 2:
MODERN GIRL TRYING TO FIND THE HOLY:
A SPIRITUAL AUTOBIOGRAPHY

The first section of my portfolio is my spiritual autobiography. A spiritual autobiography traces God's activity in an individual's personal story. It is a fundamental activity for spiritual formation as it allows the person to reflect on the spiritual dimension of their life.

Ms. Fix-It

It was just another rubber-chicken function. A ballroom filled with large circular tables covered in white, baskets of untouched rolls, sparkling glasses of water and wine, a confusing array of cutlery and a faint air of excitement as we settled in for another meal and a new speaker. There had been many of these events as conference after conference, trip after trip we gathered to hear new numbers, share ideas and hopefully find that silver bullet which would fix everything and save the church. My beloved church.

The best part of these pleasant but slightly tedious events was the possibility of getting to sit beside someone interesting. Of course this meant otherwise refined and respectable church dignitaries were seen scurrying around trying to find the best table with the most influential and interesting people. It was all hierarchy and status, with very few kingdom values in these hallowed banquet halls. At this particular dinner I found myself beside a complete stranger and

therefore someone, I thought, of little influence. Little did I know he was about to change my life.

We started with niceties and ceremonially passed each other the unwanted rolls. “Butter?” “More water?” Then we began to talk. Eventually he leaned in close and said, “I don’t know you, so please excuse my boldness, but you are smiling and seem happy but I am wondering, why are you so sad?”

And that was when it happened. That was the moment of insight, of truth, of transformation. I lowered my head and I cried.

Here I was living the ecclesiological high-life. I was in the senior leadership of one of the largest Anglican dioceses in North America, managing a number of staff and participating in significant organizational conversations, respected by peers, likely soon to be considered for further career advancement, and all I felt was cynicism, disillusionment and pain. The very thought of God seemed offensive, because God was nowhere in sight. In my grief, I wondered how I had gotten here? What horrible cosmic joke was being played out at my expense?

When I started in ministry 20 years before this meal, my sense of call and purpose was unwavering and God was an ever-present reality. I could relate to Brother Lawrence who described his spiritual orientation as “a silent and secret, constant intercourse of the soul with God” (Lawrence [1666-1691] 1906, 41). Brother Lawrence says he did not require great effort or elaborate practices but

simply “a heart resolutely determined to apply itself to nothing but [God], or [God’s] sake, and to love [God] only” (Lawrence [1666-1691] 1906, 19).

I thought about God frequently during the day and was always met with a sense of divine intimacy, joy and presence. Prayer was easy and I could flip into a conversation with God at any time, in any place. I would settle into prayer and begin to utter my salutation, “Dear God,” but before the word God was off my lips I heard in my soul a bright, “Yes?!” It was so fast and so close it often startled and delighted me. God was obviously there waiting for me all along. Again, I felt like Brother Lawrence who said prayer was “nothing else but a sense of the Presence of God...and Divine Love” (Lawrence [1666-1691] 1906, 21).

This made discernment and listening for God’s voice a relatively simple task, because at that time I felt so highly connected to God and God’s divine purpose for my life. I was convinced that I just had to stay open and connected to God and I would know the right direction to take.

At one point in my early thirties, with five years of ordained ministry under my belt, I heard God speak into my heart to pursue a church career in human resources. It was clear, forceful and uncompromising, as if a huge rope was knotted at my back and I was being pulled forward in a direction beyond my control. I remember thinking at the time how thankful I was that I didn’t feel the need to resist this force.

I immediately began taking business and human resources courses with a passion. I had never studied finance, economics or management, but I excelled in

this new academic discipline. My passion and conviction was reaffirmed every step of the way by professors, clergy colleagues, bishops and friends.

Opportunities began to open up before me as if there was a grand plan in place and all I had to do was simply comply with God's will.

I was half way through my human resources certificate at St. Mary's University, Halifax, N.S., and serving as the associate priest at All Saints Cathedral, when my husband got a job in Toronto. In a matter of months I found myself before some of the most powerful bishops and archbishops of our church, promising to rid them of their greatest nightmares with my sparkling new human resources expertise. Serendipitously, a position in human resources had been included in the previous year's budget for the Diocese of Toronto; they were just waiting to fill the position.

It was all so clear and obvious, the church needed me and I needed to pursue my calling, and it was all part of God's plan. God was opening doors, I thought, and I intended to push them wide open and step through.

When I look back now, I realize how naïve and filled with hubris I was. I had half of a professional certificate (which I eventually completed), but no actual human resources experience. Yet I was convinced I could take on what turned out to be one of the toughest employment arrangements in one of the most demanding work environments. I was thrown into the underbelly of an institution that had many dark secrets, had allowed so much suffering and provided so little accountability.

This was the late '90s and things were in an uproar. The 1988 sentencing of the Roman Catholic priest James Hickey for a string of sexual abuses and the 1989 Mount Cashel inquiries had revealed that the institutional church had a systemic fault that allowed vulnerable children and adults to be sexually violated by trusted church leaders (As It Happens, 1989). Although those two stories related to the Roman Catholic Church, the Anglican Church was not immune to the problem. Several cases were well known in the church. Then came the very public stories from Native Residential schools revealing the horrific scale of abuse of aboriginal children. Not only were over a 150,000 children forcefully taken from their homes and punished for speaking their language but they were subject to physical and sexual abuse. This was a travesty of trust that caused great harm to the Canadian aboriginal peoples. The courts came down hard, expanding the definition of vicarious liability and now the church was faced with lawsuits that threatened to bankrupt just about every Anglican diocese in Canada (Angus Reid Group Inc. 2000 and Milloy 1999). A new and high standard of care was mandated which required massive cultural change and policy compliance for all denominations (Bazley v. Curry 1999).

I remember how my first case rid me of any innocence: I had to find health-benefit coverage for a child and his mother after the child had been sexually abused by his step-father, an Anglican priest. Apparently, this seemingly noble and good man married the child's mother with the sole intent of acquiring access to the child. When the step-father was incarcerated, his diocesan benefit

coverage ceased, taking with it the coverage for the mother and child, doubly victimizing them. We were quickly realizing that the cultural default for almost all employment practices in the church predated the industrial revolution, and they were wholly inadequate in addressing the business, consumer and litigious culture we were now facing.

To top it off, it was beginning to hit home that society was becoming increasingly secularized and that the church was in decline and had not seen the return of two, possibly three generations (Johnson, Hoge and Luidens, March, 1993). There were indications of this in the late '60s, but the systemic response had largely been denial (Berton 1965, Hall, 2002).

The self-image of the church as a prominent, prestigious, moral leader in society was crumbling, and so was the identity of those who tethered themselves to its high columns. I and many other church leaders were scrambling to find our place in this new, marginalized, often indifferent, sometimes hostile, secular environment. Many of us began to dig in out of a sense of fear to make our last stand. But herein lay the problem: I do not remember even once hearing the institutional church or its leaders asking where God was in the midst of all this change and chaos.

It was strategically determined by the diocese—after a lengthy process—that the challenges the church was facing could best be managed by incorporating business acumen, especially human resources expertise. At the outset, I observed the business community did, in fact, possess values consistent with the Christian

ethic, but which were absent from the church. Ill-informed church leaders were often involved in summarily dismissing employees, exploiting rectory families and denying due process in conflicts completely contrary to the gospel values we preached from the pulpit. Often, this resulted in costly lawsuits. The corporate world had at least figured out some basic principles of how to treat its people, whether the motivation was truly for the people or the bottom line.

So, I diligently rolled up my sleeves and began the process of bolstering the institution so it could weather the numerous legal and public relations assaults it was experiencing. In *Forming the Leader's Soul: An Invitation to Spiritual Direction*, Morris Dirks says that: "In the face of the increasing responsibilities and the resulting emotional drain, many leaders struggle to find time to care for their own spiritual health" (Dirks 2013, 6). I was one of those leaders. Without children to help splay my focus, and my husband, David, travelling extensively, I put all my energy and intellect behind this effort. Most days I worked at least 12 hours, producing an exhaustive array of policy initiatives, discussion papers, program templates and procedure manuals. I produced a sexual misconduct video—the first in Canada—and many church leaders across the country had me on their speed dial: my advice was highly sought.

As I look back, the fateful mistake I made was to stop relying on God's call in my life and presence in the many decisions I was participating in. Graham Standish coined the phrase "rational functionalism" to describe the "view of faith and church rooted in a restrictive, logic-bound theology that ignores the

possibility of spiritual experiences and miraculous events” (Standish 2005, 15). Rational functionalism was definitely my *modus operandi*. I was convinced that “rational thought and disciplined investigation” (Standish 2005, 15) and business know-how would get us out of any sticky situation.

For the 10 years I worked at the Diocese of Toronto, addressing a critically changing cultural environment, I relied mainly on my business training and my own strength of character and intelligence. My rational functionalism pushed God right out of the picture, replaced with efficient procedures, productive processes and effective policies, all of which I drove through with steely conviction.

The accumulated result came to a head at that moment at the dinner table with the unknown man who spoke the truth into my well-constructed yet hollow self-sufficiency. I was sad, lonely and very frightened. I had not heeded the psalmist’s warning, and had put my trust in the works of humans, in the projects and policies of my own making (Psalm 146:3-5).

In my own defence, I didn’t get to this spiritual place all on my own. In many ways I was encouraged—even mentored—to function from the perspective of “academic inquiry and scientific skepticism” (Standish 2005, 16) and not from a reliance on God’s love, guidance and direction. The assumption was that we were working for the good of the church, so God would surely bless it. The church’s senior leaders were clear: they expected me to fix it and I did not plan to disappoint. When everyone around you claims you are a saviour, the temptation to

believe them is potent. Because of this, I relied on my own strength and abilities and less and less on the living God who had brought me to this point in the first place.

Adrian Van Kaam says humans function at four levels: Spiritual, which involves being in connection with God; Mental, which involves functional thinking and planning processes; Physical, which includes our basic needs, appetites and aspirations; and Relational, which involves our connectivity with others and all creation and life (Van Kaam in Standish 2014, 29-49). The theory is that we function at all four levels all the time, but they must be integrated in order for there to be health. As post-enlightenment people, we tend to cut off the spiritual dimension of our lives, although it is in fact the primary dimension. The result is a systemic, unintegrated internal conflict at all levels.

The most profound internal conflict I experienced came as a result of a distortion of the mental dimension. Without a spiritual foundation, my life and identity became focused on producing, achieving and maintaining control. In my unintegrated state, I assumed my thoughts and plans were the right thoughts and plans, so everything had to be done to ensure they were executed without alteration.

After 10 years of functioning this way, things were starting to crumble around me. Projects were becoming harder to push through. Staff were complaining about my relentless pace and autocratic leadership style. A new supervisor, inserted between me and the bishop, was hired and began taking the

diocese in a new direction, questioning all our initiatives. Relationships with bishops and colleagues, already strained, began to break down. I sensed I was being excluded from some significant meetings. Internally, I could sense an unpleasant feeling of unease and fatigue. To quote Timothy Keller: “when work is your identity, success goes to your head and failure goes to your heart” (Keller 2013, 11:42). After a decade of over-functioning, I was beginning to sense failure. The result was emotionally crippling.

I had been acquiring more and more expertise about how to respond and what to do in the face of crisis and change but, as Simon Sinek points out, I had lost the why (Sinek, 2011). Consequently, I lost the passion for what I was doing, because “I knew what I did. I knew how I did it, but I could not tell you why I did it” (Sinek, 2014, 0:53/3:20). What had inspired me at the beginning of my ministry now had faded, leaving me vulnerable to being battered and bruised by the turmoil. It turns out that for people of faith, we have to dig even deeper and ask an even more fundamental question: Who? Who are we serving and who is calling us into this particular activity and function? If we do not have the who and why questions figured out, we are likely to lose our passion for what we are doing. Instead, we simply function.

As it turned out, my dinner guest at this transformative moment of my life was practised at seeing these spiritual illnesses in church leaders. He was a spiritual director for a number of them, and was there to help us look at some of the systemic issues that were hurting our church. When I was able to recover

somewhat from my emotional outpouring, I asked the man if this was some kind of spiritual director's pick-up line he used to get new clients. He laughed, but it became, in fact, the beginning of a journey in a new direction with his support and guidance.

Broken

I would unquestionably describe the moment at that dinner event as a conversion experience—I was immediately aware of how profoundly sad, lonely and unhappy I had become.

Graham Standish says conversion, or the moment of transformation, is when we are drawn back from our own freedom of choice to God's purpose for our lives (Standish 2014, c). The goal of spiritual formation is to align our choices with God's purpose through intentional prayer and discernment. It is on account of our own ego needs and selfishness that we stray from that goal and forge our own purpose. At some point, we begin to feel the pain of isolation, resentment and the constant state of fear and we return to God's purpose for our lives. This oscillation between our choices and God's purpose is an inherent part of the regenerative nature of a spiritual relationship with God. If we favour our own purposes over God's for a protracted period of time, the return to God's purpose is experienced as a conversion because of the many and sudden personal insights the individual becomes aware of (Standish 2014, c).

I knew that out of the chaos and turbulence of my life, I was facing a choice: abandon my spiritual life all together and look for work outside the church

or reconnect with God in a whole new way—this same God I now did not completely trust. There needed to be a marked difference between how I had lived my life and how I was to live it. Dirks says that it was through pain that he came to “radically reshaping” his way of life (Dirks 2013, xi). He too had come to this point after recognizing that he was “totally and completely lost” (Dirks 2013, 1).

So, what to do? For as long as I could remember, I had always had a clear sense of what God wanted of me. Now, God was remote, and thoughts about God were uncomfortable and unpleasant. I had no idea where to turn.

My darkest moment came soon after that dinner when, out of desperation, I attempted to reconnect with God through my old prayer practice of being present. I settled in and once again began with, “Dear God.” Then I said what was on my heart at that moment of uncertainty and sorrow. “I feel so stupid!” The response was swift and familiar, just like it had always been. But this time, the words were cruel and they stung. “That is because you are stupid!” was what I heard. It was at this moment that I became aware of just how far I had travelled from God and how vulnerable I was. In place of God, some other force that sounded a lot like God had entered my soul and found a cosy place to reside, leaving me frightened and confused.

I have had spiritual directors for most of my ordained ministry, but I realized not only had I been coasting, I had never openly and unreservedly spoken to another person about my faith experience. I needed someone who could see past the façade and role, and who would challenge me. I needed someone who

would help me voice and bring to a conscious awareness the deep yearnings God was placing in my heart. I began meeting regularly with the man at the dinner event and have continued in that relationship ever since.

This person began by helping me reconnect with God by expanding my prayer practices so I could once again hear God's voice in my life. Prayer, because it is a means of communication, gets us connected and relating to God. Without this connection, discerning God's purposes is impossible. Decisions become purely analytical. In my case, I would once again find myself relying on the intellectual process of dividing right from wrong. Discernment, by contrast, is accomplished in the context of a relationship with God where we sense that which draws us closer and that which separates us from the divine centre. Ignatius of Loyola, the 16th-century founder of the Society of Jesus and author of the *Spiritual Exercises*, calls this the "interior movement in the soul" (Loyola [1524] 2010, 1768/1977). He says it is essential to pay attention to these movements as some will draw us closer to God, that which he calls "consolation" and other feelings will draw us further away, called "desolation." Spiritual discernment then is becoming familiar with the movements of these internal spiritual activities as they draw one closer or further away from God. And so I began keeping a journal and committing to the daily examen, an Ignatius prayer practice that involves reviewing the past day for places where I experienced consolation and desolation. This helped me open myself up to God and sift through the many possibilities that

now lay before me. It was as if scales had fallen from my eyes and I could see for the first time how far I had strayed from God's purpose for my life.

Without that tugging rope, I felt like I was cut adrift with no clarity or purpose. My spiritual director introduced me to contemplation and I could not imagine a more useless practice. Sitting for long periods of time, doing absolutely nothing: no words, no petitions, no movement, no thoughts, no goals, no accomplishments, no expectation, just an empty mind turned toward God. Instead of relying solely on my instantly gratifying, child-like conversation with God, or my dazzling skills, I was being called to listen intently to the silence.

I began to reach out to the community and asking my husband, friends and trusted colleagues if they thought I was burnt out and what they thought I should do about it. The consensus indeed was that I seemed emotionally exhausted. It was also becoming clear that there were going to be some significant changes on the horizon for the diocesan staff, and I wasn't sure I wanted to be part of another restructuring process. This would have meant facilitating the terminations of some of my friends, or perhaps even of my own position, and I just simply didn't have the stomach for it anymore.

So here I was, emotionally spent, with a fledgling new prayer life, and the imminent need to get out of my current position. I was encouraged to offer my name for an episcopal election by all my closest family and friends. The wider community was not so supportive, and so, when I predictably lost, it only further entrenched my sense of hurt and sadness.

With my inner spiritual life unsettled and my work unrewarding and demeaning, I once again reached out to my spiritual director for help. His advice was that I needed time for more silence and solitude. I needed a spiritual retreat.

Free Fall

For more than 20 years of professional ministry I had successfully avoiding going on retreat. I think it's safe to say that the thought of it filled me with fear. Noise and busyness were my markers of a successful and competent Christian life. I guess I was afraid that in the silence and solitude I might lose control of everything I was familiar with, afraid of no longer being considered proficient and skilled, afraid I wouldn't be safe and afraid of ending up with further loss, hurt and resentment. The biggest fear of all, though, was that silence and solitude would result in a depression, a deep and unrelenting mental breakdown. This seems ridiculous now. But at the time, these fears were very real and almost paralyzed me.

But what choice did I have? My life was metaphorically teetering on the edge of a cliff, my toes perilously close to the edge. I knew with everything there was to know that I had two options: back away from the cliff and accept things the way they were and learn to live with unhappiness, or make a huge leap of faith and step out into the unknown. The first step of the second option would likely involve a considerable free-fall.

I wish I had read Ruth Haley Barton's *Invitation to Solitude and Silence: Experiencing God's Transforming Presence* (Barton 2010) at the time, because it

would have been a helpful companion for the journey. Barton's book is a practical guide written by someone who has struggled first-hand with the many fears and challenges of solitude and silence as a spiritual discipline, but who has also experienced its great rewards.

Barton provides helpful teaching on the many challenges we face when considering a silent retreat: our initial resistance, dealing with physical fatigue, the relentless chatter of our minds and those monumental moments of truth that this spiritual practice opens up for us. She does not sugarcoat the truth that silence and solitude are among the most intense and cathartic of the spiritual practices. Going on retreat requires a "willingness to press on through sunlit days and dark nights, unspeakable beauty and terrible danger.... It is a perilous and priceless journey" (Barton 2010, 17). She opens one of her chapters with a quote from Henri Nouwen: "Solitude is the furnace of transformation" (Barton 2010, 95), alerting the reader to the insight that silence and solitude is not for the casual and uncommitted spiritual sojourner.

When I faced my first silent retreat, I had some sense of the turmoil this practice was about to create in my inner and outer life. When the crowds fall away and the noise is turned down there is nothing left—no ego-filled illusions, no victim narratives, no dazzling escapes—nothing left but you and the God who made you, knows you and now calls you to truth. I had strayed so far from God that the very thought of this "illumination" and its implications was terrifying.

Barton's book might have helped me realize that there have been many sojourners at the top of that cliff who have managed to take that first step, survived the fall and who now cheer me on with the certain knowledge of new and fuller life. As Barton says, "It feels like the bravest thing we have ever done—bungee jumping for the soul" (Barton 2010, 104). But it is so worth it, because we discover that God's love is "deeper than any abyss ... [and] eventually becomes a bedrock of settledness at the core of our being. It is worth any price we have to pay to find it" (Barton 2010, 113).

And so I took my first big stepped into the deep unknown and, predictably, I began to fall....

For two full days, I thrashed about violently, with a sobbing song of anger in my heart: Why me? My lament eventually took the shape of Psalm 139, one of my favourite passages of scripture. But its content was inverted:

You do not know me, for I am unknown.
You hem me in and constrain me.
The very activity of fleeing from you feels good,
But you trap me and hold me fast.
If you could read my thoughts you would know my secret wish is to fail.
Fail from perfection, fail from performance, fail from responsibility.
My ugly thoughts are ever before me...
that you have failed, you have let me down, you know nothing about me.

And a slightly softened version:

O Lord, I search for you, where are you?
I have fallen down, I have wandered blind, I reach out for you,
But you are not there.
In my time of trouble you left me.
You used me and now I am cast away
Everything is being cast away...

I knew I was being asked to leave my present world behind: my professional accreditation I had sacrificed so many nights, weekends and vacations to acquire; my human resources department, the first of its kind in the Canadian Anglican church, and which I had fought so hard to create and protect; my work, that I had passionately built with a reputation for being just, fair and equitable; my status as a leader, equipping leaders and having a voice in decisions that affected the church at large. In fact my whole identity and sense of who I was and what I valued as a person was on the line.

I was aware that it was all slipping away, being taken from me even, but that the better option was for me to make a conscious decision to turn my back on it and walk away. Go. But where would I go? Into the complete unknown, with absolutely no sense of what lay ahead of me?

I was being asked to let go of everything and trust.

Before I could trust, though, I had to grieve. It was death that I was facing. The death and loss of relationships, of dreams, of worth ... and I railed—wailed—against the injustice and divine abuse I felt.

So it went until I was spent, and found myself in a place of utter emptiness and silence. The storm finally quieted, and I stood alone and still. Slowly, a calm

and peace fell upon me like gently falling snow. It was then that I heard these few words:

Dawn, I know you as my beloved child. Come and rest.

The tears were no longer hot and fiery but warm and quenching, and, for the first time in a very long time, I stopped.

The old defences began to drop away. My grip slackened and I began to simply let things slip from my hold. Thankfully, with each wrenching loss, there followed a buoyant easing. I was being rewarded for letting go with an ever-deepening sense of peace and calm.

What began to emerge was an awareness of a new calling. I had no idea of the specifics of my future direction, but I could sense that just beyond my reach something new was evolving. I hunched this would take some time to become clear, but for now I was to continue the process of saying goodbye to the old.

In his talk, *The Art of Stillness*, Pico Iyer, one of the best known travel writers and a respected spiritual speaker, says: “[T]he trip ... [gives] me some amazing sights but it is only sitting still that allows me to turn those sights into lasting insights” (Iyer 2014, 2:11). He likens our life to “standing about 2 inches away from a huge screen and it is noisy and it is crowded and changing with every second and ... it is only by stepping back and then further back again and holding still that we can begin to see what the canvas means and catch the larger picture” (Iyer 2014, 14:25).

I had been living my life far too close to the screen, and the time of silence and solitude had provided me with the space to see that I was in the middle of a transition and that I needed to stop before I could move ahead because a whole new way of living was about to emerge. As the prophet Elijah experienced, it is not in the great wind, the mighty earthquake, or the fierce fire that we find God, but in the “sound of sheer silence” (1 Kings 19:13).

I came away from the retreat and began to commit time to periods of solitude. I scheduled three three-day retreats at a local monastery to ensure I had periodic times for checking in with this “still small voice.” Along with this, I began transforming my prayer life so that it included more silence and stillness. I hunched that a regular practice of being in the presence of God would change the cathartic cliffs of my life into more soothing riverbanks. Cliff-falling turns out to be emotionally and physically exhausting, and I was ready for a more gradual and paced spiritual experience.

The Miracle of New Life

Then a miracle happened. A call came inviting David and me to come and see a picture of our new daughter.

We had been working our way through the requirements for adoption. My sister and her husband had adopted two children from China, awakening a desire and longing we hadn't before recognized. But with the discovery of this newfound joy of nieces and the common dissatisfaction with the direction of our careers, we tentatively began meeting with a social worker and filling out forms.

Frankly, up to then, we were too busy to even consider the thought of children. If someone had asked why we did not have children, we would say: “We forgot.” The image I had of us as a couple was of two people leaning together, our backs touching, but looking out and away from each other. David and I were supportive of each other but were relatively independent, with separate interests and activities. The thought of this little girl coming into our lives meant that for the first time as a couple we were turning away from the world and inward, toward each other, to create a safe space for new life to grow.

China was also reportedly closing down its adoption program, so this was likely our one chance to have a child. It was only a year after the emotional dinner event, and now we found ourselves expectant parents.

At this point, leaving the diocese became critical, and I only had a few months to discern my way forward. Once again, the question about my career loomed large. Where would I go from here? Remaining at the diocesan office was out of the question. My soul was as hard as a dried pea, and I had the good sense to realize this was not the right work environment for starting a family. I could change my career and go into the training and development field, which interested me greatly, but that felt overwhelming and far too risky.

Returning to parish ministry seemed like the best way to go, but I have to admit the decision was still heavily laden with intellectual analysis and expediency. I had invested 20 years in a pension, and returning to parish ministry meant that we wouldn't take a massive personal financial loss. I was used to being

supported by a large staff team and overseeing a considerable budget. Trinity, Aurora, one of the largest parishes in the diocese, could accommodate both these needs. It was also within driving distance from David's work, and so minimized family disruption. I think I thought the parish would be a good place to heal from the emotional damage of 10 years managing clergy misconduct files. It turned out that couldn't have been further from the truth. I also hoped that the parish would be a supportive place to bring up our little girl.

So, within the few weeks of welcoming Yohanna into our lives, we sold a house in downtown Toronto and bought one in Aurora, a suburban town about 40 km north of the city. I resigned from a position with the diocese in which I had developed extensive expertise and accepted a new position for which I was wholly unprepared. At age 45, I braced myself for the greatest identity-crushing experience of all, becoming a mother.

Family systems theorist Dr. Ed Friedman says that each one of us plays a role within a larger system, and by doing so, we create balance and stability within the system (Friedman 2007, 188). Above all, systems desire stability, balance and equilibrium—what he calls *homeostatis*. When change is introduced into the system, it will be perceived as a threat to that stability. Consequently, resistance will be applied to the change in order to maintain the balance. This will happen even if the system is unhealthy or harmful to individuals within the system. As a result, he says, “to succeed at a new venture requires a kind of

relentless drive.” Or, more bluntly: “No one has ever gone from slavery to freedom with the slaveholders cheering them on” (Friedman 2007, 188).

I was starting to understand the systemic role I was playing in the functioning of the diocese. The bishops collectively serve as both chief executive officer and compliance officer for the church. But clergy and parishes are quite independent in this system and bishops find themselves running from one crisis to another trying to put out fires, leaving little time for leadership and organizational planning. Consequently, their work relies on persuasion and committee discernment to get things done. This systemic inability creates an institutional wobble, with staff overcompensating with policies, guidelines and church laws to make up for what seems like ineffective leadership at the top. It is interesting that in this system, the overcompensating staff person is usually a woman who serves as an unpopular but necessary villain. I was beginning to realize that I was that person. So here I was, no longer the darling I once was, but I still had many responsibilities and provided a valuable service that had to be reassigned to other staff in a short period of time.

When I look back, I would describe my exit from the diocese as jagged. Because of the cathartic emotional work accomplished during my retreat, I was prepared to leave it all behind—my human resources expertise, the relationships, my status and influence. The only problem was that I had not sufficiently considered how ill-prepared everyone else was for this abrupt departure.

But forward I marched and, within weeks, David and I had spring-cleaned our lives, leaving friends, colleagues, work plans and an independent, single-couple lifestyle behind. In what seemed like a blink of an eye, we were now parents, in a new home, a new community and a new job, beginning a new life together. I knew God was calling me into a deeper relationship and asking me to explore the significant issues of trust. How better to begin this journey than to be thrown into the deep well of love that comes with motherhood and pastoral ministry!

My commitment to a structured prayer life was promptly flung aside, along with a full night's sleep. Gourmet meals, the opera and expensive clothes were a thing of the past. I was consumed by the demands of a little child adjusting to her new family, and her issues became *the* issues of our new family. Most days were filled to overflowing with half-accomplished household chores and inadequately completed work tasks that made life feel chaotic and overwhelming. I was the master of organization and planning but now nothing came together as I predicted.

I remember orchestrating what felt like a small revolution just to have a few minutes alone at a coffee shop, only to spend the whole time aching to get back home with our little girl. Like Jeremiah, I was experiencing a purification, a refiner's fire, and it was taking the form of motherhood for me. The deeper journey had begun and now I was forced to explore what was at the root of my motivation and ego needs. I was being forced to learn how to let go and trust.

Warrior for an Incompetent God

Dirks uses Ignatius's concept of inordinate attachments to shed light on the hidden motivations that affect us all (Dirks 2013, 77-89). According to Ignatius, the more we are in union with Christ the more emotionally healthy we become. But this union requires an abandonment of our own will for God's will. Union with God requires us to trust in God's promise and providence. Ignatius says inordinate attachments act like "hidden saboteurs" that make it difficult to discern between our ego and need to control and God's will and purpose. Three motivations that serve as inordinate attachments for most of us are: 1. a need to be liked; 2. a need to be successful; and 3. a need to be perfect. Instead of relying on God for a sense of love, security and belonging, we construct systems, structures and strategies out of our own abilities. These are ultimately rooted in fear and a need to control. By relying more and more on these inordinate attachments, our relationship with God is pushed further and further into the background until there is little of the spiritual life left alive.

The inordinate attachments that I had been struggling with for all those years in ministry and at the diocese were the need to succeed and the need for perfection. I realized that I was driven by a need to get things done in a manner I thought was right. I accomplished this through overzealous management, planning, organization and execution. In many ways this was a successful strategy for getting things accomplished in a complex system. However, when I functioned like this, I left little room for God, because everything was dependent

on me making sure it was done correctly. I had little empathy, but I was able to create masterful structures with my boundless energy.

While I was on that first retreat, I discovered that the image I had of myself was of a warrior for God, cloaked in dazzling, impenetrable steel. I thrashed about with my sword and fought the evil forces of chaos and disorder with skill and ability. Underneath the armour, however, was a vulnerable Little Dawn, who spent a significant amount of time whimpering into the silence and dark.

God was my cause but not my consolation.

I now had to become aware of the spiritual issues associated with this personal dynamic. I recognized that the strong armour of the warrior that showed up as an inordinate attachment kept God and others at a distance. This accounted for why I always felt so lonely, especially at the deepest spiritual level. It also explained why I felt a need to react so forcefully if I sensed the slightest threat—I was far too vulnerable and needy at the core. Like many such defenses, this one probably had deep roots in my childhood. I had lost my father quite suddenly in a car accident when I was eight, and the impact seemed to continue. And so the journey into my youth began.

All I remember is that one evening my mother and father left the house and by the morning they had not returned. There had been a car accident. My father and a friend, who was a passenger, died at the scene of the accident; my mother was seriously injured and was hospitalized for about a month. When you

come through an experience like this, you realize profoundly how capricious life is. I recall thinking how seemingly powerless God was to fix it.

Neighbours were there to help, but it was a few days before family members could be summoned from Nova Scotia to Ontario. As the eldest of three girls, I took on emotional—and physical, to some degree—responsibility for my sisters and the situation in the aftermath of the accident. If God and adults were not able to prevent this, and parents were nowhere in sight, I felt I had better step in. Mary Gordon's famous quote rang true: "A fatherless girl thinks all things are possible and nothing is safe" (Gordon 1980, 263).

The root of my resistance to God almost 40 years later lay a question of God's competence: "Just how well are you running the universe if small children can be left without parents?" It is as if the small child within was crying: "How could you leave us little girls with so much responsibility?" As a result, the spiritual question that consistently lay under the surface was: "Can God really be trusted?"

I didn't realize this at the time but I can now see how the experience of those first few days after the accident deeply affected my spiritual journey. If God could allow an accident to happen where three little girls could be left alone, maybe this God was incompetent. Maybe this God could not be completely trusted to take care of the world. So, at some deep and unthought-out level, I realized I had been functioning as if I were alone and everything was left up to

me. Just as I did after the accident, I rolled up my sleeves and began to take care of the world—well at least the church, which was my world.

Now I was a mother, and this approach was not going to work. Yohanna's personality was not one that took easily to being controlled. Instead of forcing my will upon her, I had to learn how to come alongside to nurture and facilitate what was emerging within her.

Slowly and surely Yohanna began to teach me how to release my grasp and play. And with delight, Little Dawn began to crawl out from the dark and see light. I felt God was inviting me to experience a time of joy and to lessen the need to produce. Life did not need to be so heavy or so hard and I was not meant to do it all myself.

This was a perspective I had long lost and it required a reorientation of how I lived my life. It was a new awareness I was realizing, and I was going to have many opportunities to practise it. So, I began to place my agendas and projects aside just to sit in the presence of my family and God to relax and be. Evelyn Underhill, the 20th-century Anglican mystic said that “We mostly spend [our] lives conjugating three verbs: to Want, to Have, and to Do... forgetting that none of these verbs have any ultimate significance, except so far as they are transcended by and included in, the fundamental verb, to Be” (Underhill 1937, 20). I was beginning the mystical journey of learning how to be.

As I gained perspective, I began to see how little control I had actually had all along. I had been trying to fulfill God's will through the sheer force of my own

personal insight, abilities and stamina. Irrespective of how effective and elaborate my structures were, I was ultimately ineffective. The irony was a realization that although I diligently struggled with a sense of aloneness, I became aware that God had been there all along, sustaining, nurturing, guiding and loving me. I had thought it was all up to me, but I had been toiling in vain, failing to recognize the power and support that was there, if only I had had eyes to see and ears to hear.

With this new insight in mind, I felt drawn to God's mercy and grace like the prodigal son to the father. But I knew this new way would require yet another large sacrifice. I had already had to give up my human resources work and accreditation! What now was being demanded? I had to give up something that was going to be painful: my ego. I had to surrender my will, my plans, my strategies, my fear and my need to control. Instead, I would have to place myself in God's loving hands, that same God I wasn't sure I totally trusted. But that was the choice, and I had to make a decision. Two quotes stuck in my mind at the time: "Above all, trust in the slow work of God" (Teilhard de Chardin, 1914-1919, 57-58) and, "He who is in a hurry delays the things of God" (De Paul in Underhill, 1937, 113).

This was going to mean more than relying on God for those few moments cloistered away in prayer. God was going to have to become part of every aspect of my being and doing. Brother Lawrence's prayer was: "I must now... apply my mind to outward things, I beseech Thee to grant me grace to continue in Thy Presence" (Lawrence [1666-1691] 1906, 24-25). Lawrence was able to achieve a

state of being where, he said: “the time of business [did] not... differ from the time of prayer, and in the noise and clatter of [the] kitchen, while several persons [were] at the same time calling for different things, I possess[ed] God in as great tranquillity, as if I were upon my knees at the Blessed Sacrament” (Lawrence, [1666-1691] 1906, 26).

I longed for this union and peace, and sensed it was possible, because I saw hints of it in my relationship with my daughter. But where to begin?

Thomas Kelly in *A Testament of Devotion* says that the first step of holy obedience is just to “begin where you are... and live this present moment... in utter submission and openness toward” God (Kelly [1941] 1991, 33). Not to “grit your teeth” and force your will but, instead, to “submit to God [and] learn to live in the passive voice” (Kelly [1941] 1991, 34). Brother Lawrence says the same thing: “we ought, once for all, heartily to put our whole trust in God, and make a full surrender of ourselves to Him, secure that He would not deceive us” (Lawrence [1666-1691] 1906, 22).

The Beauty of Nothing

This was what brought me deeper and deeper into solitude.

Contemplation has a long tradition in the Christian church, going back to Jesus himself. In scripture we get a sense that Jesus spent many hours in prayer, where there was a deep union between him and the Father.

Thomas Keating describes centering prayer as a form of contemplative prayer that moves “beyond conversation with Christ to communion with Him”

(Keating 2006, 1). The individual opens the “mind and heart—... whole being—to God, the Ultimate Mystery, [who is] beyond thoughts, words, and emotions” (Keating 2006, 1). Keating suggests we begin this prayer practice by finding a word that “expresses our intention” to welcome God’s presence into our interior life. He calls this a sacred word. The individual then sits quietly for a period of time repeating the sacred word, allowing all thought and distractions to fall away. This form of prayer does not require a liturgical format nor does it use words beyond the one sacred word, music or movement of any sort. Rather, the individual stays silent and still with an open and willing heart that desires to be in God’s presence. My word was ‘surrender’.

Evelyn Underhill describes a relationship with God as “a life in which all that we do comes from the centre, where we are anchored in God; a life soaked through and through by a sense of His reality and claim, and self-given to the great movement of His will” (Underhill, 1937). I yearned for this kind of closeness and intimacy with God, but everything in my character moved toward accomplishment, achievement, effectiveness and productivity. My inordinate attachments were going to take a beating I realized as I anticipated embarking on this new and challenging prayer form.

At first I was not aware of anything happening. I was reminded by my spiritual director that this was not a goal-oriented practice and I should not be focused on an accomplishment. Sometimes I even nodded off and found myself

coming to 20 minutes later to the sound of the timer chime. Surely a nap wasn't a form of prayer, I thought.

But it wasn't long before I could actually see significant changes in me. I gradually began to recognize a groundedness in my being that had not been there before. It was like I was unflappable and could make my way through a busy and demanding day with a sense of calm, peace and wisdom. A spiritual and emotional buoyancy developed that gave me unlimited strength and resilience. With a sense of surprise and humility, the centering prayer had become the anchor of my prayer life as each day I came before the Lord with nothing but myself and then left with nothing but a sense of God.

I was beginning to understand what Augustine said when he explained the effect of prayer on the emotions of the one praying. Prayer, he wrote: "brings serenity to our heart, purges it, and makes it readier to receive the divine gifts that are poured into us of the spirit. . . . Then the vision of the pure heart can bear the pure light from above that shines without fading or setting. Our heart then can not only bear the light, it can abide in it, not only painlessly but with unspeakable joy, the joy that brings true and unsullied fulfillment to the blessed life" (Augustine [393] 2009, Sermon on the Mount 2:3:14).

My prayers had moved from making direct requests to God to a more contemplative sense of delight in just being in God's company. I found I had fewer petitions because I really didn't want to rely on my understanding of what was needed or acceptable for any given situation. As Augustine says, prayer

simply is “an affectionate turning of the mind to God” (Augustine [393] 2009, Sermon 11:3). So it does not require formality or a set of prescriptive litanies. It simply requires our openness, our longing for God. Prayer in this way is a relationship of love. And I was getting glimpses of this in my experience and practice through the centering prayer.

Another spiritual practice that I felt drawn to at this time that began to transform my life was sabbath. I was introduced to a book by Dan Allender, called *Sabbath*. It has a lush and descriptive portrayal of this spiritual practice as “an invitation to enter [God’s] delight” (Allender 2009, 3/191). The reading of the book and subsequent practice of sabbath was a welcome release from the pensive and introspective nature of silence and solitude, and it helped create a cohesive spiritual balance between thoughtful self-examination and a playful heart. I was reminded of the passage in the Gospel of John that affirms that God does not condemn the world for its sinfulness but redeems it so that all may partake in full life (John 3:16,17). It is necessary to see our sinfulness, not as an end in itself, but to get it out of the way so as to enable the delight and glory of God, the Sabbath.

Allender says sabbath is setting aside one day a week for “delight that delivers us to joy.” So, “it...require[s] a separation from the mundane, an intentional choice to enter joy and follow God as he celebrates the glory of his creation and his faithfulness to keep his covenant to redeem the captives” (Allender 2009, 3/191). Nor is it simply a day without work. “Sabbath is not about time off or a break in routine. It is not a mini-vacation to give us a respite so

we are better prepared to go back to work” (Allender 2009, 11/191). Instead, it is a day where we have been mandated through a commandment to “feast, play, dance, have sex, sing, pray, laugh, tell stories, read, paint, walk, and watch creation in its fullness.” This came together for me where he writes that the sabbath is the day we should look forward to all week and then remember for the week after (Allender 2009, 4/191).

So I began to attend to my sabbath time with a question Allender proposed: “What is it that you [God] see in me that brings you delight?” I knew that if I could answer this question I would also know what brings delight to my soul and to that of my family. So, in prayer and meditation I held up this question, and both obvious and strange awarenesses of my joy and delight began to surface. God delights in seeing me create, connect, express and play. A list began to take shape of the many activities that bring about this delight: knitting, cooking and sharing a meal, intimate times with David, laughing times with Yohanna (non-program, non-screen), meditating, skiing, running, hiking, dancing, escaping to downtown Toronto (getting out of the parish), theater and ballet, dressing up and wearing stilettos and pearls (and not caring what the parishioners think!)

With a structured timeframe in place, I began to fill it in with the items on my list: the activities of delight. The first activity I began to work on was preparing and sharing a meal with friends. As a family we decided to have a formal Sunday meal in the dining room once a month where each of us invited one friend and their family. This was challenging at first, because I had to

honestly admit that I did not have many friends. I have well over a thousand close pastoral and professional relationships but very few friends. And if this were to be a true sabbath, it could not be work. There was a moment when I realized my guest list included people who I felt I needed to connect with for the sake of the parish. Our sabbath meal was not supposed to be an opportunity to do parish welcome ministry or donor prospecting. But I also recognized that to cross off the whole parish and colleague list would leave me with an empty table. I settled into a slightly awkward realization that some parishioners and clergy friends would be invited to the table, but only if it could still feel like play and if I sensed they were emotionally capable of managing the boundaries.

Allender suggests that the guests be made aware that they are participating in sabbath and not “merely in a gathering with good food and friends” (Allender 2009, 78/191). I do sometimes make this explicit in the invitation, so it is clear to our guests that this is a sabbath, where we are open to the joy and wonder of God in and through each other.

Another planned sabbath event was to go downtown to visit old acquaintances or take in a museum or attend a sports event or simply roam around somewhere interesting and just get lost in the anonymity and buzz of a big city. So, every second month, we began to check out upcoming events and work around the schedules of busy friends so that we could escape the loving gaze of the parish. Immediately, we sensed the freedom and joy this activity brought to our lives.

We had always commitment to some form of physical activity, but the sabbath practice meant we put some structure and regularity into it. During the winter we skied or skated at least once a week. For the rest of the year we biked, hiked or swam as weather permitted. Every weekend, we made sure there was some activity the whole family enjoyed and could participate in. As Allender says, “one must stand before creation in awe and with gratitude if one is to see, taste, smell, hear, and touch God” (Allender 2009, 39/191).

I Am Woman, Hear Me Chant!

I was in a good place, my spiritual life was deepening and growing and I could feel an ever increasing sense of God’s closeness. But there was one big problem. Very little of this spiritual awakening was making its way from personal life into my professional, ministerial life. On the home front I was more aware of God’s presence and peace. This gave me strength and calm. Not that everything was perfectly smooth sailing. In fact there were many stressors and challenges, but God was present and at the helm.

Although David and I had now turned inward to form a family of nurture and care for Yohanna, our focus was on her and not on each other. We were beginning to grow apart and lose sight of each other. This came to a particular crisis point, prompted by an unsettling medical report for David.

My new-found spiritual clarity and discernment was like ballast through this storm. No matter how challenging the situation, I knew that if I trusted God to guide me it would work out. Consequently, we learned that we had to reorient our

focus from just Yohanna to include each other if we were going to be faithful to our marriage vows and create a truly loving family. David and I discovered that the gift of love that God had given us was steadfast and strong and overcame the pain of alienation we had experienced.

So even though there was some turbulence in my personal life, God was close and spiritual discernment was integral. Not so for ministry at the parish. I continued to rely on my rational competencies and felt the strain of pushing my will against the force of the divine cosmos.

Trinity, the parish I now served in, is a large parish in the diocese—in the country, for that matter. It has been described as a regional church and, according to the size typology developed by Arlin Rothauge in *Sizing Up a Congregation for New Member Ministry*, it is a program size. This size church requires that clergy lead, delegate and manage. The prevailing North American model for Anglican parish leadership, however, is for a smaller church, categorized as pastoral size. The smaller church requires more hands-on, direct involvement in pastoral care ministry from the priest.

Trinity had been in significant transition before I arrived and was in need of both leadership that galvanized a way forward and also cared for the wounds of grief and loss it was struggling with. I began to face a challenge in that the more I focused on the pastoral care concerns, the faster it began to shrink from a program size to a pastoral size church. The parish needed care, but I couldn't afford to give it and still manage and equip it for growth.

Layered on top of that is the fact that I am a women and one of the first in Canada to be appointed to a parish of this size and complexity. When I first sensed a call to ministry, women had only been permitted to preach and celebrate at the altar for less than a decade. In a relatively short period of time, society has made significant advances in addressing obvious sexual discrimination. But the deeper, less obvious systemic challenges continue to thrive.

It didn't help that I followed a popular, successful male priest who built the new church and was then elected bishop. He was the very model of the charismatic male leader: attractional, tall, strong and clear. The boots he left behind were large, but I felt, perhaps naively, that I could adequately fill them.

Sheryl Sandberg in her book *Lean In: Women, and the Will to Lead*, writes about research that shows that when men succeed they are admired but that this is not the case when women succeed (Heilman 2007, 81-92). Sandberg says, "When a man is successful, he is liked by both men and women. When a woman is successful, people of both genders like her less" (Sandberg 2013, 588/3870). She goes on to say that, "Aggressive and hard-charging women violate unwritten rules about acceptable social conduct. Men are continually applauded for being ambitious and powerful and successful, but women who display these same traits often pay a social penalty. Female accomplishments come at a cost" (Sandberg 2013, 246/3870).

This was definitely my reality in the parish. The more I stepped into my leadership, the more derision and dissension I felt from the very people I needed

to be in partnership with. Both men and women recoiled from me when I was strong, clear and direct, but the women were by far the most disruptive. Sandberg quoting Madeleine Albright said “There’s a special place in hell for women who do not help other women” (Sandberg 2013, 2438/3870), and there were many moments when I took on this mantle of victimhood and imagined the destiny of my detractors.

There was a strange cacophony of voices all advising me on how to be a better leader. Men with executive backgrounds vehemently pushed me back into the ring, shouting: “Take control!” But as soon as I did, they about-faced and criticized me for not being more caring for people. The women simply sharpened their teeth and noisily condemned me, readying themselves for the kill.

I had brought my family to this place and there was no turning back, so, with the strength of the mighty warrior, I once again stepped into the breach. This time however, I didn’t fight with the sword. Instead, I took only a suit of armour, and simply walked into battle to weather the assault. I knew I didn’t have to win ground. I just had to survive the battle. But once again God was my cause and not my consolation. There was no vulnerable divine reliance here, just sheer personal fortitude and willpower. At least that is what I thought. As it says in Deuteronomy, “When you go out to war against your enemies, and see horses and chariots, an army larger than your own, you shall not be afraid of them; for the Lord your God is with you” (Deut 20:1).

To make matters worse, I was bleeding—literally. A well kept secret for many women is that middle age brings with it excessive bleeding from uterine fibroid tumours. Yet another indignity for a woman in leadership! Between the anxiety of containing the blood, worrying if it was malignant, and struggling with anemia, I was exhausted and frightened.

Finally, after countless medical appointments, I fought with the doctors to resolve the situation and have the necessary surgery. That surgery would knock me out of action for a couple of months. I found myself going from an almost manic pace to a complete halt. For the first time in 27 years, I was not in the parish for one of the busiest seasons of the year, Christmas. For the first time in 40 years, I did not have the responsibility of leadership. For the first time in my life, I had permission to stop, rest and heal in peace and quiet. I welcomed the privilege to be still and found many hours of silence and solitude where I slept, prayed and played.

This healing period gave me some space to reflect on one of Barton's practices, to consider the question that God asked of Elijah: "What are you doing here?" (1 Kings 19:13), (Barton 2010, 107 and 113). I pondered that question a lot. Through it, I felt drawn to the biblical figure of the woman with a haemorrhage. Both of us hid our affliction so we could continue to function in a male world. Both of us lived with secrecy and denial so as not to distress the normal functioning of life around us. We both "endured much...but...grew worse" (Mark 5:26) as we reached out in desperation to those who were supposed

to help us. But let's face it, how do you hide something as obvious as blood? How do you stay strong when your very life is flowing from you? How do you find support in community when the stigma of the affliction separates clean from unclean, able from disabled, man from woman?

Jesus did not chastise the woman for her bold move—her uninvited touch—but helped her claim her strength and her confidence. She needed help and she got it, and that did not need to be a secret or a shame. “Daughter, your faith has made you well; go in peace, and be healed of your disease” (Mark 5:34).

“What am I doing here? What am I doing in this parish?” I knew I needed to find the answer to those questions, and my illness was giving me the space and time to make that discernment.

“What would you do if you weren't afraid?” is the question Sandberg asks, and which I pondered frequently. What would I do if I weren't afraid, and what was it I was so afraid of?

As I said, in my home and personal life I had a strong sense of God's presence and there was little that I feared, but in my parish ministry there were many things I feared. I feared I was responsible for declining church attendance. I feared that what I believed in was irrelevant and meaningless to society. I feared I did not have adequate resources for the challenges the church faces today. I feared I would fail as a woman. And, if I was totally honest, I feared I was I unlikable. Otherwise, why would so many be standing in judgment of me?

It is interesting that the scriptures show that whenever a person encounters an angel or the voice of the Lord, the first thing that is said to them is: “Do not be afraid” (Gen 15:1, 2 Kings 1:15, Matthew 1:20, Matthew 28:5, Luke 1:13, Luke 2: 10, Act 18:9). We are filled with so many fears that I believe consciously and unconsciously undermine our actions. The opposite of love is not hate but fear. As 1 John 4:18 says: “There is no fear in love, but perfect love casts out fear.” Fear is a helpful emotion when there is a real threat and we need to protect ourselves. But fear is very much a destructive emotion because it is the basis of our prejudice, greed, stress and paranoia. As Sandberg says, “Everyone needs to get more comfortable with female leaders, including female leaders themselves” (Sandberg 2011, 761/3870).

So what was keeping me from being more confident as a leader? It was me. And ironically it was my fear and overzealous confidence in my own strength and abilities. Once again I was faced with the realization that if I was to continue at Trinity, I knew I needed to find my source and strength from God, not from the admiration of those around me, nor from my own sparkling abilities. I was at Trinity to bring glory to God and to find pleasure in God’s presence. It was as simple as that. As soon as I started to live out of this spiritual perspective I received a call to let my name stand for episcopal election. And then a few years later, again I was strongly persuaded by my colleagues and a sense of God’s gentle confirmation to enter the episcopal nomination process.

Entering an episcopal election process requires steely mettle and a significant dose of hubris because candidates are subjected to a public process akin to a civic election. Interviews are arranged, speeches videotaped, essays written, select questions answered, pictures taken, and both church and secular media offer commentary. Determined not to exclude God in this process this time, I began to approach this process in prayer. I prayed for hours both in silence and with words; I consulted countless friends, colleagues and bishops for their opinion and I carefully listened for guidance from the Spirit.

The result was strange. For the first election, I absolutely knew I had to go through with this and let my name stand, but with equal conviction, I absolutely knew I was not going to be elected. Knowingly subjecting oneself to this kind of humiliation, public scrutiny and rejection seemed unthinkable. But there it was, God's direction. For the second election I received a clear message from God, "Calm down! And you will be taken care of." Both times I was being asked to relinquish control and enjoy, as much as you can, the journey.

For the first election, I set up a blog and began to write. I wrote about the role of the Anglican Church in the 21st century. I wrote about stewardship and the theology of baptism and outreach. I finally came out and clearly expressed my opinion about same-sex marriage and open table (not stipulating in the invitation to communion that "all baptized Christians" are welcome, thus opening the possibility that an unbaptized person will come forward to receive the sacrament). As hundreds and hundreds of words tumbled out, I began to feel such wonderful

release. I was claiming my spiritual identify with confidence and clearly saying where I stood on controversial topics that were causing such discord in our church.

It is safe to say, that as I wrote, I *became*.

I grew with the refining of every idea and I slowly realized why I had been called to go through this process. It was not to win an election. It was to discover something about myself that I and the church might not otherwise have come to know. God was nudging me to come out from behind the curtain and to stand on centre stage, speak and lead. But this time it was not from a place of power or might but from a place rooted and grounded in a relationship with God.

Although I had been a warrior and fighter for the institution, it was always as a combatant for someone else's battles. If synod needed a policy for a new and possibly controversial benefits plan, I nurtured it through a complicated consultative process and made it happen. If the whole church needed a systemic change in order to safeguard children and vulnerable adults—and to limit legal liability—I was there at the ready to shepherd in a comprehensive policy, create a training program, then oversee its enforcement. If complaints surfaced in a parish, but it wasn't clear who was at fault, I made a pathway forward that brought about fairness and resolution. By the time I was in my own parish, I had no idea what I personally believed or stood for. I knew what it meant to be faithful to the institution but I was at sea when I considered what it meant for me to be personally faithful to God.

I will admit, however, that my faithfulness to the institution did not always mean that I was faithful and respectful to all. I often had strong, critical opinions about their level of competence, which I freely shared—behind their backs, of course. As I have drawn closer to God, I have begun to see how my strong criticisms came from my feelings of being threatened, from fear. I assumed there was only one way to solve a problem and that was my way. This allowed me to see myself as superior, more knowledgeable. In my prayers I could see Jesus writing in the sand, as he did before the Pharisees ready to condemn the adulteress, and then looking up at me. His eyes are filled with such deep and profound love, love that overwhelms me and melts my strong defences. I find myself standing before the almighty power and love of God with only the offending rock in my hand and I am ashamed.

But the love that seared my soul is the same love that called me forward. I was being invited to leave my dark hiding places and, instead, step out into the open with my thoughts, opinions and trust. It is when we bring things to the light that we see them for what they truly are, healthy and unhealthy alike.

So I wrote. And as I wrote, I began to believe. By forming the words and creating the sentences, ideas and images began to emerge and take shape. My faith in God's leadership was being born into the light of day.

The second election was no different. In the process that preceded the election I felt called, affirmed and faithful. The results, however, were unequivocally clarifying. The church community did not desire me in that role.

So elections came and went with predictable results. Throughout it all I was inexplicably filled with joy. God was asking me to allow my parish calling to embark on a total, not partial, spiritual renewal. I had to trust every aspect of my life to God's providence and love, and that included the parish.

True spiritual transformation is a challenging concept in my Anglican tradition. First of all, the concept of "conversion" or "being saved" has no intellectual traction for most classical Anglican spiritual sensibilities. Our denominational demographic tends to embrace the well educated, relatively affluent, who are highly engaged in the ruling structures of our society. Their question would be: "From what and for what am I being saved?" Coupled with a cultural predisposition against public displays of emotion, the individual Anglican is discouraged from making the deeper spiritual journey required for transformation.

Lex orandi, lex credendi (the law of praying is the law of believing), best describes the faith formation process for Anglicans. It is through worship that we are formed. This, along with an emphasis on infant baptism, encourages an insider faith development associated with the piety of corporate worship and little in the way of adult transformational resources. This is an obvious deficit within my denomination. I did not have an adequate or appropriate vehicle to help respond to and nurture the spiritual awakening or desire to go deeper I was feeling drawn to.

A concept that does make sense within Anglican culture is for individual believers to own their faith. This means that they have gone through a maturing

process whereby they have questioned their historic salvation (faith) and now claim it for themselves. But as a steeped Anglican from birth, I was left wondering if I really did own my own faith.

Our family was the Canadian '60s demographic norm of two parents of mixed British/European background: a working father and stay-at-home mother, three children, living in the suburbs. And, like most families at the time, we attended church.

Sunday worship was one of those things we underwent, like taking cod liver oil and regular lice checks. We were told it was good for us, but it made little sense to our childish minds. Sunday school classes were crammed packed with kids from the post-war baby boom. My early spiritually formative years were nurtured in cinder-block basements, huddled behind half-walled dividers fighting against the ear-piercing din of more than 200 children expressing their joy of being released from the restrictions of Sunday worship upstairs.

The only memories I have from this tender formative period was of making a Palestinian soap house—which seemed to take the whole year and involved working with sharp implements—and the pleasant, warm smile of one of the teachers. All the other teachers seemed completely stressed—likely because of the teaching environment, now that I think about it.

God was ever present in the background, neatly partitioned from the rest of life. Everyone was far too busy forging their way in the glittering new economy of post-war growth to be weighed down by spiritual concerns. If anything, it was

the time of the prosperity gospel, even though we didn't know to call it that then. We had won the war and were prospering from its many technological advances which fostered a growing and affluent middle class. God was blessing us, indeed.

The place where the church found expression outside its doors was when we engaged in outreach activities to help the needy and poor and those left behind by this booming economy. Locally, nationally and internationally we built structure and system to help "the poor." We studiously knelt beside our beds to say our night prayers that always included, "Now I lay thee..." and a litany of the familial list. But rarely was God referred to in daily living and struggles.

I often sensed something spiritual, but I learned that talk about God was personal, something better kept to yourself. We were expected to be devout churchgoers, explicitly church-doers, but we were not supposed to be Christ-lovers. That would be taking it all too seriously, and I might be considered a fanatic. This was a category reserved for Evangelical and born-again Christians whose styles of ministry were seriously frowned upon.

So, with this upbringing and in this context, I now found myself facing another challenge. How was I to embrace a living faith and establish a relationship with God that would go deeper and be more pervasive than what my historical and familial roots and my current parish culture was used to or might allow? But, also, how could I continue in my old ways, now that I had tasted this finer wine? I had experienced the rest that Augustine refers to when he says: "You

have made us for yourself, O Lord, and our heart is restless until it rests in you,” (Augustine Confessions [401] 2011, 1:1) and I had no desire to turn back.

It's God or Nothing

Tentatively I began to pray about it and slowly and surely, the answer emerged: “Find some friends.”

Early in my ministry at Trinity, I had developed a spiritual leaders program. This was in response to a perception I had that the parish's lay leaders were like me, capable doers but not confident in their faith. I felt that I was keeping the best of the church away from them by focusing on church activities rather than a personal relationship with God.

Good liturgy fosters a sense of awe, beauty and holiness, tolerance and open-mindedness, but it does not provide a process for overt spiritual maturation. Anglicans may be left blissfully sated by their rich liturgical experience, but they often feel wholly incompetent in their spiritual lives. We have some of the most educated and competent business leaders in our parish, who are capable of organizing complex and effective outreach ministries like soup kitchens and seniors care, but who, when asked to say grace or open a meeting with a prayer, feel anxious and uncertain.

Along with this, participation in small-group ministry is not a common expectation for parishioners, so individuals have few places to reflect on their experience of the liturgy and the spiritual insights of their private devotions—if indeed they have any.

Spiritual formation requires seeing the gap between a present state of being and a vision of God's call, then intentionally taking on disciplined practices in order to bridge that gap and forge a deeper relationship with God. It takes more than good liturgy to make this possible. Many people have spiritual experiences of the divine within the Anglican worship services, but those experiences need to be given a forum to be reflected on and mentored into maturity. Suitable spiritual practices must be discerned and offered, so that the diversity found within the Anglican Church may find its unity, not of purpose or method or belief, but in the divine call of God.

In an effort to respond to these spiritual formation needs within the denomination, I developed a program in my Aurora parish called *Lift High the Cross: empowering spiritual leaders*. The irony of my blindness leading their blindness was not lost on me. But I knew that by creating this program I would connect with laypeople who were open to God's call and it would force me to go deeper. In other words, I was responding to the discernment of my prayers to find some friends for the journey (see Chapter 3: Closing the Sanctification Gap in Anglican Formation, The Program 127).

I realized my own spiritual development was in need of care and, in its current condition, it would likely limit the growth and maturity of the lay leaders. I felt the need to go back to school. So I made a call to a seminary professor to ask about suitable academic programs. She was insightful and asked if my desire to take a course was for intellectual stimulation, to provide academic information or

to respond to a deeper spiritual calling. As I reflected on this question, I began to realize how spiritually and intellectually hungry I was and how profound my yearning was for union with God. What would responding to a deeper spiritual calling look like? With that in my heart, I asked God for direction and help and soon found myself entering the doctorate in ministry program for spiritual formation at Tyndale College Seminary.

At a session with my spiritual director, I blurted out that I was enrolling in this DMin to save my life. At first, my spiritual director, thought this statement was absurd, since the DMin, with its requisite demands and deadlines, would add more strain, pressure and stress that would hardly enhance the quality of my life. I sensed though that something big needed to happen in order for me to make the essential changes that were going to bring about the new life I knew God was calling me into. One way or another, the structure of the program was going to create a crisis of time that couldn't be addressed with a little tinkering of the day-timer. Ultimately, it would crack open more space for God.

My spiritual director asked two important questions: "If the DMin is going to save your life, which life is it saving? Little Dawn, Executive Dawn or Successful Dawn?" And "which one of those lives has to die for you to be saved?"

His questions made clear that if I was truly going to go forward with this academic program, I was faced with some sacrifices. I could no longer be the over-functioning perfectionist because there wasn't going to be enough time. He

also pointed out that this was likely going to require a dismantling of my persona as a competent professional with respected expertise. Instead I was acknowledging I was limited, vulnerable and powerless, in need of God's healing, love and protection. In other words, I had to risk allowing God to be present and obvious in all parts of my life.

Little Dawn was going to have to emerge and take center stage. It was in her vulnerability and weakness that God promised there would strength. Executive and Successful Dawns were going to have to step aside from their former brilliance in order to allow space for God and for the person God was calling forward.

And so I found myself signed up for Tyndale University College & Seminary, and their newly minted Spiritual Formation DMin program. The focus of this program was not only for academic study but for personal spiritual growth and practice. Finally, I thought, I would be required to stop my noisy life and attend to God who was calling me closer.

One of the first delights I encountered in the program was a sense of almost total anonymity. I can't adequately express the utter joy I felt when I discovered no one in my 12-person cohort had any prior experience with me, no preconceived impressions, and no extraordinary expectations. As the former Director of Ministry Resources of the diocese and now serving in a public role in a relatively small town, there were few places for me to hide. But in this new group I could be free to be me, free to grow into whatever God was forming.

Almost immediately a few of us gravitated towards each other and began to informally meet. We laughed and we cried as we grieved and celebrated the new things God was bringing into the light of our lives. We ranged from charismatic to Christian Reformed, and all but me were scripturally competent and conservative, especially around the issues of human sexuality. One of the first challenges the group offered me was to consider my need to forgive the many hurts that I was harbouring from my days at the diocese. No longer could I hide behind my expertise, competence or status, because I was with equals, sojourners on this magnificent journey. It was with this group that I truly began to experience the love and presence of God in and through their love and presence. Interestingly, the hot-button issue of same-sex relationships rarely came up. Even when it did, it did not divide us because of the huge sense of respect we held for each other. Members of my DMin cohort had become my praxis-based, small-group and consequently my spiritual life began to flourish.

For the first time in my life I was beginning to grasp the full meaning of Jesus' summary of the law: "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind." This is the greatest and first commandment. And a second is like it: "You shall love your neighbour as yourself" (Matt 22:37-39). God is love, and out of that love God brought about creation. We cannot know God if we are not open to love, a love that overcomes all division, all pain, all sense of accomplishment, and, ultimately, all aspects of

the ego. “Love so amazing, so divine, demands my soul, my life, my all” (Watts [1707] 1998).

As I have grown closer to this love I have become more and more committed to sharing this experience with others in the church, particularly the laypeople I serve. In so many ways I believe we have burdened them with the heavy work of maintaining an institutional structure but we haven’t always been as attentive to their spiritual growth. I hear the call of my ordination more profoundly than I ever have, to, “Feed my sheep” (John 21:17).

A concern I had at first was that as I drew closer to God I would somehow distance myself from my parishioners and other clergy who might be in a very different place on their spiritual journey. The delightful surprise has been the receptivity of parishioners to “go deeper”. In fact, at our last annual meeting a motion was initiated by the laypeople to continue in the direction of further spiritual growth. Last year, our parish was profiled in a local newspaper which gave me the opportunity to say that our parish motto is *Connecting spiritual journeys...* and that we supported the growth of those journeys. Interestingly, since then, we have received many new parishioners who have indicated on our newcomer card that they wished to spiritually grow. As Archbishop Hing of Southeast Asia and contributor to the 2016 Lambeth Report, *Intentional Discipleship and Disciple-Making* says, “A narrow, pietistic attachment to Jesus, whether individualistic or ecclesial, was never what God intended and will not serve us well today. ... Following Jesus will and must change every aspect of our

being” (Kafwanka and Oxbrow 2016, xii). I believe Christ is calling us into deeper transformation and the church must not distract or waylay this journey but instead act as a sojourner and companion. Of course, if we, as leaders, are to point the way, we must first have made that journey ourselves. We cannot take people where we have not gone. Our church leaders must be willing to reorient or even relinquish their priorities in order to draw closer into the mystery of God who will ask for everything and then give back more than we can imagine (Ephesians 3:20).

And so the journey continues with constant faltering and renewals. The parish has served as a significant instrument of God’s grace as I have been challenged to mature and grow because of the many relationships that have continued to shape me. The parishioners are constantly teaching me that it truly is all about relationship.

God reaches out in love and invites us into a relationship. It is through this relationship of love that we experience the fullness of who we are called to be. And then, out of the experience of love from this relationship we are instinctively compelled to look outward to love God, ourselves and our neighbours. When we lack trust, rely on our own efforts, get distracted or desire immediate satisfaction, the love shrivels. But God, respecting our choices remains vigilant and persistently offers the invitation to once again renew relationship. We hear the faint whispers of this call in the sacred stories of our tradition, the beauty of creation, the mystery of ritual and sacrament, the encounter with another person,

and through the endless promises of renewal and hope that surround us. A response to the invitation begins with surrender; a place of vulnerability, trust and love. It begins with a relationship. Of course the greatest delight is to discover that it is in this place of holy depletion that true fulfilment, competency and completion is known in the strength of sacred intimacy.

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CHAPTER 3:
CLOSING THE SANCTIFICATION GAP
IN ANGLICAN FORMATION:
A SPIRITUAL FORMATION MODEL

“Can you please open with prayer, Reverend?”

As an Anglican parish priest, this is a persistent request. I am constantly being asked by laypeople to do the “God” thing. This time, as I scurry to the front of the room, I note that I am making my way past three senior managers, a CEO, an elected government official, two school principals, four accountants, a host of long-time serving lay leaders and a lavishly decorated pink cake. As I take a breath to invoke the obligatory “Let us pray...”, I ponder why am I doing this when there are so many capable laypeople present? Significant leaders in every other aspect of their lives, they are reluctant to show spiritual leadership.

Perhaps over the years clergy simply become used to this deference of being ordained. Maybe it is even seen as a sign of respect for our “set-apart” status. I had just come back to parish ministry in the Anglican Church after a 10-year stint in church administration as a human resources professional (see Chapter 2: Modern Girl Trying to Find the Holy, 16-27). I was seeing this confidence gap in lay leadership with fresh eyes and I was appalled. What did we—the church—do to render these otherwise competent leaders so spiritually dependent and uncertain? What was so lacking in their formation that the saying of a simple prayer in front of trusting sisters and brothers in Christ could be so intimidating?

The Anglican Church typically relies on its liturgy to form people spiritually. It is through participating in the ritual of communal Word and Sacrament that our people grow in their awareness and knowledge of God. Along with this, laity are encouraged to encounter God through the practice of personal devotions and by showing their faith through doing good deeds and charity. What they are not given is the opportunity to develop and grow in their relationship with Jesus by openly reflecting on their experience—something that might be done, for instance, in the context of a smaller group. The spiritual life of our adult churchgoers, if it is developed at all, is assumed to be private and personal and, therefore, inaccessible for discussion and public sharing. As a result, laypeople are rendered ill-equipped to offer their faith and proclaim the Good News that has formed and shaped their lives.

Polls and studies consistently show that most North Americans believe in God (Gallup 2017; Jedwab 2012), have had an experience of God and pray to God (Pew Research Center 2015), however they define God. It strikes me that somehow, with the Canadian Anglican emphasis on liturgy and public service, we have relegated a meaningful relationship with Jesus—one that can be openly spoken about and confidently shared with others—to the spiritual elite: the clergy. In so doing, we have denied our people the kernel of the faith: that is, a relationship with the One who transforms lives by bringing meaning and purpose to every day living.

It is something like the situation of the elder brother in the story of prodigal son (Luke 15:11-32). In this parable, Jesus tells of a son who recklessly spends his father's inheritance and lives a hedonistic life. On his humble and contrite return, the father forgives him and welcomes him back into the family with a feast. Through a process of self-discovery, albeit reckless and painful, the younger son is now finally able to enter into an intimate relationship with his father. Meanwhile, the dutiful and obedient older brother has served his father but he has never come to appreciate his father's abundant and lavish love. Anglicans, like the faithful elder son, have worked hard for God by serving the needs of the world. But they have not been encouraged to engage in a deeper more intimate relationship and experience first hand God's generosity and joy.

In my experience, nowhere in their spiritual formation have the Canadian Anglican lay leaders been offered a chance to: 1. develop skills for prayer, engagement with scripture and discipleship; 2. reflect on the experience of God's activity in their lives through liturgy; 3. build a relationship of trust, support and accountability with other Christians that provides the framework for open self-disclosure and discovery; 4. given the opportunity to develop a confident voice, in a safe and trusting environment, to express the activity of God in their lives; and 5. provided a chance to share their experience of God with others.

From my experience in the local church, clergy and laypeople alike lack this component in their spiritual formation, and therefore have not been accorded the opportunity to move from obligatory "doing" to "being" in a personal

relationship of love. Instead, I believe, we replace a living faith with church activities, resulting in both clergy and laity becoming worker bees for the Lord. In this doing role, my experience is that we all become accomplished in the task of preserving and protecting the church structures that facilitate the work of God. We have inadvertently stripped our people of the most precious and significantly relevant aspect of their spiritual lives—a meaningful relationship with Jesus and/or the Holy Spirit—leaving them uncertain of their place as children of God, and lacking in confidence as spiritual leaders, ill-equipped to proclaim the Good News to the world.

What is needed is an opportunity for formation that goes beyond liturgy and fosters a living and mature relationship with the God of love, mercy and forgiveness. We need to help laypeople reflect on their encounter with Jesus, the Christ who would reorient their functional doing into loving, relational responsiveness, transforming them from Marthas into Marys (Standish 2005, 11-18).

Such an opportunity would require a discipleship process in the areas of prayer, engaging with scripture, spiritual discernment, mission, and other fundamental activities of becoming a follower of Christ. This would then spiritually ground people so that they do not feel anxious about sharing their faith. The only way this can happen is if the leaders have a place where they can speak about their spiritual experience and reflect on it in the company of those they trust. A smaller community would allow for participating in a reflective process

that accords them the opportunity to acquire and practise new skills and speak openly about their relationship with Jesus and the experience of the Holy Spirit actively participating in their lives.

Spiritual Formation

We were not meant to only know about or serve God. We were meant to be in a relationship with God and to grow into Christ's likeness (Rom 12:2; Phil 3:21). Spiritual formation is a process of spiritual growth that comes about through deliberately taking on practices and disciplines that align one's life with God's love, power and mission through the example of and relationship with Jesus Christ.

The term "spiritual formation" is relatively recent. Originally, it applied to the training and development of ordained clergy or those preparing for the religious (monastic) life. The primary focus of this kind of spiritual formation was the training of Roman Catholic novitiates for life as a celibate in community, and involved studying scripture and the teachings of the church, and taking on practices that would help mature the individual's relationship with God.

In the 1960s and '70s with the Second Vatican Council and the opening of Roman Catholic seminaries to laypeople who did not intend to be ordained, spiritual formation was more readily available to a wider audience. Coupled with this, advancements made in modern scientific study, especially psychology, pedagogy and neuroscience, and the awakening of the need for spirituality to be a comprehensive lived practice, have brought about an openness in society for

resources to facilitate emotional improvement and health. This desire for self-actualization and the opening of seminaries brought the contemporary understanding of spiritual formation into being (Mulholland 1993, 12-14).

One of the early attempts to define spiritual formation for common use can be found in *Caring Mind, Caring Spirit: Psychiatric Dimensions of Spiritual Direction* by Gerald May in 1982. A practicing psychiatrist, May brought together spiritual, medical and scientific advancements made in the field of psychology and psychiatry. His definition of spiritual formation was: “all attempts, means, instruction, and disciplines intended towards deepening of faith and furtherance of spiritual growth” (May 1982, 6).

So, the contemporary view of spiritual formation involves the outward effort of taking on behaviours that foster inner growth and development. It rests on the assumption that certain practices or behaviours—such as prayer, engaging in scripture, fasting, participating in worship, keeping Sabbath, spiritual direction—facilitate a connection with the Divine and foster personal growth and well-being.

Kenneth Boa (2001), in *Conformed to His Image: Biblical and Practical Approaches to Spiritual Formation*, is one of the more recent writers to provide a specific Christian emphasis to the understanding of spiritual formation. He defines it as a “Christ-centered orientation to every component of life through the mediating power of the indwelling Holy Spirit” (Boa, 2001, 19). Dallas Willard, who has worked extensively in this area, expanded Boa’s definition by saying that

spiritual formation is “a Spirit-driven process of forming the inner world of the human self in such a way that it becomes like the inner being of Christ” (Willard, 2002, 22). The overt Christological emphasis of these definitions gave spiritual formation a credibility within the evangelical tradition that helped move it beyond a largely Roman Catholic interest.

One of the most comprehensive definitions of spiritual formation comes from Robert Mulholland (1993) in his book *Invitation to a Journey: A Road Map for Spiritual Formation*. In it, he says that spiritual formation “is a process of being conformed to the image of Christ for the sake of others” (Mulholland, 1993, 12). This definition provides key elements of the spiritual formation model: that spiritual formation is a process of ongoing growth, that it requires alignment of the human will to Christ’s will and finally that the efforts of being formed are ultimately oriented toward the betterment of others and the world, i.e., that it is not merely an exercise in self-actualization.

In his book, Mulholland uses the concept of journey as a central metaphor to help express how spiritual formation is a process of emotional and spiritual progressive development that leads to spiritual maturation. Spirituality that understands “the acquisition of information and techniques that enable us to gain possession of [a] desired state” is static (Mulholland 1993, 12). Formation, therefore, is more than Christian education, catechetical recitation, credal assent, correct thinking or prescribed moral behaviours. The journey image shifts the effort from knowledge acquisition to ongoing growth, progression and

development. It facilitates an existential state of relationship with God. In other words, spiritual formation is not a quick fix, but a life-long activity and process that involves finding meaning and purpose in the whole of life's experiences in relation to God. As Saint Paul says: "We must no longer be children...but we must grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ" (Ephesians 4:13-15).

Like Boa, Mulholland says the goal of spiritual maturation is to be engaged in efforts that will allow one to be "conformed to the image of Christ," as Paul puts it in Romans (Romans 8:29). "Being conformed" means that the locus of control for growth does not come from within the person but from outside the person, that is, from God. Spiritual formation cannot be accomplished by relying on our own strength or giftedness. In fact, one of the fundamental and ongoing steps along the journey is making the decision to relinquish control. This, in turn, allows God not just to change lives but transform them. Terry Wardle, in *The Transforming Path: A Christ-Centered Approach to Spiritual Formation*, says that when we rely on our own effort it "is like trying to cross the ocean in a sailboat by blowing on the sails" (Wardle 2003, 21). Surrender to God's will and guidance in our lives is a key to beginning the journey of being spiritually formed.

We see this fundamental step of the formation process through the life of Jesus and his temptation in the wilderness. In the early days of Jesus' ministry he went to the wilderness where he encountered Satan. There he was tempted to achieve material success and worldly acclaim. His response was: "One does not

live by bread alone... ” and “Worship the Lord...and serve only him” (Matthew 4:4, 8). Both comments reveal a detachment from physical and worldly need and, instead, a reliance on God. One way or another, spiritual formation requires the intentional act of abandoning self-interests, abilities and attachments to a God who brings about growth and change.

The concept of conformity to the image of Christ is rooted in the New Testament, particularly Paul’s letters, where he encourages his readers to “grow in the likeness of Christ” (2 Corinthians 3:18; Colossians 3:9-10; Ephesians 1:3-6). This is an intentional process of taking on the characteristics, behaviours and thinking of Jesus so as to pattern choices and the whole of the individual’s life after Jesus’ actions and disposition. The promise is that this intentional effort will be guided and empowered by the work of the Holy Spirit. The question in the mind of the person undergoing spiritual formation is not “What would Jesus do?” but “Who would Jesus be?” in any given situation. This shifts the focus from simply being a prescriptive, moral adherence to a deeper discernment of will and intent. As Mulholland says, conformity to the image and likeness of Christ means a “deepening responsiveness to God’s control of our life and being...characterized by love and forgiveness...healing and liberating” (Mulholland 1993, 12, 33).

The process of an individual’s transformation into the likeness of God is known as *theosis*. The doctrine’s earliest expression comes from the patristic period. The first reference, as far as we know, is from Irenaus, the second century

bishop of Lyons, who said that Christ became what we are, so that God “might bring us to be even what He is Himself” (Irenaeus [182-188] 1885, ANF01, *Against Heresies*, Book 5, Preface). The concept, under that heading, is far more prevalent in the Eastern Orthodox church, and describes the transformation of the individual, as far as is possible, into the likeness of God or union with God.

Finally, spiritual formation is not just something that is taken on to make individuals feel good about themselves. It is for the sake of others—the world. In fact, acquiring spiritual maturity may involve significant effort, sacrifice and pain. Thomas R. Kelly, in *A Testament of Devotion*, expresses this quite forcefully, when he says: “[God] plucks the world out of our [hands], loosening the chains of attachment. And...hurls the world into our hearts, where we and [God] together carry it in infinitely tender love” (Kelly, [1941] 1992, 20). We are being formed to draw nearer to God and to grow in our love for the things God loves and has created. Ultimately, spiritual formation is about the mature awareness of God in our lives and the confident expression of our gratitude and care for all that we have been given.

Diversity

Despite some overarching structural consistencies in practices, spiritual formation is as diverse as the people who seek it. As Mulholland says: “[W]e are unique persons, and our relationship with God always manifests that individuality, [and so] our process of spiritual formation toward wholeness may be very different from others” (Mulholland 1993, 13). He suggests that the Jungian-

derived Myers-Briggs Type Indicator® be used as a resource. In the MBTI® process, each person is assessed for a particular preference for how they interact with the world and how they make decisions. Mulholland says that these preferences will affect the way individuals interact with God and make choices for their spiritual lives. A better self-understanding in these areas will help deepen the individual's understanding of God.

Terry Wardle addresses the challenge of diversity by exploring the concept of spiritual gifts. Calling on Paul's first letter to the Corinthians, chapter 12, Wardle emphasizes that in order for there to be spiritual maturity, individuals must embrace their gifts, which will vary from one another in the community. "Each individual believer is placed in ministry and equipped for service in his or her unique way" (Wardle 2003, 79). He observes the unfortunate situation common in church culture that encourages passivity for most members, except for the professional few who receive a "higher calling." He uses a well known reference to the church being like a football game where "hundreds of people in the stands desperately needing exercise are watching twenty-two people on the field desperately needing rest" (Wardle 2003, 82). But, as he points out: "[A]ll Christians are commissioned by Christ and equipped to serve the Lord" (Wardle 2003, 82).

Richard Rohr, the Franciscan monk, and Andrea Ebert use a different personality-type grid, the Enneagram® (Rohr 2011b). The Enneagram offers an insight into personality temperament, proposing that individuals fall into one of

nine categories. While some assessments focus on strengths, the Enneagram highlights the dark side—the needs of the individual that might cause them to fall away from efforts to form spiritually.

All of this is to say that a one-size-fits-all program will not effectively address the diverse temperaments and gifts of those seeking a deeper relationship with God.

Classic Spiritual Formation Model

Spiritual formation requires perceiving the gap between the present state of being and a vision of God's call, then intentionally taking on disciplined practices in order to bridge that gap and forge a deeper relationship with God. The first step, therefore, is a conscious awareness of one's present state, a vision of a blessed state in God's presence, and intentionally choosing to take on spiritual practices to align the two (Willard 2006, 68-79).

The requirement for this intentionality was commented on by the second-century Christian writer Tertullian, who famously wrote that “Christians are made Christians, and not born such” (Tertullian [197] 1917, *Apologeticus*, XVIII, 4). Spiritual formation is a response to God's initiative, but it requires a deep commitment to change on the part of the person engaged on the spiritual journey. Along with this, it requires the availability of resources and techniques, community support, the ability and desire to be self-reflective, the opportunity to apply suitable disciplines and practices, the space and time to reflect on the process of growth, supportive peers or a mentor to facilitate speech about the

experience and a willingness to be attentive to context so as to appreciate God's presence in every day living (Howard 2008, 282). Ultimately, it is about developing a relationship and being open to being changed by that relationship.

This process of change and growth has been observed to involve movement through stages. In his letter to the Romans, Paul says formation is initiated by God in the form of a call. Individuals who respond to that call are "justified," then ultimately "glorified" by participating in the union of God (Romans 8:29-30). In his seminal work, *The Origins of the Christian Mystical Tradition*, Andrew Louth identifies Origen (180-250 CE) as the first to write about the stages of faith development as a threefold ascent (Louth 1981, 57-59). Pseudo-Dionysius, the late-fifth century theologian, elaborates on this in his *Celestial Hierarchy* to create what becomes the classic threefold movement of: 1. an awareness of sinfulness and a turning toward God, which he calls purgation; 2. greater awareness of God and an openness to growing in a godly life, called illumination; and 3. union, where the individual soul unites with God's will and purposes (*Pseudo-Dionysius, The Complete Works*, Luibheid, [5th Century] 1987, 165-C). Mulholland calls this the "The Classical Christian Pilgrimage" (Mulholland 1993, 79-101). He adds a stage at the beginning of the process, called Awakening, which he says is the individual's desire to be in a relationship with God in the first place.

Researchers at Willow Creek Community Church, the megachurch founded by Bill Hybels, asked this question in their book *Move: What 1,000*

Churches Reveal about Spiritual Growth. “Are all the things that we do here at Willow that these people so generously support really helping them become fully devoted followers of Christ?” (Hawkins & Parkinson 2011, 15). Their findings were consistent with Wardle’s and Mulholland’s spiritual formation models in that they recognized that the individual’s faith development is a staged continuum, and that spiritual practices foster movement along that continuum.

Hawkins et al. identified four stages that parallel Mulholland’s classic model (See Figure 1, 94). Stage 1 they call “Exploring Christ,” in which people have a basic belief in God but are unsure about Christ and his role in their lives. Stage 2 is called “Growing in Christ,” characterized by the beginning of a personal relationship with Christ. This is consistent with the classical stage of purgation, in which there is an acute awareness of the gap between the individual and the person God is calling them to be. Stage 3, “Close to Christ,” is consistent with the illuminative stage, in which individuals depend on Christ to assist them in life and regularly turn to him for help and guidance. The last stage is called “Christ-Centered.” Here the individual’s whole identity is set within the context of a relationship with Christ. They have fully surrendered to Jesus and have subordinated their will and desires to his.



Figure 1. The stages of the classical spiritual continuum as the soul makes its way from awareness of God to union with God.

It has been noted that movement between each stage is generally characterized by a periodic angst-filled experience of being “abandoned by the Divine” (Underhill [1930] 2002, 121) better known by the name St. John of the Cross gave it as the “dark night of the soul.” As Evelyn Underhill says: “The consciousness which had, in Illumination, sunned itself in the sense of the Divine Presence, now suffers under an equally intense sense of the Divine Absence” (Underhill [1930] 2002, 170). John of the Cross wrote extensively on the occurrence of these distant, lonely and arid experiences as “one of the chief sufferings...” of the process of growing closer to God. He says that within these transition periods “[t]he soul is made conscious of a profound emptiness, and an utter destitution... evils, miserable imperfections and aridities, its faculties devoid of all apprehensions, and the spirit abandoned in darkness” (Faber 1864, 5611/6552).

As difficult as these transition periods are, John saw them as a way to purification, since by them the soul is made ready for the ultimate surrender of the

will and earthly appetites. “This dark night is an inflow of God into the soul, which purges it of its habitual ignorances and imperfections, natural and spiritual, and which the contemplatives call infused contemplation or mystical theology” (Kavanaugh and Rodriguez 1991, 8608/16482). This is a helpful insight to all seekers who pursue the deeper spiritual journey. John’s open revelation of dry periods in the relationship with God, which torment the aspiring soul, normalizes what could be a crippling and destructive barrier for the continuing spiritual journey. He shows that although these periods are spiritually painful, they are necessary for the perfect union with God, and serve as an important element of spiritual maturation.

Richard Rohr, the contemporary Franciscan spiritual writer, claims that this is necessary for the journey because it involves relinquishing the attachments that hold back the spiritual formation process. In *Breathing Under Water* he says:

You will not learn to actively draw upon a Larger Source until your usual resources are depleted and revealed as wanting. In fact, you will not even know there is a Larger Source until your own sources and resources fail you... Until and unless there is a person, situation, event, idea, conflict, or relationship that you cannot ‘manage,’ you will never find the True Manager. So God makes sure that several things will come your way that you cannot manage on your own (Rohr, 2011a, xv, xvii, 117).

The Science

John Westerhoff in his work *Will Our Children Have Faith* (Westerhoff 1976) used the image of a tree to show that faith formation was developmental and grew upon the experience of previous stages. He said that there were four spiritual development stages that tracked the emotional development of the individual: 1. experiential faith; 2. affiliative faith; 3. searching faith; and 4.

owned faith. The American theologian James Fowler, in his ground-breaking work *Stages of Faith: The Psychology of Human Development and the Quest for Meaning* (Fowler [1981] 1989), applied theories of cognitive development to the study of spiritual formation. Through observation, Fowler argued that there are six stages of faith development that begin at the time of birth and progress through to adulthood. According to Fowler, within the first two years of life, a child develops a sense of security and attachment from the family that then translates into an understanding of the Divine. The child continues to grow to an experiential and developmental stage until they reach adolescence. In adolescence and throughout adulthood, the individual's faith formation is closely tied to the development of the person's identity and process of self-actualization (Fowler [1981] 1989, 117-199).

M. Scott Peck, an American psychiatrist, builds on Fowler's assumptions in *The Different Drum: Community Making and Peace* (Peck 1993), saying that "there is a pattern of progression through identifiable stages in human spiritual life" (Peck 1987, 188). He condenses Fowler's six stages to four identifiable stages of intellectual, emotional, cognitive and spiritual development. Each stage is distinct and can be observed by particular changes in behaviour (Peck 1987, 189, 190, 192).

In the 1990s these claims began to be tested against the scrutiny of scientific research methodology and advances made in the field of neuroscience imaging. In 1997, Kenneth Kendler, Charles Gardner and Carol Prescott in

Religion, Psychopathology, and Substance Use and Abuse: A Multimeasure, Genetic-Epidemiologic Study conducted a twin study and concluded that “personal religious involvement appears to be influenced by both environmental experiences and temperamental factors that are partly under genetic control” (Kendler, Gardner, and Prescott 1997, 326). The study shows that 29 per cent of the individual’s spiritual capacity, what is called personal devotion, is innate, while 24 per cent is influenced by the family and religious environment. Forty-seven per cent is influenced by the specific personal environment of the individual (Kendler, Gardner, and Prescott 1997, 325).

Kendler draws a distinction between religious institutional adherence and personal devotion. He found that religious institutional adherence was not genetically predetermined but was influenced by the family and personal environments. As Lisa Miller says in her book *The Spiritual Child: The New Science on Parenting for Health and Lifelong Thriving*, (citing Kendler’s work), the benefits of spirituality come not necessarily from participation in a religious institution but from “a sense of a close personal relationship to God... and a vital source of daily guidance” (Miller 2015, 7).

However, according to Miller, the religious and familial environment have an influence on the personal devotional life, if they nurture a benevolent relationship with the divine, particularly in the first two decades of human development. She and a senior colleague, Ron Kessler, found that at childhood and early adolescence the “inner spiritual experience and what they learn in

religion classes are often thought to be the same thing” for the individual (Miller 2015, 65). But by the time the person becomes an adult they see religious structures and personal spirituality as distinct entities in their life. It is only when religious institutions foster “an inner sense of living relationship to a higher power (God, nature, spirit, universe, the creator, or whatever your word is for the ultimate loving, guiding life-force)” that the benefits of church are seen in people’s lives (Miller 2015, 7).

Kendler’s and Miller’s studies show that:

- There are significant benefits to a developed spiritual life that promotes a sense of physical and mental well-being and thriving.
- there is no correlation between personal spirituality development and attending a church, participating in church structures or reciting faith statements (Kendler, Gardner, and Prescott 1997), (Miller and Gur 2002).
- Spiritual growth is influenced by three factors that interact: an innate biological predisposition, familial influences and modelling and by the individual’s personal choices.
- Organized religion can have a significant effect on the development of an individual’s spiritual life, particularly in the first two decades of life, but only if it facilitates a deep personal relationship with the transcendent God and encourages the development of an owned faith (Miller 2015, 9).

This may account for why Anglican lay leaders manifest a discomfort with expressing personal spirituality. Participation in the liturgy and religious

structures, albeit beautiful and perhaps socially beneficial, are possibly not enough to foster spiritual growth and competence. An intentional process of faith formation that allows the individual to question religious assumptions in order to make them their own and to develop a personal and intimate relationship with God is necessary for comprehensive spiritual formation.

Anglican Spiritual Formation

Juan Oliver, a former professor at The Episcopal Church's General Theological Seminary in New York, in his essay *Worship, Forming and Deforming*, expands on Tertullian's maxim to say: "Christians are not born, but made by God in the context of a supportive worshipping assembly" (Oliver 2010, 140/1675). This expresses the Anglican belief that liturgy is the primary place of spiritual formation. Archbishop Thomas Cranmer, architect of the *Book of Common Prayer*, the foundational liturgical book of the Anglican Church, believed that worship facilitates the "true, lively and unfeigned Christian faith [that] liveth, and stirreth inwardly in the heart" of every person (Cranmer, 1547, 136). For Anglicans, it is primarily through the act of gathering together, hearing and interpreting scripture, participating in the mystery of the sacraments and then being sent out into the world that we are deepened in our understanding and relationship with God.

That is likely why the Latin phrase *lex orandi, lex credendi* (the law of praying is the law of believing) is so often applied to the Anglican spiritual formation process. It is taken to mean that theological beliefs and understandings

are shaped and formed through the act of participating in worship. In other words, what and how we pray affects what we believe. (The earliest known antecedent of the phrase comes from the early fifth-century writer Prosper of Aquitaine, PL 51) Belief, however, inevitably becomes a rational, thinking process that only partially affects the deeper relational requirements of spiritual formation. For Anglicans, a more accurate phrase might be “the law of praying is the law of spiritual forming.” In other words, we are matured and formed in and through the experience of corporate worship, centered today around the eucharist.

Given that worship is the central experience of spiritual formation, Anglicans are mostly formed in “meta-logical ways, through suggestion, resonance, analogy, and metaphor more than through clearly defined, unequivocal actions and words allowing for only one interpretation” (Oliver 2010, 10). In fact, Harvey H. Guthrie, dean emeritus of the Episcopal Divinity School in the United States, argues that the Anglican Church does not expect people to adhere to a set of theories that may or may not be relevant to life’s situation. Instead, “what fundamentally makes one a part of the Church is one’s doing with the Church what the Church does liturgically, sacramentally and empirically” (Guthrie [1982] 2000 160).

Although accessibility to scripture has been a fundamental principle for Anglicanism from the beginning, scripture in and of itself has not been understood as the sole place of authority. *Sola scriptura* was the cry of the Reformers in protest against the authority of the church hierarchy of the day.

Many Protestant churches, especially Evangelical ones, go so far as to say that the Bible is the final authority on all spiritual and theological matters. The Anglican approach is somewhat more nuanced. Through the influence of a young scholar by the name of Richard Hooker (1554-1600) appointed by Elizabeth I, the church developed the position that there are three essentials or authorities for the faith. “Be it in matter of the one kind or of the other, what Scripture doth plainly deliver, to that the first place both of credit and obedience is due; the next whereunto is whatsoever any man can necessarily conclude by force of reason; after this the Church succeedeth that which the Church by her ecclesiastical authority shall probably think and define to be true or good, must in congruity of reason overrule all other inferior judgments whatsoever” (Hooker [1597] 1888, Book V, 8:2).

In other words, the Bible’s authority is conveyed through reason and tradition. The church has to ground things “necessary to salvation” in scripture, meaning that, on the one hand, the church can not invent rules affecting salvation unless they can be supported by scripture. On the other hand, not all rules or guides have to adhere to a literal interpretation of scripture (Schmidt 2002, 24). This significantly affected the spiritual formation of Anglicans because it meant that individuals were encouraged not only to experience the holy and engage in the scriptures, but to apply their intellect as a fundamental element in discerning God’s will. The Anglican Church has long been regarded as a place where the intellectual gifts of its worshippers have been honoured. Members are given

permission to use their reasoning abilities in the maturation process of spiritual formation.

Hooker went so far as to say that while there were only a few things deemed essential, other practices or beliefs should be tolerated because they help the individual have a living faith (Hooker [1597] 1888, Vol. V, Chapter iv, 3 v. 1). One way to describe this is to call it incarnational. There is little divide for Anglicanism between the secular and the sacred worlds. “The material, physical, carnal life of human beings is good, not bad, because God not only made it, but has united himself to it in the person of Jesus Christ” (Schmidt 2002, xix).

Another factor in this is that the Anglican Church is non-confessional. It does not have a statement of belief, such as the Presbyterian *Westminster Confession of Faith*. (The *Thirty-Nine Articles of Religion*, 1571, although promulgated by the English parliament and highly influential in Anglican theology, never had the force of the *Westminster Confession*, and the interpretation of the articles varied widely from the beginning (Moorman 1976, 212-216).) Instead, the Anglican Church relies on the collective experience of the corporate worshipping community. The late archbishop of Canterbury Michael Ramsey said that there is no distinctive Anglican body of doctrine “though there is an Anglican theological method, usage and direction” (Ramsey 1945, 2). This is not to say Anglicans do not have any documents of theology. The church formally accepts the Apostles Creed, the Nicene Creed and decisions of the first four General Councils. But since the middle of the 20th century, clergy and laity

have not normally been required to assent to the *Thirty-Nine Articles* (Anglican Consultative Council 2005: Lambeth Conference Resolutions Archives 1968: Resolution 43).

The international gathering of Anglican bishops at Lambeth in 1930 described the Communion this way:

The Anglican Communion is a fellowship, within the one Holy Catholic and Apostolic Church, of those duly constituted dioceses, provinces or regional Churches in communion with the See of Canterbury, which have the following characteristics in common:

- a) they uphold and propagate the Catholic and Apostolic faith and order as they are generally set forth in the Book of Common Prayer as authorised in their several Churches;
- b) they are particular or national Churches, and, as such, promote within each of their territories a national expression of Christian faith, life and worship; and
- c) they are bound together not by a central legislative and executive authority, but by mutual loyalty sustained through the common counsel of the bishops in conference (Lambeth 1930, Resolution 49).

This pragmatic perspective, which emphasizes participation in the life, work and witness of the church, results in diverse theological perspectives housed within the one denomination. It requires the individuals within it to let go of the spiritual arrogance that “insists that true Christianity must involve only [one] particular kind of religious experience” (Guthrie [1982] 2000, 160). Individuals know how to co-exist with many different viewpoints and live with tolerance. “The basic thing they have in common is neither a doctrinal position nor a religious experience. It is simply participation in what the Church does as Church” (Guthrie [1982] 2000, 160). That is why Anglicans do not claim to own the full truth of God, but only say that they know of their truth.

The culture of the church is open to intellectual questioning and shies away from declaratory statements. The downside is that Anglicans can seem wishy-washy or ambiguous, reluctant to speak out on controversial topics and unable to define what they actually believe. As Schmidt says, “Usually this has not been due to mere intellectual laziness, but to a certain humility, the realization that the human mind cannot grasp the entire truth and some questions can therefore be left unanswered” (Schmidt 2002, xx). This is a generous statement. Others say Anglicanism is “intellectually one of the freest of Christian churches, [but] socially...one of the most subservient” (Hastings 1986, 32).

In my experience, the result of this culture is that Anglicans, out of a sense of inclusion, are frequently reluctant to share any spiritual conversation with others out of their fear of insulting their neighbour or seeming to be intolerant. Tolerance and acceptance of disparate theological viewpoints in this case take priority over any individual articulation of faith, even the fundamental claim of belief in God, let alone the salvific redeeming work and divine status of Jesus. This might ultimately impede spiritual growth, because it devalues the individual experience of a vibrant and relevant faith.

Another downside of this for spiritual formation is the lack of confidence expressed by individuals because they have not been given the opportunity to systematically reflect on their experience and beliefs. As with any reflective process, a thorough and rigorous examination that brings all aspects of the issue to light is an invaluable process for incorporating new ideas and values.

The spiritual formation process of the liturgy was not meant to be an end in itself but a way of transforming the soul for a faithful life in the world.

Frederick Denison Maurice, one of the great Anglican thinkers of the 19th century and founder of the Christian Socialist Movement in England said, “I do not think we are to praise the liturgy but to use it... . When we do not want it for our life, we may begin to talk of it as a beautiful composition” (Maurice 1848, 6). The liturgy is meant to transform the soul into a readiness for the Kingdom of God which is here and now, in and outside the church building.

This has prompted the international Anglican bodies (Anglican Consultative Council and Lambeth Conference) to organize ways to facilitate this lived response. In the mid-1980s the church was called to a decade of evangelism out of which was articulated a vision of human “wholeness in harmony with God, with fellow human beings and with every aspect of [the] environment” (Anglican Consultative Council 1990, 101).

“Religion should inspire us with the vision of God’s love for humanity” (Edwards 1998, 65). It is understood that Anglicans “ought...to express their love by active service, whether they do this by taking a particular political role or by quietly trying to help those around” (Edwards 1998, 66). This perspective, in combination with the incarnational orientation to the world, has meant that Anglicans tend to be people who will roll up their sleeves and become doers of the faith.

Anglicans working from an incarnational theology do not hesitate to adopt secular scientific reasoning into their spiritual worldview. This was reflected in a resolution approved at the international gathering of Anglican bishops at Lambeth in 1930 which said,

As the intellectual meaning and content of the Christian doctrine of God cannot be fully apprehended without the aid of the highest human knowledge, it is essential that Christian theology should be studied and taught in Universities in contact with philosophy, science and criticism. (Anglican Consultative Council 2005: Lambeth Conference Archives 1930: Resolution 6, 7).

Anglicans tend to follow Augustine's reasoning with respect to the intersection between secular sciences and religion:

For we ought not to refuse to learn letters because they say that Mercury discovered them; nor because they have dedicated temples to Justice and Virtue, and prefer to worship in the form of stones things that ought to have their place in the heart, ought we on that account to forsake justice and virtue. Nay, but let every good and true Christian understand that wherever truth may be found, it belongs to his Master (Augustine [397] 2005, *De Doctrina Christiana*, Bk II, Ch 18).

The late Martin Thornton, Anglican priest, author and lecturer in the Diocese of Truro, England, described Anglican spirituality as “sane, wise, ancient, modern, sound, and simple; with roots in the New Testament and the Fathers, and of noble pedigree; with its golden periods and its full quota of saints and doctors; never obtrusive, seldom in serious error, ever holding its essential place within the glorious diversity of Catholic Christendom” (Thornton [1963] 1986, 14). But he saw that there was significant change on the horizon and predicted a spiritual renewal that would challenge the church to look beyond the liturgy for spiritual formation. Thornton noted that people were “moving away

from convention towards a desire to a deeper faith and devotion” (Thornton [1963] 1986, 9). With a prophetic voice he said that individuals will desire an authentic sense of community that will be nurtured by spiritual practices and that people will want a balance in spiritual maturity that has both “reason and wonder in [their] approach to the transcendent” (Thornton [1963] 1986, 10).

Over the 500 years that Anglicanism has developed as a separate denomination, a number of important spiritual writers have provided personal spiritual devotions or practices that have helped the individual grow in spiritual maturity beyond what they could achieve through the liturgy. These spiritual writers significantly influenced and shaped the denomination. *The Whole Duty of Man*, published anonymously in 1658, made an important impact in the church for 200 years (The Whole Duty of Man, Internet Archive [1648] 2011). It offered many private devotions and extensive guidance in the practical matters of every day living. Some of the topics covered in this exhaustive manual are: Of Humility, Of Temperance in Eating, Of the False Ends of Drinking and Of Directions and Prayers for the Morning.

The spiritual classic, *A Serious Call to a Devout and Holy Life* by the Anglican priest William Law (1686-1761) (Law [1728] 1978), challenged every person to ask themselves the important spiritual question: “What is the best thing for me to intend and drive at in all my actions?” (Law [1728] 1978, 282). Law pushed the individual to be introspective so as to achieve an inner spiritual change. Many other Anglican spiritual writers such as John Donne, George

Herbert, Edward Pusey (all clergy) offered ways to connect more deeply with the divine through poetry and sacred reading that augmented the corporate worship experience.

More recently, *The Elements of the Spiritual Life: A Study in Ascetical Theology* by F. P. Harton (1889–1958), provided a doctrinal structure for the ascetical or spiritual life (Harton [1932] 1936). Harton's overarching themes are: God's action in the individual soul, human resistance, the role of sacraments, the required life of prayer, and the ultimate goal of the spiritual life and ways to achieve it. The criticism of this book was that it was too theoretical and did not provide enough practical resources to help further spiritual maturity (Thornton [1963] 1986, 12).

Advancements in modern scientific study, especially psychology, pedagogy and neuroscience, and the awakening of the need for spirituality to be a more comprehensive lived practice have prompted most denominations to reflect on their core identity as a vehicle for facilitating spiritual maturity.

This brings us to the most significant weakness of the Anglican approach to spiritual formation. While it fosters a sense of awe, beauty, holiness, tolerance and open-mindedness, it does not provide a process for overt spiritual maturation. Statistics indicate that many Canadians—including Anglicans—have spiritual experiences of the Divine (Jedwab 2012), but those experiences are not given a forum where they can be reflected on or the people experiencing them mentored into maturity. As a result, Anglicans can be left wallowing in their liturgical

experience and they often feel wholly incompetent in their spiritual lives. Anglicans are typically some of the most educated and competent business leaders in society (Hadaway 2006, 17), capable of organizing complex and effective outreach ministries like soup kitchens and seniors care, but they have next to no biblical knowledge and feel incapable of expressing their understanding and experience of God with others. This has certainly been evident in my experience with lay leaders, such as the ones I recalled at the outset of this chapter, who were unwilling to execute the spiritual tasks, such as saying a short grace in front of fellow Christians.

Participation in small-group ministry is not a common expectation for members, so individuals have few places to reflect on their experience of the liturgy and the spiritual insights of their private devotions, if indeed they have any.

As I have noted earlier, spiritual formation requires seeing the gap between a present state of being and a vision of God's call and then intentionally taking on disciplined practices in order to bridge that gap and hone a deeper relationship with God. It takes more than good liturgy to make this possible. Many people likely have spiritual experiences of the divine within Anglican worship services, but those experiences must be given a forum where they can be discussed and challenged. Suitable spiritual practices must be discerned and offered so that the diversity found within the Anglican Church may find its unity, not of purpose or method or belief, but in the divine call of God.

The Sanctification Gap Anglican Style



Figure 2. The Anglican sanctification gap in the spiritual journey.

Richard Lovelace, an American professor of church history, has written about what he calls the “sanctification gap” (Lovelace 1979), a phenomenon among evangelical Protestants where they know particular side issues about the church but are unaware of the central objective of their faith, which is discipleship into the full life of Christ. Lovelace describes this gap as “a peculiar conspiracy somehow to mislay the Protestant tradition of spiritual growth and to concentrate instead on frantic witnessing activity, sermons on John 3:16 and theological arguments over eschatological subtleties” (Lovelace 1979, 232).

Lovelace attributes this gap to the evangelical emphasis on an early conversion experience which sets an expectation for a deep spiritual experience at the beginning of the spiritual journey instead of nurturing spiritual growth over time. As he says, “the whole of sanctification had been inserted into conversion”

(Lovelace 1979, 234). Without reinserting spiritual formation or sanctification into the spiritual life of faith, it leaves churchgoers “doing the right thing for the wrong reasons” (Lovelace 1979, 234).

Anglicanism has its own peculiar sanctification gap. The final stage of the classical spiritual journey is union or, in the Willow Creek model, the Christ-centered stage. This stage of formation is characterized by a total surrendering of the person’s life to the will of God. As Greg Hawkins and Cally Parkinson of Willow Creek say: “Christ-Centered believers emerge from a battle between two sets of values—the secular values that define personal identity, happiness, secular and success for much of the world, and the spiritual values of selfless love and dedication to others that characterize a life centered on Jesus” (Hawkins and Parkinson 2011, 84).

The “selfless love” and “dedication to others” is manifested in deeds of mercy and charity. Jesus’ response to the scribe asking to know which commandment was the greatest is apt for defining the Christ-centered life: “‘Love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind, and with all your strength.’ The second is this, ‘You shall love your neighbour as yourself’” (Mark 12:30,31).

The 16th-century mystics John of the Cross (1542-1591) and Teresa of Avila (1515-1582) were both noted for teaching and writing about the final state of union with God. Their lives were examples of the kind of commitment to serving the needs of God’s people that comes from a life that is wholly dedicated

to God (Hardy 2004, 568/2312 and Avila [1565] 2004, 70). In *The Naked Now: Learning to See as the Mystics See*, Richard Rohr says, “When you honor and accept the divine image within yourself, you cannot help but see it in everybody else, too, and you know it is just as undeserved and unmerited as it is in you. That is why you stop judging, and that is how you start loving unconditionally and without asking whether someone is worthy or not” (Rohr 2009, 159).

As a denomination, the Anglican Church has made significant contributions to the wellbeing of society through the many charities, societies and institutions for the betterment of the less fortunate. Hospitals, schools and agencies to relieve poverty have been formed by passionate laypeople who saw a need and created an organized response to address it. Anglican laypeople can look like they are living out of a state of union if they are simply assessed on their acts of mercy. Frank Weston, bishop of Zanzibar in the early 20th century, said in defence of Anglican Catholicism: “You cannot claim to know Jesus in the Altar if you do not recognise Him in the slum... . [Nor can you] hold [your] peace while... fellow citizens are living in hovels below the level of the streets” (Weston 1923).

The sanctification gap for Anglicans is that they jump from the “awakening” stage of spiritual formation to the “doing” activity associated with union in God, thereby appearing to be living from a more developed formational stage than they actually are. On the surface they appear to have reached full spiritual maturity. In fact, they have simply skipped the spiritual growth process

altogether and jumped over the stages of purgation, illumination and mystical union while their benevolent actions said otherwise. So Anglicans, like Lovelace says about evangelicals, often do the right things for the wrong reasons.

Small Reflective Groups

Bill Hull in *The Complete Book of Discipleship* (Hull 2006) quoted James Hervey (1714-1758) about the necessity for small communities for spiritual maturity saying, “But God reveals to one what is good for another: so that, in a multitude of counsellors there is wisdom” (Hull 2006, 104).

Small groups are an important part of the spiritual formation structure (Kirkpatrick 1997; Putman 2013, 183-196; Watson 2014). Generally they involve from five to 20 people who gather together on a regular weekly to monthly basis. The typical focus of small groups in church ranges from biblical study to planning events. The small group that nurtures the spiritual formation process, however, is one that facilitates discussion and is specifically focused on the work of the Holy Spirit in conforming the lives of the group to Christ. Such groups will likely involve activities such as prayer, scripture reading, and group spiritual direction. The group provides accountability and support for members who, in a bond of trust, are committed to their spiritual development.

Willow Creek’s 2003 *Reveal* survey (Hawkins and Parkinson 2011) found that small groups were particularly helpful as they served as catalysts for movement along the first three categories of spiritual formation continuum: Exploring Christ, Growing in Christ and Close to Christ (See Classic Spiritual

Formation section above 90) The small group serves as “the primary resource...for forming friendships and mentoring relationships that help them grow in faith” (Hawkins and Parkinson 2011, 177). The significant factor that facilitates growth is the community that provides “accountability [and] a safe environment for coaching and counseling that helps people face and process issues” (Hawkins and Parkinson 2011, 236).

Small groups were a prominent feature in Jesus’ ministry. In Mark 3:13-19 we are told that although Jesus ministered to the crowds, he also gathered a small group of 12 together although little is known about the specific content or how the groups were structured. Its members were apostles, and he taught and mentored them, and modeled a spiritual life for them. These apostles were sent out into the local region to share Jesus’ ministry and then called back together for sharing, teaching and debriefing.

The good news of Jesus Christ spread in the early church through the gathering of small communities or groups. Acts 2:42-47 tells of gatherings that took place at the temple courts and in homes where people “devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching and fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers.” (Acts 2:42) These small groups fostered growth in discipleship (Matthew 28:16-20) by providing communities of acceptance, accountability and love (John 13:34-35).

The need for a place to process the personal experience of the saving and loving action of Christ in a nurturing and accountable small group is not a new

message for the Anglican Church. As far back as the mid-1700s, Rev. John Wesley spoke out vigorously for changes in the denomination that would promote a personal faith based on the experience of the divine and nurtured in the context of an accountable small group.

Wesley himself was formed in a small group, nicknamed the Holy Club, that his brother, Rev. Charles Wesley, had organized, while studying at Oxford University. This, along with a transformative conversion experience where he said, “I felt my heart strangely warmed” (Parker [1790] 1951), contributed to a zealous desire to have others experience the assurance of God’s saving love. He constructed a system for spiritual formation for laypeople that involved weekly participation in the church services, attending an outside preaching rally four times a year and becoming a member of a small group for support and accountability (Welch [1789] 1901, 83). In later life, Charles Wesley recalled that other students mocked him and other members of the group for their “method of study,” calling him “the harmless name of Methodist.”

Church authorities were alarmed by what they perceived as the excessive expression of emotion they called “enthusiasms,” especially when members began to challenge the institutional boundaries of the church. The momentum of John Wesley’s ministry proved difficult to contain and eventually he, unwelcomed in church’s pulpits, began preaching throughout the countryside, in the fields or wherever the people would gather. At each gathering Wesley formed small groups he called classes (or, for the more spiritually rigorous, bands, select bands,

penitent bands and societies) to help people stay committed to their spiritual deepening (Welch [1789] 1901, 83).

Wesley drew up a rule for the band meetings in December, 1738, in which he quoted James 5:16 saying that the members of the band were to meet weekly, to “Confess your faults one to another, and pray one for another, that ye may be healed...” (Wesley [1738] 2011). The purpose of “meeting together was to provide the mutual confession and encouragement conducive to advanced spiritual growth” (Watson 2002, 123).

Wesley was reacting to the kind of Anglican spirituality which was then, as it is now, “corporate and liturgical and sacramental” (Guthrie [1982] 2000, 161). It assumed that the individual personal experience was secondary to the communal participation in worship. As Guthrie says: “[T]o the person looking for direction in living the Christian life, the classical Anglican response would be ‘Enter into the life of the Church with eyes and ears and heart and mind open’” (Guthrie [1982] 2000, 168). Wesley encouraged participation in the weekly worship services but did not believe that liturgy in and of itself would adequately address the spiritual growth needs of people.

Eventually a movement gathered around Wesley that formed what has come to be known as the Methodist Church. David Lowes Watson, Methodist professor and writer, reflecting on the relationship between the founder and the denomination, says, “Methodist spirituality was honed by the context of its practice... necessary, though often neglected.” He said that even Wesley realized

that once people were spiritually awakened they then had to grow spiritually but that “the intensive mutual searching of the bands presumed too much of those whose spiritual birth was relatively new and sudden” (Watson 2000, 182). By the time the movement became a denomination “the high requirements for membership...had to be adjusted” (Stafford 2003) which resulted in less commitment to small group membership.

Wesley’s insights into the need and a process to develop disciples in response to the Great Commission (Matthew 28:16-20) was as important then as it is now. Beautiful liturgy and solid institutional structures must be accompanied with opportunities for more intimate personal encounters where the spiritual experience can be reflected upon, nurtured and fostered into fuller growth. Over the next 150 years, advancement has been made in the understanding of human development, psychology and pedagogy, all of which reaffirm Wesley’s insights for the need for small groups for spiritual formation.

Adult Experiential Learning

Jean Piaget (1896-1980) was the first psychologist to systematically study how humans develop knowledge. He was particularly known for his work on child development, from which arose his theory of cognitive development, called constructivism. Constructivism, said Piaget, is the interplay between experience and ideas that brings about knowledge and meaning (Piaget [1954] 1999). The impact of an experience on a person’s life, according to Piaget, must be reflected upon and assessed against memories of previous experiences in order for the

individual to construct their sense of meaning (Piaget [1954] 1999, 380-386). This forms the basis for what is known as experiential learning. David A. Kolb elaborated on Piaget's work in the 1970s to develop the experiential learning circle model. It begins with a concrete experience that is reflected upon. This then forms abstract concepts or generalizations which are subsequently applied and tested against experience (Kolb 2015, xvi-xx).

Andrew Wilkinson (Wilkinson 1965), a British researcher and educator, wrote about the importance of speech in the reflective learning process of children. He coined the term *oracy* and said that speech helps form the cognitive process of thought and reason. This insight led British educator James Britton to say, "Writing floats on a sea of talk" (Britton 1983, 11).

The process of finding the words to describe an experience and the effect of that experience on current understanding and knowledge helps form meaning and prompts maturity and growth. Aldous Huxley said:

Language permits its users to pay attention to things, persons and events, even when the things and persons are absent and the events are not taking place. Language gives definition to our memories and, by translating experiences into symbols, converts the immediacy of craving or abhorrence, or hatred or love, into fixed principles of feeling and conduct (Huxley [1958] 2001, 109).

The general conclusion is that a process of reflecting on experience is required for the development of meaning. This reflective process requires being able to express thoughts, ideas and feelings in words. As the authors of *Women's Ways of Knowing: The Development of Self, Voice, and Mind* note: "In order for reflection to occur, the oral and written forms of language must pass back and

forth between persons...sharing, expanding, and reflecting on each other's experiences" (Belenky, Clinchy, Goldberger and Tarule 1986, 26).

The current Anglican spiritual formation model, emphasizing corporate participation in liturgy but silencing the expression of the personal spiritual experience, stunts spiritual formation. Although Sunday school and, in some cases, youth groups are available to young members of the church, there is no normative practice for Anglican adults to participate in classes and study past the age of Confirmation, which is usually at age 12 or can be as young as 7. By not providing an expectation for reflection in small groups, competency with spiritual practices such as prayer, scripture reading and discernment is not developed. This may account for why Anglican lay leaders express reluctance to express their faith or openly share their experience of God because they have had little practice or encouragement to do so.

This is not to say that all Anglican laypeople are spiritually underdeveloped. Many, in response to their own inner promptings, take the initiative for their spiritual formation and find the reflective community necessary for growth outside of the normal parish structures. Sometimes laypeople find a reflective community in a clergy-led study group or by associating with one of the Anglican monastic communities or participating in a home group of another denomination. These options are available and hugely beneficial but they are not normative or common to the Anglican experience of church.

Summation of the Anglican Spiritual Experience: Strengths and Weaknesses

The strengths of Anglican spiritual formation are:

- It is corporate and liturgical and therefore affective rather than didactic.
- It creates an experience of an encounter with the transcendent God through the use of architecture, music and prayer.
- It tolerates a wide diversity of theological perspectives because it does not define itself confessionally.

The weaknesses of Anglican spiritual formation are:

- It is experienced as personal and private with no structural process or cultural norm for reflecting on the spiritual experience in community.
- It does not give individuals the opportunity to use language to express their experiential reality of the spiritual encounter.
- There is a leap from experiencing to doing which creates a culture of busyness and burnout.
- It does not foster an ongoing awareness of an immanent, everyday, intimate relationship with God.

The Balloon Model of Spiritual Formation

Three elements are required in order for the individuals to experience growth in their spiritual formation:

1. A personal encounter and awareness of God nurtured through a private

devotional life that is attentive to specific spiritual practices.

2. A corporate worshipping community that provides structure, support, framework, the experience of effective liturgy, resources for growing in the fullness of Christ and opportunities to minister to the needs of the world.

3. A small group or mentor that through a loving relationship nurtures and provides opportunity for verbal reflection on the spiritual experience and facilitates the confident awareness and sharing of that experience.

The balloon model illustrates these three elements. (See Figure 3 below 122.) The model has three parts: 1. the inflated balloon; 2. the string; 3. the knot that joins the two together. Each section represents a component of the spiritual formation.

Elements of Mature Faith Formation



Figure 3. The three elements necessary for effective spiritual formation.

Figure 4, the inflated ball, represents the personal spiritual experience which is the individual's encounter with God. As noted above, the individual has

an innate spiritual capacity that is influenced by family, institutions and personal choices (see Kendler 1997, Miller 2015). The balloon not only represents the individual's direct experience with God, but also the personal devotional life such as private prayer, meditation and experiencing God in nature. In other words, any spiritual activity that is particular to the individual.

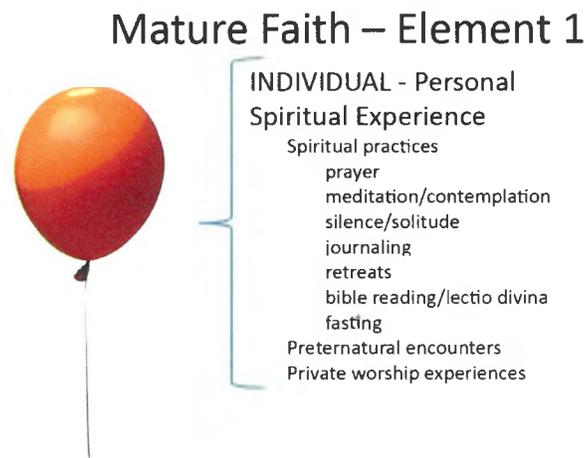


Figure 4: The first element of spiritual formation: the personal spiritual experience.

The knot, shown in Figure 5, represents that which holds the personal experience and the communal framework together. Quite simply, it is a place of conversation within a trusted relationship. A small reflective group is the best example of a knot. Other examples that serve this spiritual function of the knot are dyadic ministries of spiritual direction, friendship and mentoring. These small communities provide the opportunity for individuals to share their personal experience with God acquired through corporate worship and private devotions,

express their experience and ideas, and be formed through the support and accountability of the experience of others. When this works well, the individual's experience informs the corporate, worshipping community and the corporate, worshipping community's collective history, tradition, knowledge, wisdom, and experience informs and supports the individual.

Mature Faith – Element 2

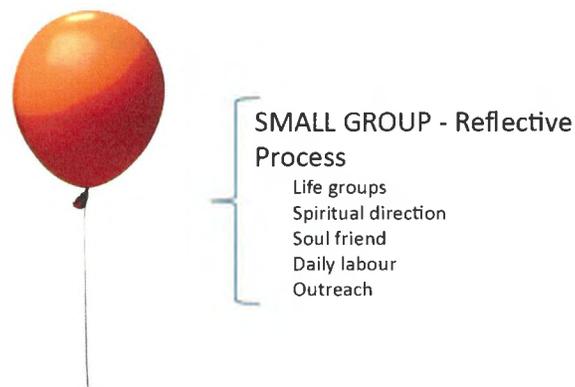


Figure 5: The second element of spiritual formation: the small group.

The string, as shown in Figure 6, represents the community that helps form and foster the innate personal experience. This includes the family and religious structures such as the church. It supports and anchors the personal encounter by giving the spiritual experience structure, language, support and accountability. The institution serves as a stable place where the spiritual phenomenon can find location.

Mature Faith – Element 3

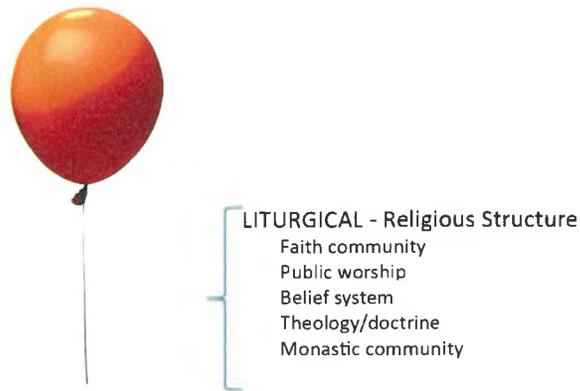


Figure 6: The third element of spiritual formation, the religious, liturgical community.

If we undo the knot, as in Figure 7, the balloon disconnects from the string and, metaphorically speaking, the personal encounter is separated from the corporate experience of community. The impact of this is that the balloon drifts off wherever the forces take it. It might get stuck on the ceiling or, worse, it might hit a light bulb or nail and burst. Similarly, a personal spiritual experience can disappear with no guidance in defining itself and left to mean as many things as the imagination allows.

Meanwhile, the string becomes a lifeless pile on the table. So it is for the religious structure that is not enlivened by the thriving spiritual vitality of individuals within the community.

A Balloon without a String

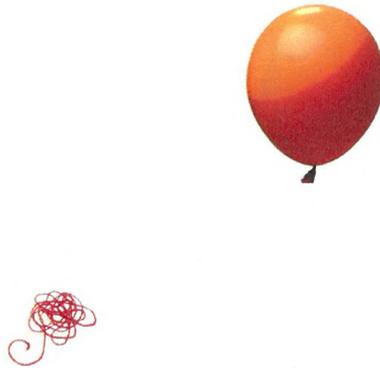


Figure 7. The separation of the personal spiritual experience from the corporate religious structure.

Research shows that most people do have a personal experience of God at some time in their lives but that they have never shared it with another person (Gallup 2013). That is an example of the balloon separated from the string in Figure 7.

Community is essential to spiritual maturation, but not just any community. American sociologist Josh Packard's research reveals that people want to be in community where there is a high value placed on relationships, far less emphasis on dogma, and where there is flexibility to explore spiritual questions and directions. They want "a community of people who are experiencing God together" (Packard and Hope 2015, 485/2443).

The Anglican Church with its emphasis on liturgy but no structure for sharing and incorporating the personal spiritual experience, leaves individuals spiritually stunted. Lay leaders attend church, can recite the beautiful liturgical

prayers, manifest great deeds of benevolence and charity but cannot confidently express their faith or recount the personal experience of God in their lives. Over time, it is as if the balloon gets stuck on the ceiling, because personal spirituality stalls if it does not get appropriate attention (Hawkins 2011, 169-189). When this happens churches are left with religious doers as opposed to disciples with lives that are transformed in and through God's love.

The Program

In an effort to respond to the spiritual formation needs of one Anglican parish, I developed a program at Trinity Church, Aurora, Ontario, called, *Lift High the Cross: Empowering Spiritual Leaders*. Twelve lay leaders were invited to participate in a year-long program of weekly small-group meetings that focused on building confidence in spiritual leadership and facilitating spiritual formation. Spiritual practices, spiritual direction and competency in prayer and scripture study were taught through an experiential learning model. The program was divided into three sessions: Session 1: Communicating with God; Session 2: Engaging in Scripture; and Session 3: Called to Ministry.

Session 1: Communicating with God focused on the topic of prayer and introduced the participants to 10-15 different prayer practices including Ignatian imaginative prayer, the examen, body prayers, the labyrinth, icons, doodle prayers, chanting, contemplation, journaling, reflective prayer, extemporaneous prayer and prayer beads. These specific prayer practices were chosen because they appealed to a variety of personal temperaments and styles. The examen with

its daily review process appealed to lay leaders that liked structure and order and were more likely to learn from their mental capacity. Meanwhile a walking prayer or body prayers appealed to those with more affective learning needs and who readily connected with God through nature or activities. The structured service of Morning Prayer has traditionally been a spiritual practice encouraged within Anglican cultural norms. It was not included in the prayer forms of the program because it had already become a common experience of the lay leaders and they tended to respond to it as they would any other corporate liturgical service. The daily office, or Morning Prayer, serves as another worship service with links from ancient liturgical practices which the individual participates in with others, even if they are on their own (International Liturgy and Anglican Identity 2005).

Consistently, however, the majority of participants said that outside Sunday worship their prayer practice was minimal. When they did pray, it was most likely in the form of petitions, or commonly known as “arrow prayers” (Church of England, 2017), asking God to help fix difficult specific life situations. They identified that once in awhile at the cottage or on the ski hill or within the church service, they would sense a deeper spiritual connection with God, but they rarely spoke of these experiences nor did they do anything to foster further intimacy with God beyond the experience.

The goal of the Session 1 was to expose the participants to the breadth of prayer practices within the Christian spiritual tradition, see the practice modeled, have them experience the practice first-hand, offer an opportunity to reflect on

their experience and, ultimately, to determine the suitability of the prayer practice in their spiritual life. By the end of the first session, the expectation was that each participant was praying regularly and could offer a public prayer when needed.

Session 2: Engaging in Scripture exposed the participants to six different literary forms of biblical writing: narrative text, wisdom literature, apocalyptic writing, poems, gospels and epistles. They also got to experience and lead four Bible study methods, including the inductive method, Luther's Garland of Prayer, *Lectio Divina* and Ignatius's imaginative method. The objective of the session is to give participants an opportunity to experience the Bible as text for spiritual formation and equip them to lead short Bible meditations which they could use to open church meetings.

Session 3: Called to Ministry focused on discipleship and included topics such as spiritual calling, group spiritual direction, discernment, spiritual gifts, pain and suffering, creeds and belief statements, silent retreats and spiritual leadership.

The program began with a two-day retreat where each person was given a personality assessment based on the Jungian Myers-Briggs Type Indicator® to get a sense of their personality temperament. This helped people align prayer practices to their personal preferences and temperaments. For example, people who are strongly extraverted, in Jungian terminology, would be unlikely to be able to sustain long periods of contemplative silence at first. Instead, they would be encouraged to begin praying through corporate worship or by joining a prayer group or by walking in nature. Throughout the year, participants might move to

more contemplative practices as they spiritually matured. The expectation is that each participant is forming a rule of life that traces these developments.

This year-long program consistently awakened deep emotions as participants realized how narrow their spiritual experience with God had been and how broad and pervasive God's vehicles of communication were. The other significant learning was that a relationship with God was not primarily about right thinking or doing, but about simply "being" in the company of a God who profoundly loves them and this world.

The assumption of the program is that as competency grows in the spiritual leadership of the parish so does the spiritual maturity of the congregation overall. Spiritually mature and confident spiritual leaders will be more willing and able to reflect the joy, peace, hope and love they find through their relationship with Christ and share that with the world.

Conclusion

Spiritual formation that fosters mature, confident leaders requires participation in community through liturgy, reflection on the experience of God's activity in participants lives through small groups and personal devotions suited to the individual that nurture the inner soul. Without addressing personal piety and without a small-group reflective process, the Anglican emphasis on liturgy permits a separation between religious institutional participation and personal spiritual experience. The lack of a small-group spiritual formation processes leaves Anglican lay leaders feeling incompetent and uncertain about their spiritual

experiences and unable to effectively share their experience with others. An experientially based methodology for adult leaders focusing on prayer, scripture and discipleship will bridge this confidence gap and help form spiritual leaders that enrich the church and the world.

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CHAPTER 4:
FOSTERING SPIRITUAL GROWTH IN ANGLICAN
LAY LEADERSHIP THROUGH A PRAXIS-BASED,
SMALL-GROUP DISCIPLESHIP PROGRAM:
AN ACTION RESEARCH PROJECT

This section of the portfolio explores how Anglican adult lay leaders at Trinity Anglican Church, Aurora, became confident spiritual leaders in matters related to prayer by participating in a praxis-based, small-group discipleship program focused specifically on developing applied skills in public and personal prayer. In my experience of more than 30 years in parish ministry, competent Anglican lay leaders frequently express feeling insecure and incompetent in their ability to pray, whether privately or publicly. These feelings of behavioural incompetence mean that these leaders are disinclined to show or share their faith. As a result, their spirituality remains private. The further consequence is that their faith development stalls, deteriorates and may even go dormant.

Twelve lay leaders participated in a seven-week, facilitated small-group program designed to introduce them to 10 different prayer practices, allowing them to experience, practise and reflect on the various prayer techniques and their effect on their relationship with God. A spiritual vitality survey was administered before and after the program as well as a prayer-behaviour test. Along with these two tools, qualitative data was collected from the facilitators' notes and participants' emails.

The findings of this research project are that learning about and experiencing a variety of prayer practices and reflecting on those practices in the context of a supportive small group increases self-efficacy—the ability to feel comfortable praying in public—and spiritual maturity—an observable change in spirit maturity as evidenced by expressions of feeling closer to God. As a consequence of these findings, more small group opportunities providing practical skills in private and public prayer need to be made available to lay leaders at Trinity Anglican Church in order for them to grow in self-confidence as spiritual leaders and deepen their relationship with God as disciples of Christ.

Focus and Purpose of the Project

This research project tested the effectiveness of the small group as a medium for developing the qualitative prayer life of lay leaders at Trinity Anglican Church, Aurora. The small group served as a forum for delivering a training course that involved introducing participants to 10 different forms of prayer, experimenting with the prayer forms, reflecting on the experience of those forms, practising the prayer forms and incorporating them into the participants' personal prayer life. The effectiveness of the program was measured by assessing behavioural change and growth along the spiritual continuum using both quantitative and qualitative data.

Criteria tested included measuring maturity in private prayers—such as regularly using contemplative prayer versus exclusively using simple petitions—and confidence in praying publicly. I used a third-party spiritual inventory survey

that participants completed during the first week of the course and also the week following the final session of the course. This provided qualitative data. I developed my own prayer-behaviour test which participants took both before and after the program to provide qualitative and quantitative data. Qualitative data was also gathered from the notes of the program's two facilitators, as well as comments expressed in person or by email from the participants throughout the entire program. The results showed change in participants' behaviour that reflected increased self-efficacy and growth along the spiritual continuum.

Opportunity or Problem

Corporate worship is the central experience of spiritual formation for Anglicans (see Chapter 3: Closing the Sanctification Gap in Anglican Formation 78-131). The result is that many Anglicans have rich spiritual experiences at the meta-logical or affective levels. This means they are mostly formed "through suggestion, resonance, analogy, and metaphor more than through clearly defined, unequivocal actions and words allowing for only one interpretation" (Oliver 2010, 10). My conclusion, therefore, was that the reluctance of lay leaders at Trinity Anglican Church, to speak about their spiritual experience with others was a direct result of them not having had the opportunity to reflect on those experiences in another context other than worship (see Chapter 3: Closing the Sanctification Gap in Anglican Formation, Science 94-118). This is the deficit I sought to address with the prayer course tested in the research project.

The Anglican Consultative Council, the coordinating body of the international Anglican Church (the Anglican Communion), has identified the need for a missional connection with secular culture. The council also recognized that this cannot happen if church members are spiritually stalled or feel incapable of finding the words to share their personal experience of God's love in their lives.

Anglicans/Episcopalians are witnessing to Christ's reconciling love all over the world, and in all sorts of ways, as a sign of their discipleship. But many Anglican/Episcopalian leaders, lay and ordained, are also quick to point out that much more could be done if there was an intentional focus on nurturing and equipping both new and existing members, to deepen their lifelong discipleship and Christian witness... The Church needs to be called back to its roots as a community of disciples who make disciples. (Kafwanka and Oxbrow 2016, xii).

In other words, it is essential that the church form confident disciples of Christ who can then witness to the experience of their faith in their lives and thereby make other disciples who can do the same (Matthew 28:19).

Response or Innovation

The purpose of the research project was to assess the effectiveness of a prayer course on increasing self-efficacy and positively changing lay leadership behaviour of participants from Trinity Anglican Church, Aurora. This research paper will explore how the experience of: 1. learning about various prayer practices and seeing them modelled; 2. experimenting with those practices; and 3. reflecting on the experience of these prayer practices in the context of a facilitated small group can build behaviour competence and confidence and foster spiritual growth in Anglican lay leaders at Trinity. Twelve individuals participated in a seven-week course of two hours a week that aimed to develop their competency

in public and private prayer and to provide a forum for spiritual growth. Both qualitative and quantitative data was gathered. A third-party spiritual growth assessment tool, the Episcopal Spiritual Life Inventory (ESLI), was administered before and after the program, specifically to assess changes in the spiritual growth and maturity of the participants. A pre- and post- prayer behaviour test was administered. Along with this, qualitative data was collected from facilitators' notes and participants' emails. The data collected from these sources were used to assess changes over the seven weeks of the program in three areas: behaviour, self-efficacy (see below, Definitions Section 147) and spiritual growth along the spiritual continuum (see below, Definitions Section 148).

The praxis process of learning-action-reflection (see below, Definitions Section 146) helped individuals grow spiritually and feel more confident as they moved from hard workers of the institution to enlivened participants of the kingdom willing to share their experience of God with others. Taking on a regular prayer practice deepened their faith experience and helped them grow in their relationship with God.

Definition of Key Terms

Extemporaneous Prayers in this context are informal prayers offered by a lay or ordained leader at the beginning or end of a meeting, before a common meal or in response to a pastoral situation. In my experience, Anglo-Catholic prayers tend to be more structured and formulaic while in an Evangelical context they tend to be less structured and more spontaneous.

In Anglicanism, intercessory or petitionary prayers generally take the form of a short collect. A collect is a structured prayer of approximately five sentences that “serves mainly to *collect* and summarize the people’s intentions” (Plater 1995, 43). A simple outline for a collect is: 1. a salutation to God; 2. a thanksgiving; 3. a specific or topical petition or request; 4. an aspiration or desired result, and 5. a closing statement of mediation (Blunt 1872, 69; Witvliet 2008, 197-8; Reformed Liturgical Institute 2006). The Lord’s Prayer (Matt. 6. 9-13) and the prayer of the apostles in Acts 1:24-25 provide the biblical examples of this form of prayer. When Anglican leaders at the parish of Trinity are asked to offer spontaneous prayer they are most likely to compose a prayer based on the structure of the collects they have heard and prayed weekly through the liturgy of the *Book of Common Prayer* or *The Book of Alternative Services*.

Lay leaders are parishioners who chair or participate in parish committees or ministries. They attend church regularly and have typically been members of the Anglican Church for more than five years. They can also usually be identified by the level of screening required for their ministry, as all lay leaders in the denomination are screened either for a medium or high level of fiduciary risk associated with their ministry.

5. **Praxis** is a form of learning that involves the cyclical process of being trained, practising the trained behaviour, reflecting on the experience of the

new behaviour and incorporating the new behaviour into life practices (see Chapter 3: Closing the Sanctification Gap in Anglican Formation, Adult Experiential Learning 118-120). The concept of praxis grew out of Jean Piaget's (1896-1980) theory of cognitive development, called constructivism.

Constructivism, according to Piaget, is the interplay between experience and ideas that brings about knowledge and meaning (Piaget [1954] 1999). The impact of an experience on a person's life, said Piaget, must be reflected upon and assessed against memories of previous experiences in order for the individual to construct their sense of meaning (Piaget [1954] 1999, 380-386). This forms the basis for what is known as experiential learning. David A. Kolb elaborated on Piaget's work in the 1970s to develop the experiential learning circle model. It begins with a concrete experience that is reflected upon. This then forms abstract concepts or generalizations which are subsequently applied and tested against experience (Kolb 2015, xvi-xx).

6. **Self-efficacy** is a social cognitive theory. It is "the conviction that one can successfully execute the behaviour required to produce the outcomes" (Bandura 1977, 193), and was developed primarily by Stanford University professor, Albert Bandura. Self-efficacy is influenced by four key factors: experiences that foster mastery, social modeling, social encouragement and persuasion, and the interpretation of feelings (Bandura 1994, 71-81; Pajares 2002). People will "only attempt what they believe they can successfully accomplish" (Hayden 2013, 15). A difficult task will be perceived by those with

high self-efficacy as a challenge, while those with low self-efficacy will see it as a threat to be avoided (Bandura 1994, 71-81). Studies have shown that self-efficacy affects a sense of self-confidence and motivates leadership behaviour (McCormick, Tanguma, and López-Forment 2002). Self-efficacy affects behaviour at all ages and can be an important component in fostering a thriving and vital lifestyle in all developmental stages (Bandura 1994, 71-81).

7. **Spiritual continuum** is a concept of spiritual development that frames the process of spiritual maturity an individual can progress through as a range (see Chapter 3: Closing the Sanctification Gap in Anglican Formation, *Spiritual Formation* 82-88). Hawkins and Parkinson authors of *Reveal* defined spiritual growth as “increasing love of God and increasing love of others—Matthew 22:37-40” (Hawkins and Parkinson 2011, 18). Their research showed that spiritual growth can be measured and that while activities such as prayer, church attendance, participation in a small group or reading the Bible, do not in and of themselves “predict” or “drive” spiritual growth, they do serve as catalysts of growth (Hawkins and Parkinson 2011, 18-19).

Supervision, Permission, and Access

This project followed the guidelines and restrictions of the Research Ethics Board of Tyndale Seminary and the administration and faculty of Tyndale University College & Seminary. Informed consent was obtained from all participants who have had access to all findings and reports. All findings and reports were anonymized. All sessions were co-facilitated. The program began

with an orientation session to review issues of confidentiality, group norms and standards (see Appendices A: Consent Form 211; L: Objectives, Norms and Standards 266; M: Confidentiality Agreement 267). A protocol was established to address any ethical concerns of participants with respect to the research project.

Context

This research project was conducted at Trinity Anglican Church in Aurora, Ont., a suburban community 40 km north of Toronto. The town's demographics reveal that it is predominantly comprised of people of British and European descent who have well above the provincial average post-secondary education and national household income (Town of Aurora 2017). Although there are a number of young families in the parish, parish attendance demographics show that it is predominantly populated by baby boomers aged 55-69 (Appendix B: Natural Church Development Status Chart, 2014 BB=46%, 217). I serve as the parish priest of this congregation and I reflect the demographic tendencies of the town and parish.

Trinity participated in a Natural Church Development (NCD) assessment as part of an initiative supported by the Diocese of Toronto in 2010. NCD is a growth strategy for congregations based on an assessment of eight characteristics that define a healthy church. The assessment showed that Trinity had above average competency in the assessment tool's categories of "empowering leadership" and "gift-based ministry" but far inferior scores in "passionate spirituality" and "needs-based evangelism." The 2010 NCD Status Chart for

Trinity showed a maximum factor of 68.8 for Gifts-Based Ministry and a minimum factor of 24.9 for Passionate Spirituality (see Appendix B: Natural Church Development Status Chart 217). Bill Bickle, the NCD Canadian Partner, using the NCD Canadian 2017 database, said Trinity's assessment scores were consistent with the majority of Canadian Anglican Churches in having passionate spirituality as their lowest minimum factor (Bickle 2017).

In other words, Trinity was strong in doing ministry, as evidenced in its outreach programming and governance structures, but far less capable in matters of faith and mission. To address this spiritual development deficit, a discipleship program was developed to facilitate competency in spiritual leadership and foster spiritual growth (see Chapter 3: Closing the Sanctification Gap in Anglican Formation 127).

This research project involved testing the prayer portion of a discipleship program to assess its effectiveness in developing spiritual leadership competency and fostering spiritual maturity, in an Anglican parish. I developed a discipleship program in 2009 to help address the lack of confidence in the spiritual leadership of Trinity's lay leaders. The full program was 10 months long, but for the purposes of this research project only the seven-week prayer module was used. Twelve individuals who serve in a leadership capacity in the parish, either as chairs or members of a committee or ministry, were invited to participate in a seven-week program of two hours a week. An invitation to participate in the research project (Appendix C: Survey Invitation 219) and a brochure (Appendix

D: Spiritual Leaders Brochure 222) describing the project were sent to leaders to introduce them to the course, its goals and objectives. The objectives were to provide them with the opportunity to learn about themselves and God, to have an opportunity to observe and try the various prayer practices, enjoy a sense of community and encouragement with peers, access the resources of clergy and ultimately to develop confidence as Christian leaders.

Since the participants of this research project came from the leadership level of the parish, most were long-time Anglicans and regularly attending members of the parish for at least five years. All had post-secondary education and had served in significant leadership roles in their work and community life. Only one had any formal theological training.

My pastoral observation was that the congregation was generally content but spiritually complacent. Leaders were confident in the secular aspects of their ministry but expressed great anxiety and guilt when asked to lead spiritual ministries such as public prayer and Bible study. Most, in fact, would refuse a request to pray, claiming they are incompetent and incapable. In their day-to-day functioning and making life-decisions they worked from a rational, secular perspective rather than an intentional discernment of the work of the Holy Spirit in their life.

Models and Other Course Material

In Chapter 3, *Closing the Sanctification Gap in Anglican Formation* (Anglican Spiritual Formation 98-113), I trace the historic development and explore the strengths and weaknesses of the current Anglican formation model.

Model of Spiritual Formation

My pastoral observation developed over 30 years of ordained ministry is that the Anglican Church, with its emphasis on liturgy and personal piety, has focused on important and necessary elements for spiritual formation, but that these alone are not sufficient for fostering mature and confident spiritual leaders (see Chapter 3, *Closing the Sanctification Gap in Anglican Formation*, 120). People may have spiritual experiences of the divine within Anglican worship services, but these experiences must be given a forum, such as a small group, to be reflected upon and mentored into maturity (see Chapter 3, *Closing the Sanctification Gap in Anglican Formation* 120-126).

Small-group ministry provides an important place for individuals to reflect on their experience and receive confirmation, accountability and support for the spiritual development process (see Chapter 3: *Closing the Sanctification Gap in Anglican Formation*, *Small Reflective Groups* 113-118). A Christian small group is defined as “an intentional face-to-face gathering of two to twelve people on a regular time schedule with a common purpose of discovering and growing in the possibilities of an abundant life in Christ” (Hestenes, 1985, 27). As it says in the book of Ecclesiastes: “Two are better than one, because they have a good reward

for their toil. For if they fall, one will lift up the other” (4:9, 10). It is clear that while Jesus taught in large public forums he also formed his disciples in small groups (Matthew 11:1; Mark 6:30; Mark 8:27-33; Luke 11:1; John 14-17).

Anglican lay leaders can collectively recite the beautiful liturgical prayers used in corporate worship, but I have observed that they cannot confidently express their faith or effortlessly recount the personal experience of God in their lives or publicly demonstrate the spiritual practice of prayer (see Chapter 3: Closing the Sanctification Gap in Anglican Formation 118-120). I believe this is a result of individuals not being given the opportunity to receive specific coaching and affirmation, reflect on their experiences and personally master the practice of a daily prayer life and leading prayer in public (Hawkins and Parkinson, 2011, 73). With no structure for sharing and reflecting on the personal or corporate spiritual experience, they develop a debilitating anxiety when asked to execute such a basic spiritual practice as saying a prayer in public (see Chapter 1: Spiritual Autobiography 67-68).

Over time, the lack of a reflective process fosters a low self-confidence in spiritual matters which can result in a lack of attention to one’s personal spiritual life, resulting in spiritual stagnation (Hawkins 2011, 134-135, 152-189). When this happens, Anglican churches are left with religious doers, as opposed to disciples whose lives are transformed in and through the experience of God’s love. An apt biblical example of this for Anglicanism is Jesus scolding Martha for her relentless busyness compared to her sister Mary who took the time to be

mentored in the faith (Luke 10:38-42). Likewise, the older brother in the parable of the prodigal son was diligently working for his father but he did not really know or live into the capacity of his father's love (Luke 15:11-32).

To summarize: at least three elements are required in order for an individual to experience growth in spiritual formation:

1. A personal encounter and awareness of God must be nurtured through a private devotional life that is attentive to specific spiritual practices.
2. A corporate worshipping community is required to provide relationships to support, model, encourage and reveal the cultural expectation to grow into the fullness of Christ.
3. A small group that, through a loving trusting relationship, models, nurtures and provides opportunity for practice and to experience and then orally reflect on the spiritual experience. This facilitates the confident awareness and sharing of that experience.

Other Resources

Chapter 3: Closing the Sanctification Gap in Anglican Formation, Adult experiential learning 116-118 provides a review of the resources used in this project. Below are additional resources used for this field research project.

Research by Stanford psychologist Albert Bandura in the area of self-efficacy showed that an individual's self-perception of their ability to successfully complete a task plays a key role in the effective execution of that task (Bandura 1977). According to Bandura, not only do people learn by reflecting on

experience, they learn through a complex internal process (Bandura 1985). There are four key factors that go into self-efficacy and the confidence required for leadership behaviours: 1. experiencing accomplishing a task so that “successes raise mastery expectations and repeated failures lower them” (SkillsYouNeed 2011); 2. observing the task modelled; 3. receiving affirmation and encouragement from others; and 4. positive personal somatic and emotional states that are interpreted as stimulating rather than stressful. In other words, “High aversive arousal tends to debilitate performance whereas with calm or low arousal, success is more likely” (SkillsYouNeed 2011).

In my experience at Trinity Anglican Church, Aurora, lay leaders do not exhibit confidence as spiritual leaders in activities such as praying in public or sharing their faith. Small groups can serve as a forum for modelling, achieving mastery, experiencing affirmation and lessening negative feelings of anxiety, all of which contribute to increased self-efficacy and confidence. This research project examines how a praxis-based small group helps foster confident spiritual leadership by giving Trinity lay leaders an opportunity to gather, learn and speak openly with others about their experience with spiritual practices and the effect these practices have on their relationship with God.

Methods

A training course was offered to twelve lay leaders at Trinity Anglican Church, Aurora. The focus of the course was to provide lay leaders with an opportunity to learn how to pray. The program deployed the principles of self-

efficacy (see Definitions 147) so that the participants would gain confidence in their ability to pray publicly. It also provided a form to experience a variety of prayer practices to allow them to develop a personal prayer practice in order that they would develop spiritual maturity.

Quantitative and qualitative data was collected through a third-party spiritual assessment survey and a prayer-behaviour test—both of which were applied at the beginning and at the end of the course—facilitator notes and participant emails. These four kinds of data were examined to see if there were changes in participants' behaviour after participating in the training course. The specific changes observed were: the level of negative feelings expressed when asked to pray in public; the type of personal prayers used (such as petitionary or prayers of solitude); the frequency of praying during the week and an assessment of participants' prayers based on the commonly expected elements for prayers at Trinity Anglican Church.

Field

As noted above (see Context 149-152), this research project took place at Trinity Anglican Church, Aurora, Ont., for seven weeks in the fall of 2016. All 12 participants were active members of the parish and had served in a leadership capacity in the parish. Eighty percent of the participants were over 50; about twenty percent were between 30 and 49 (see Appendix E, Episcopal Spiritual Life Inventory Findings, Survey 1, 224-238). Eighty-five percent of the participants were Anglicans from birth; only fifteen percent began attending church as adults.

Seventy percent had attended Trinity for more than five years. Ten of the participants had an English-European ethnic background; two were Chinese.

Rev. Diana McHardy and I co-facilitated the course. I have served in the parish for 10 years as rector (senior priest) and have a pastoral relationship with all the participants. Ms. McHardy is an Anglican priest and accredited spiritual director of the Ontario Jubilee spiritual directors program. She is also in a pastoral relationship with the participants through being an honorary priest of the parish. She provides regular worship leadership on Sunday and small-group spiritual direction throughout the year. She was trained as a spiritual director at Regis College, Toronto. Both Diana and I reflect the demographics of the parish and the participants insofar as we are both over 50, cradle Anglicans, serving at Trinity for more than five years and are of an English-European background.

I designed the course curriculum and served as the lead facilitator for the course sessions (see Appendix G: Spiritual Leaders Curriculum 255-258). I sent out weekly emails to the participants providing them with a review of the weekly session material and encouraging for them to pray during the week. For each session a participant was assigned to lead in an opening or closing prayer. A chance to reflect on the experience of leading public prayer was provided, along with the opportunity to receive supportive feedback from their small-group peers. I taught the 10 prayer practices, modelling each new practice and then facilitated a time to rehearse the practice and reflect on the practice. I also addressed questions and concerns, coached participants in the development of their spiritual

relationship and monitored group dynamics to ensure all participants were functioning well within the program. The co-facilitator served as a listener for the program and offered guidance and insight as appropriate.

Participants were expected to practise the various forms of prayer during the week and encouraged to speak about their experience with the practices and the experience of God in their lives. They completed a prayer-behaviour test at the beginning of the first session and then completed the same test once again at the end of the last session. Participants also completed the Episcopal Life Survey Inventory (ESLI) during the first week of the course and once again a week after the last session.

Along with the prayer-behaviour test and the spiritual vitality survey data, participant observations were recorded in a journal by both facilitators for the duration of the course. Emails, both solicited and unsolicited, were collected from participants. They also contributed to the participant observer data. Table 1: Data Sort shows the four types of data that were collected for this project.

Table 1. Data sort and how it was gathered

| Data Sort | Data Gathered | |
|---------------------------------------|-------------------------|-----------|
| 1. Participant Observer Data | Throughout each session | |
| 2. Participant Email | Throughout the course | |
| 3. Prayer Behaviour Test | Pre-test | Post-test |
| 4. Episcopal Spiritual Life Inventory | Pre-test | Post-test |

Scope

This research project examined the spiritual growth of Anglican lay leaders at Trinity Anglican Church, Aurora, and their behaviour competence in prayer developed over seven weeks in a small group that used experiential and social cognitive learning theory. The behavioural ability to lead prayer in public, the self-efficacy associated with achieving this ability and the impact of the course on spiritual growth is what was studied and measured. Training focussed on equipping individuals to pray both privately and publicly so that they would be able to lead others in prayer and speak confidently about their experience of God.

This study did not explore theological, moral, psychological or social issues associated with the topic of prayer, small-groups dynamics, discipleship or mission. The study did not examine the effectiveness of the program outside the context of the Anglican Church in an affluent suburban community in Canada.

Methodology

This is a qualitative research project deploying multiple methods of data gathering and analysis. Data was collected from participant observations, solicited

and unsolicited participant emails and two pre- and post-tests; specifically a prayer-behaviour test and a spiritual vitality survey called the Episcopal Spiritual Life Inventory (ESLI) purchased from RenewalWorks, a ministry of the Forward Movement organization. The ESLI is a resource of The Episcopal Church USA, which licensed the intellectual property from Willow Creek Community Church.

Qualitative data was acquired from the participant observation and emails and both qualitative and quantitative data was collected from the prayer-behaviour tests. Quantitative data was acquired from the ESLI assessments

Although this research project was not specifically an action research project, it deployed the aims and ideas of an action research project. An action research project “engages the people in the program or organization in studying their own problems in order to solve their own problems” (Patton 2002, 221). The participants of this project did not directly solve their own problem but by participating in the course they benefitted directly from it.

Methods

Participant observations were recorded in a journal or electronically from the orientation and six program sessions. Observations focussed on participants’ comments, behaviour and articulated feelings. The data was coded for comments that indicated negative or positive feelings toward praying in public or changed behaviour due to the course and indicators of spiritual growth. For example, at the orientation meeting I said that one of the objectives of the program was to equip the participants to say a prayer in public. I recorded reactions and later coded the

words or phrases associated with negative and positive feelings. Examples of negative words or phrases used were: “I would feel anxious,” “I am nervous already,” “out of control” and “embarrassing.” Examples of positive words or phrases used were: “I would give it a try,” “okay” and “I am good with that.” Emails were also received from the participants from which data was collected. The same coding that was applied to the participant observer data was applied to the email data.

The course design involved the four key factors of self-efficacy, (see Definitions above 147) specifically: 1. establishing a safe environment where the participants could feel comfortable in learning a new skill; 2. a facilitator modelling the 10 prayer practices and how to pray in public; 3. giving the participants a number of opportunities to rehearse the newly acquired skill of prayer writing and speaking; and 4. incrementally increasing the level of threat, that is, the size of the group being prayer with. At first, participants were asked to compose a prayer and pray it with one other peer. Then they wrote and led a prayer with two peers from the small group. Finally, by Session 3, and for the rest of the course, they were composing and leading opening and closing prayers for the whole group. Participant data was collected at each session to record the changes in the expressed feelings of the participants about praying in public.

Along with this, data was collected from a prayer-behaviour test administered at the beginning of the first session and at the end of the last session of the course. The questions on the prayer-behaviour test were:

1. Can you please describe your prayer life? How long do you pray?

When do you pray? What form do your prayers take?

2. Have you been asked to lead an extemporaneous prayer in public? If so, how did you respond? How did you feel? If not, how would you feel if asked to pray in public?

3. Please write a prayer for this scenario: You are at a friend's wedding reception. The mother of the bride says the clergy are unexpectedly not present. Would you say grace in about two minutes?

These same questions were used for both the pre- and post-tests. The participants' responses were collected, coded, collated, compared and analyzed from both the pre- and post-tests (See Appendix H: Prayer-Behaviour Pre-Test Responses, Question 1, 259-260; Appendix I: Prayer-Behaviour Post-Test, Question 1, 261-263). Data from Question 1 pre- and post-tests was coded under the categories: regularity of prayer, when they prayed, where they prayed, how long they prayed, form of prayer, prayer content and type of structured prayer. Data from Question 2 pre-test and post-tests was coded for negative and positive feelings and whether participants had previous experience praying in public. The data was input in a table and the totals were compared between pre- and post-tests (Appendix J: Effects of Experience on Feelings Toward Praying 264).

A rating scale was developed to assess the written prayers composed for Question 3 of the prayer-behaviour test (see Appendix K: Prayer Assessment Rating Table 265). The rating scale included the commonly recognized elements

of an Anglican collect that Anglicans would expect to hear in a public prayer offered at Trinity Anglican Church, Aurora (see Definitions 145). The elements are: 1. an invitation to pray, such as “let us pray...” 2. a salutation, 3. a thanksgiving, 4. a petition. 5. a situation or topic and 6. a mediation. All prayers were coded for the presence of these prayer elements and received one point for each element used. The prayer assessment ratings were tabulated and pre- and post-test ratings compared (Appendix K: Prayer Assessment Rating Table 265). This is an example of a prayer and the assessment rating used. Participant 7’s post-test prayer was:

Heavenly Father, we gather to celebrate this joyful marriage and we want to bring Your presence and blessing to this couple. We thank you Lord for bringing family and friends safely to this special wedding reception and we know that you will provide safety as they travel home. We thank you Lord for the food that has been prepared and we ask that we use it for Your purposes. We ask Lord, to bless and sanctify this couple as they move forward in Your Hands. We ask this in Your Name, Heavenly Father, Jesus Christ. Amen.

The prayer elements were coded as follows.

Table 2. Sample coding table for Question 3 of the prayer behaviour test

| | |
|---|--|
| Invitation | |
| Salutation | “Heavenly Father,” |
| Thanksgiving | “We thank you Lord for bringing family and friends safely to this special wedding reception...” and “We thank you Lord for the food that has been prepared...” |
| Petition | “we ask that we use it for Your purposes...” and “We ask Lord, to bless and sanctify this couple as they move forward in Your Hands.” |
| Situational Context e.g. table grace, health needs, turmoil | “We thank you Lord for the food that has been prepared and we ask that we use it for Your purposes.” |
| Mediation | “We ask this in Your Name, Heavenly Father, Jesus Christ.” |

The table below shows that Participant 7’s post-test prayer had five of the six expected elements, earning a score of 5.

Table 3. A sample rating from the prayer assessment table for Participant 7

| P 7 | Invitat’n | Salutat’n | Thanks | Grace | Petition | Mediate | Total |
|-----|-----------|-----------|--------|-------|----------|---------|-------|
| | | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 5 |

Participants were also asked to complete the ESLI. This was administered online, and the data was collated and analyzed by RenewalWorks. This method of data collection provided quantifiable data for spiritual vitality of the group. The data was collated under the category headings: Beliefs, Practices, and Faith in Action (see Appendices E and F: Episcopal Spiritual Life Survey Findings, Surveys 1 and 2, 224-254). It also provided a spiritual vitality index which measured the spiritual well-being of a community—a number that could be used to compare the population of this research project with more than 2,000

congregations and almost half a million church-goers who had previously completed the survey. On its own, the data from the ESLI survey reports cannot be considered statistically strong because of the small sample size, so the findings cannot be extrapolated beyond this project. A small sample size may not reflect the breadth of possible responses that a larger sample size would capture. However, when considered with the prayer-behaviour test data and the participant observer data, the ESLI data report provides relevant and compelling information for the purposes of this project.

The ESLI report also includes a qualitative assessment report of best practices and resources intended for parish planning purposes. This report, although interesting, was not directly useful for this research project.

The reports provide a mix of qualitative and quantitative data. The ESLI report provides numeric changes representing increases or decreases in the spiritual vitality of the group. The participant observer data provides qualitative data of the prayer behaviour of the participants.

Phases and Timetables

This research project had four distinct phases beginning in September, 2016, with a preparatory phase, planning phase, implementation phase and data-analysis phase.

Preparatory Phase (September, 2016)

- The Review Ethics Board application was submitted and approved on Sept. 27, 2016.

- Invitations were sent out, along with the program brochure, to all lay leaders at Trinity Anglican Church, Aurora, inviting them to participate in the research project. Besides the invitations, an announcement detailing the nature and timeline of the research project was placed in the Sunday parish bulletin and email. The invitation letter asked invitees to respond to a neutral third party, parish administrator Caroline Varsava, to accept or decline the invitation. Ms. Varsava fielded general questions and collected the responses to develop a participant list. The optimal number of participants was between six and 12, based on a first-come, first-served basis. Twelve individuals committed to participate in project.
- The course was developed by me in 2009 (see Chapter 3: Closing the Sanctification Gap in Anglican Formation, The Program 127-130) and was implemented at Trinity Anglican Church four times: 2010, 2011, 2013 and 2015. For the purposes of this research project the course was slightly modified to include an orientation session and a day-long retreat was excluded.
- All seven sessions (orientation and six program sessions) were scheduled in a room on the church property. While it did not ensure absolute privacy it provided a relatively sheltered environment within which a safe and trusting reflective group could develop.
- Negotiations took place with RenewalWorks, a ministry of the Forward Movement agency to purchase the Episcopal Spiritual Life Inventory

(ESLI) assessment resource. This assessment resource is typically used for a parish-wide diagnostic with a sample size of no fewer than 30 participants. Since only 12 individuals participated in this research project, staff at Forward Movement expressed concern that the data would not be statistically strong. It was decided that the assessment resource would be purchased for the purposes of the research project with due consideration for this concern.

- Each participant was assigned a code by Ms. Varsava, who then placed the code sheet in a locked and secured place. Ms. Varsava then placed each coded prayer-behaviour test in a manila envelope marked with the name matching the code. At the orientation meeting, participants were instructed to complete the prayer-behaviour test questionnaire, place the completed test back into the named manila envelope and seal it. The sealed envelopes were collected and given to Ms. Varsava who transcribed, collated and stored them.
- The two-hour orientation session was developed and implemented.
- This research project received approval from the Tyndale Research Ethics Board, September 27, 2016.

Planning Phase (September–mid-October 2016)

- The date for the orientation session was set for Oct. 19, 2016, and communicated to the participants.
- The course material was reviewed and the curriculum finalized.

- Consent forms (see Appendix A: Consent Form 211) were sent out to all participants to be collected at the end of the orientation session.
- A meeting was set up with the co-facilitator, Rev. Diana McHardy, to review the curriculum and determine leadership responsibilities.
- Participants attended a two-hour weekly course for seven weeks. The courses trained participants in 10 prayer techniques: body prayer, confession and absolution, contemplation, the examen, Ignatian imaginative prayer, *Lectio Divina*, prayer through music, reflective prayer, *Visio Divina*, and leading public prayer. (see Chapter 3: Closing the Sanctification Gap in Anglican Formation, The Program 127-130)
- Participants learned how to set up a sacred space in their home, were taught a prayer practice and how to conduct public prayer.
- Participants developed a daily prayer practice and committed to three 20-minute prayer sessions a week.
- Participants at the last session were asked to complete the prayer-behaviour post-test and to complete the ESLI online survey as a post-test during the week following the final session.

Data Analysis Phase (December, 2016–February, 2017)

- Participant observation journal and electronic notes were reviewed, and the data coded, compared and analyzed.
- The prayer-behaviour pre- and post-test data was coded, collated, compared and analyzed (see Appendices H: Prayer-Behaviour Pre-Test

Responses, Question 1, 259; I: Prayer-Behaviour Post-Test, Question 1, 261 and J: Effect of Experience on Feelings Toward Praying 264).

- A rating scale was developed to assess the composed prayers for Question 3 of the prayer-behaviour test. The data from the assessed prayers was collated, compared and analyzed (see Appendix K: Prayer Assessment Rating Table 265).
- Findings from the pre- and post-ESLI survey were received from RenewalWorks. The data was collated, compared and analyzed by the company and data finding reports were provided (see Appendices E and F: Episcopal Spiritual Life Inventory Findings, Survey 1 and 2, 224-254).

Ethics in Ministry-Based Research

The key ethical issue for ministry-based research is non-maleficence—to do no harm. It guided every aspect of the research project. This not only serves as a scientific and professional guide; it is rooted in a fundamental tenet of the Christian faith. As Tim Sensing says in *Qualitative Research: A Multi-Methods Approach to Projects for Doctor of Ministry Theses*: “Ethics is the logical consequence of your having died with Christ, being raised with him, and looking forward to being made manifest with him” (Sensing 2011, 1085). Jesus’ life, death and resurrection was a witness to both the vulnerability and the significance of the individual and a commitment to the just and fair treatment of everyone, especially the weak and marginalized (Matthew 6).

There are likely many benefits participants received from participation in this program, such as the experience of spiritual growth brought about by a regular prayer life and an opportunity to talk openly about spiritual experiences. Participants also experienced increased feelings of self-efficacy and self-confidence in their ability to pray publicly and privately. They deepened their knowledge of one another and developed what will likely be lasting and loving relationships. They may have had transformative spiritual experiences that made positive and enduring change in their lives. Finally, it is likely that they helped the Anglican Church, at diocesan, national and international levels, better understand and address spiritual formation needs. It is hoped that this will ultimately result in confident lay leaders equipped to disciple others in their faith.

Although participating in this research project comes with many benefits and does not present any greater risks than the participants might expect to encounter in any other small reflective group in the church, the risks associated with the imbalance of power and dual relationships must nevertheless be examined. It is essential to ensure that the vulnerability of the participants is respected, benefits are enhanced, and risk of harm minimized.

For the purposes of this project the ethical issues of power imbalance and risk were:

1. Participants may have felt pressured by the researcher to participate in the research project because the researcher is their rector (spiritual leader) and so in a dual relationship with them.

2. Participants may have felt stress and anxiety due to a lack of confidence in the areas they were learning about. There may been some risk that the prayer and small-group experiences would trigger traumatic memories and cause psychological distress and harm. Participants may also have felt uncomfortable sharing personal spiritual experiences with other participant parishioners.

3. Fellow participants in the small group may not have respected the confidentiality and privacy of individual participants, causing public distress and embarrassment.

4. Participation in the course may have disrupted previously established relationships in the community, causing social harm.

Procedures to lessen risk or stress were:

1. The survey invitation letter (Appendix C: Survey Invitation 219) asked invitees to respond to a neutral third party to accept or decline the invitation. This was a deliberate attempt to diminish any possible feeling of pressure to participate, so that invitees would not feel coerced by the influence of the rector, the primary researcher.

2. There was an orientation session introducing the participants to the objectives, norms and standards (see Appendix L: Group Norms 266) of the program and highlighting possible risks. Each participant was asked to sign a confidentiality agreement (see Appendix M: Confidentiality Agreement 267).

3. The program was co-led by a facilitator who is a qualified spiritual director with special training of groups in spiritual practices. The co-facilitator,

along with the primary researcher, provided mutual peer supervision. The primary researcher and the co-facilitator had successfully completed the requirements of diocesan policies for sexual misconduct, health and safety, and all other relevant policies regarding the ethical behaviour in leadership of ministry.

4. A process for addressing any ethical issues that might arise was established, including naming a warden (senior parish lay leader) as an outside contact person. This process was shared with participants in the orientation session.

5. In an effort to eliminate any perception of favouritism in the parish, the invitation letter was sent to all adult lay leaders who function in the parish. Participation was determined on a first-come, first-served basis.

6. Although there was an announcement detailing the nature and timeline of the research project in the parish, the names of participants were not made public and were only shared on an absolute need-to-know basis. All seven sessions took place in a building on church property, separate from the main church building.

Outcomes, Findings and Interpretation

The research study collected data to measure the effect of a praxis-based, small-group, discipleship course on: 1. the self-efficacy of Anglican lay leaders' ability to lead prayer in public and, 2. their growth or maturation along the spiritual continuum.

Findings were drawn from four sources: 1. participant observations from an orientation session, six training sessions from co-facilitators; 2. participant emails sent to the co-facilitators; 3. a prayer-behaviour test taken at the beginning of the orientation session and at the end of the sixth session; and 4. a pre- and post-course spiritual growth survey called the Episcopal Spiritual Life Inventory (ESLI).

Table 3 (see 164) below indicates that there were 12 participants in total. One participant missed the orientation session and did not complete the prayer-behaviour pre-test. Another participant dropped out of the program after the orientation session and so did not complete the ESLI surveys or prayer-behaviour post-test. As a result, there is data from 11 pre-tests and 11 post-tests, but only 10 complete sets of pre- and post-test comparative data.

Participant observation data was collected during and after each session and at the end of the project by both the co-facilitator and me in order to share and compare observations. Data was also collected from emails sent by participants to the facilitators over the duration of the course. It was not anticipated that we would receive data from participants' emails during the project. However, these emails turned out to be a rich source of content as individuals continued to reflect in them on their prayer experiences over the week that followed the session.

Table 4. Participant attendance table

| Participant Attendance Chart | | | | | | | | |
|---------------------------------------|------------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|
| | | Session 1 | Session 2 | Session 3 | Session 4 | Session 5 | Session 6 | Session 7 |
| Data Sort | | Oct. 19 | Oct. 26 | Nov. 9 | Nov. 16 | Nov. 23 | Nov. 30 | Dec. 7 |
| 1. Participant Observer Data | Attendance | 11 | 11 | 10 | 11 | 11 | 11 | 11 |
| | Change | 1 absent | 1 left | 1 absent | all present | all present | all present | all present |
| 2. Participant Email | | 12 | 42 | 15 | 8 | 4 | 6 | 35 |
| 3. Behaviour Competency Pre-Post | Attendance | 11 | n/a | n/a | n/a | n/a | n/a | 11 |
| | Change | 1 absent | n/a | n/a | n/a | n/a | n/a | 1 left |
| 4. Episcopal Spiritual Life Inventory | Attendance | 10 | n/a | n/a | n/a | n/a | n/a | 10 |
| | Change | 1 absent | n/a | n/a | n/a | n/a | n/a | 1 left |

The research findings from the participant observer data shows that more than half the participants expressed high levels of negative feelings when they were told one of the objectives of the course was teaching them to be able to pray in public. Participant observer data reveals a high level of apprehension and anxiety in the group at the beginning of the program compared to feelings of satisfaction and enthusiasm expressed at the end of the program.

At the orientation session, objectives of the program were reviewed with the participants, specifically that they would be praying out loud to each other. Many participants voiced their discomfort and disbelief during the orientation session when this objective was read to the group, saying they would “be too nervous” or would “make a mess of this.” One of the participants said: “This is so stressful. I can’t believe I signed up for this!” Another bluntly stated: “There is no way you will get me praying in public. When it is my turn, I won’t be here.” Said another: “The thought terrifies me!” In fact, the expression of negative feelings was so intense that it prompted a facilitated intervention to allay fears and manage anxiety in the group. Participants were reassured that they would start in small

groups of two with someone they trusted and that if they still felt uncomfortable they could always opt out of the exercise. They were also affirmed by the two facilitators, who said they believed the participants could accomplish the task.

The prayer-behaviour test, taken at the beginning of the orientation session, confirmed that about half of the participants expressed feelings of anxiety and discomfort about praying in public. Phrases such as “self-conscious,” “embarrassed” and “anxious” appeared in the answers to the second question of the pre-test asking how they felt about praying in public (see Appendix J: Effects of Experience on Feelings Toward Praying 264).

They not only expressed intense negative feelings but said those feelings would likely prevent them from successfully executing the task. Question 2 asked how they would respond if they were requested to pray extemporaneously. Some said that they would “simply reply, ‘no thank you’” or indicated they felt it was inappropriate for them to pray outside the Sunday worship. Two participants who expressed debilitating negative feelings refused to complete the third question of the test, which was to write a prayer that could be used in a public setting.

Figure 8 (see 175) shows the number of participants that expressed positive and negative feelings in their pre- and post-test answers to the prayer-behaviour test, Question 2. The pre-test bars show that the group was equally split between those who expressed negative and positive feelings toward leading prayer in public. The post-test data shows that all participants reported either positive feelings or non-debilitating negative feelings regarding the possibility of

praying in public. Instead of negative words, the participants used words in the post-test such as “confident,” “comfortable,” “okay” and “honoured.” They might have said that they would “not enjoy it” or “still find it difficult” but that this would not prevent them from giving the task a try: “I would give it a try” or “I will keep trying.” One comment summed up the change from negative pre-test to positive post-test feelings experienced by many of the participants: “Before this session I would have been terrified but now I feel that I would make the effort and feel more at ease” (Question 2, Post-test, Participant 10).

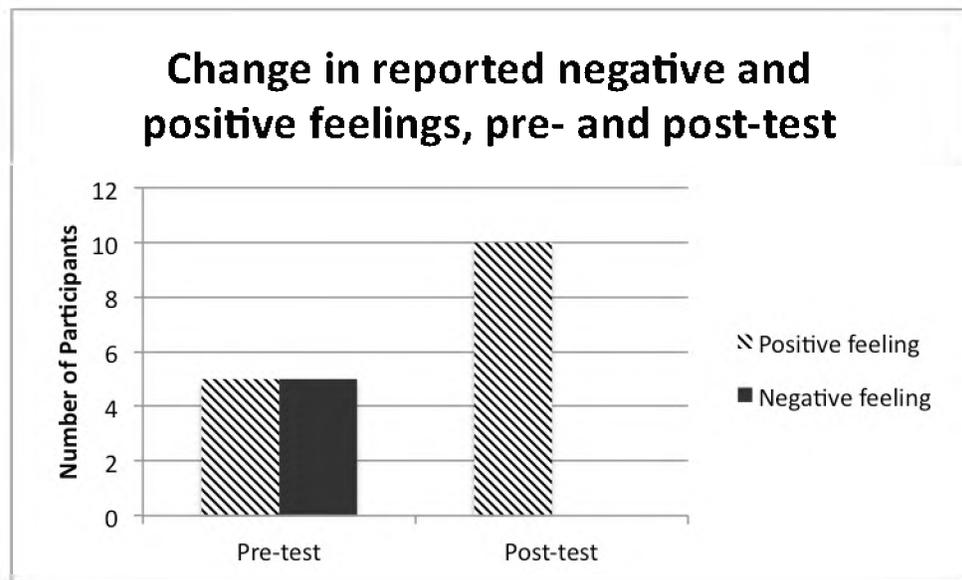


Figure 8. Change in reported negative and positive feelings, pre- and post-tests.

When previous experience was taken into consideration, pre-test data showed that those who expressed negative feelings towards the possibility of being asked to pray in public were less likely to have had a previous experience of praying in public. More participants expressed positive feelings if they had

previous experience praying in public. Figure 9 shows that those with no previous public praying experience were 80% more likely to express negative feelings about praying in public than those with previous experience.

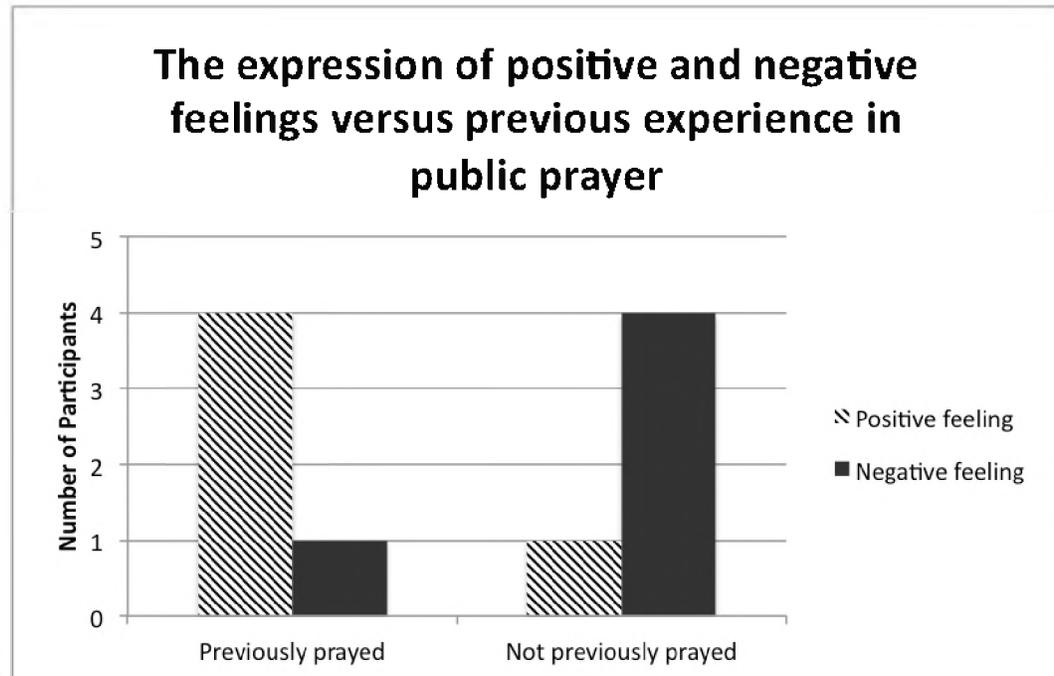


Figure 9. The expression of positive and negative feelings compared with having previously prayed publicly

The third question of the prayer-behaviour test provided the participants with a scenario and asked them to write a prayer they could use for the situation. The scenario was a wedding reception where the mother of the bride asks the participant to offer a prayer of grace and thanksgiving for the couple because the cleric is unexpectedly unavailable. Participants were asked to write a prayer they would use in such a situation. The prayer-behaviour being measured was the same as would be used for extemporaneous prayer. The prayers behaviour had the same demands, such as a need to express coherent ideas in a short period of time, the

task of formulating phrases that address the context, and the expectation to form a prayer according to the cultural norms of the community. Each prayer was assessed according to a rating table of reasonably expected standards for public prayer within the tradition of Trinity Anglican Church, Aurora (see above section Methods 161-165). Criteria included having an invitation, a salutation, a thanksgiving, a petition, situational content and a closing mediation. All but two participants completed the task, even though their previous answers indicated they did so with feelings of anxiety and discomfort. Comparing the pre- and post-test written prayers revealed an overall improvement in the average assessment ratings for the post-test prayers. Figure 10 shows an increase of 31% in the average

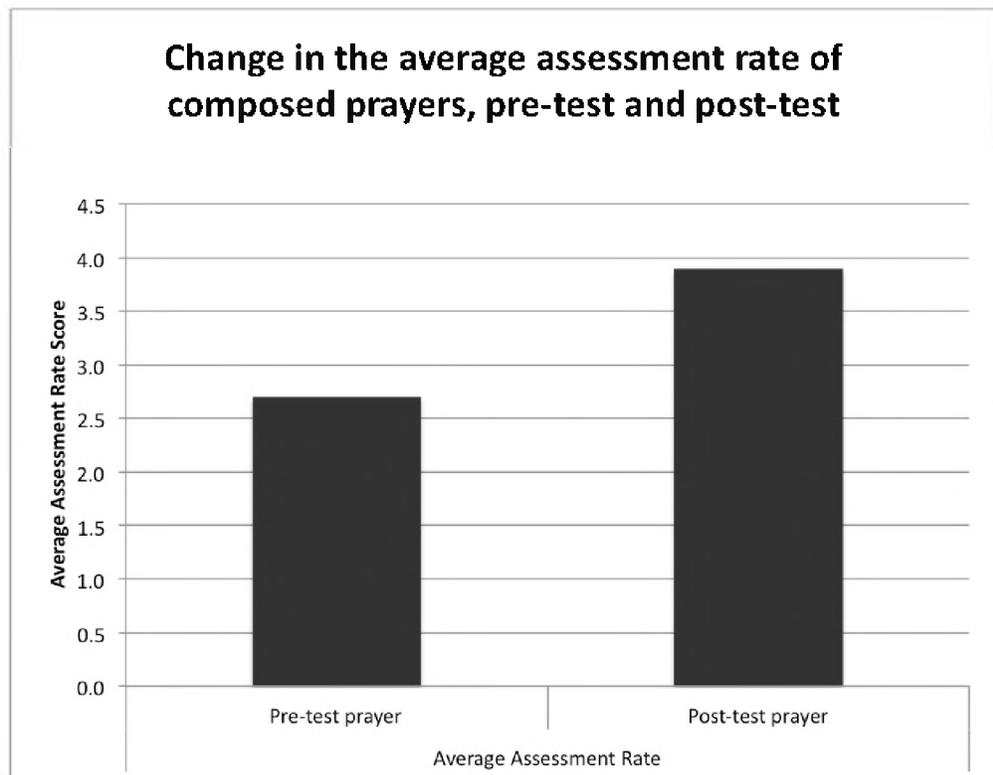


Figure 10. Change in the average assessment rate of the participant composed prayers, pre- and post-test.

assessment rate of the written prayers at the end of the course compared with those written at the beginning of the course.

Strikingly, further analysis of the pre-test average assessment rate for the written prayer revealed that the groups that expressed negative or positive feelings had an identical assessment rate. In other words, regardless of the expressed feelings of the participants in the pre-test, both groups wrote prayers that were rated equally. The average prayer assessment rating number was found by applying the rating scale to each prayer (see Methods 161-165) and taking the average of the assessment rate for the groups that expressed positive or negative feelings. Both the group that expressed positive feelings and the group that expressed negative feelings scored an average assessment rate of 3.2 for their written prayers. Since the research (shown in Figure 9 above 176) revealed that those who expressed negative feelings toward praying in public were less likely to have had previous experience praying in public, it would have been reasonable to assume that the participants with negative feelings might have fared more poorly in the written prayer task, given their lack of experience. However, Figure 11 shows that participants who expressed negative feelings toward praying in public were able to write a public prayer as competently as those with previous experience.

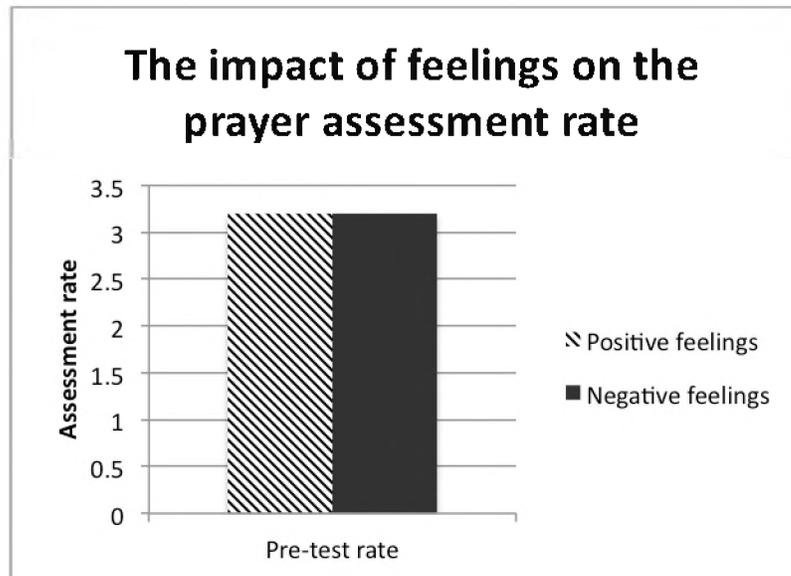


Figure 11. The impact of feelings on the prayer assessment rate.

This finding is consistent with participant observation data that confirmed participants were capable of writing and leading prayer in public even though they had expressed anxiety and a lack of confidence that would have likely prevented them from actually doing it.

Along with the prayers written for Question 3 of the prayer-behaviour test, each participant was assigned the task of writing and leading prayer in graduated public settings (see Methods 161-165). These public prayers were collected and rated according to the same assessment rating scale used for Question 3 of the prayer-behaviour pre- and post-tests. Again, all the prayers scored greater than 3 out of 6, meaning they contained more than three of the prayer elements reasonably expected in a public prayer at Trinity (Appendix N: Rate Table of Participant’s Opening and Closing Prayers 268). This is an example of a

participant’s prayer from Session 3 who had expressed negative feelings about praying in public in question 2 of the prayer-behaviour test.

Loving God, We thank you for your presence with us as we struggle to find meaning in the turmoil of this day. We are frightened and confused, as was Jesus in Gethsemane. Certainty has dropped away and we cannot sense a clear way ahead. When Jesus felt this way, he gave himself over to you and turned towards his future. We pray that we will come to recognize your guidance into our future. Amen (Participant comment, Session 3)
The assessment rate scale was applied, see Table 5 below.

Table 5. Sample coding table for Question 3 of the prayer behaviour test

| | |
|---|---|
| Invitation | |
| Salutation | “Loving God,” |
| Thanksgiving | “We thank you for your presence with us as we struggle to find meaning in the turmoil of this day” |
| Petition | “We pray that we will come to recognize your guidance into our future” |
| Situational Context e.g. table grace, health needs, turmoil | “We are frightened and confused, as was Jesus in Gethsemane. Certainty has dropped away and we cannot sense a clear way ahead.” |
| Mediation | |

Table 6. Sample rating for the prayer assessment table for Participant 2

| P 2 | Invitation | Salutat’n | Thanks | Grace | Petition | Mediate | Total |
|-----|------------|-----------|--------|-------|----------|---------|-------|
| | 0 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 4 |

The prayer assessment scoring above shows that the prayer from Participant 2 had four of the six prayer elements in the composed prayer. Therefore Participant 2’s closing prayer for Session 3 received an assessment score of 4.

One of the expectations of the course was that each participant would commit to practising the prayer form they were taught and experienced at each course session. They were offered a small reward in the form of a sticker if they prayed the appropriate prayer form three times during the week between the sessions. This simple motivational strategy gave the participants a small incentive to perform the task and be publicly rewarded. This motivational strategy was offered in good humour at the first session but the positive response of the participants ensured it continued. Each session of the course began with a regular check-in where participants reported on the frequency of their prayer practice during the previous week and reflected on the experience of that practice and received their sticker.

Findings from the participant observer data suggest that over the seven weeks of the course this modest accountability structure resulted in an increase in the number of times participants prayed daily. Eight of eleven participants consistently reported they were praying more frequently. The quality of their prayer time also changed. One participant's comment reflects the change in behaviour observed in most of the other participants: "I used to just have a short prayer to God whenever I needed something. Now I sit down for about a half hour each day. I can't tell you how much this is feeding my soul!" (Participant comment, Session 7).

Findings from the pre- and post-prayer-behaviour questionnaire confirm these qualitative findings (see Appendices H and I 259-263). In the pre-test, seven

of the 11 participants described their prayer life as ad hoc, sporadic or unstructured. In the post-test, they described their prayer life as focused and regular. Figure 12 shows that at the beginning of the course 33% of the participants described their prayer life as sporadic. By the end of the course none of the participants identified their prayer life as sporadic. In fact, there was a 43% increase in those who said they either prayed daily, two to three times a day or continually. As one participant said during the program: “Here’s to the awareness of God slipping into our everyday doings” (Participant email).

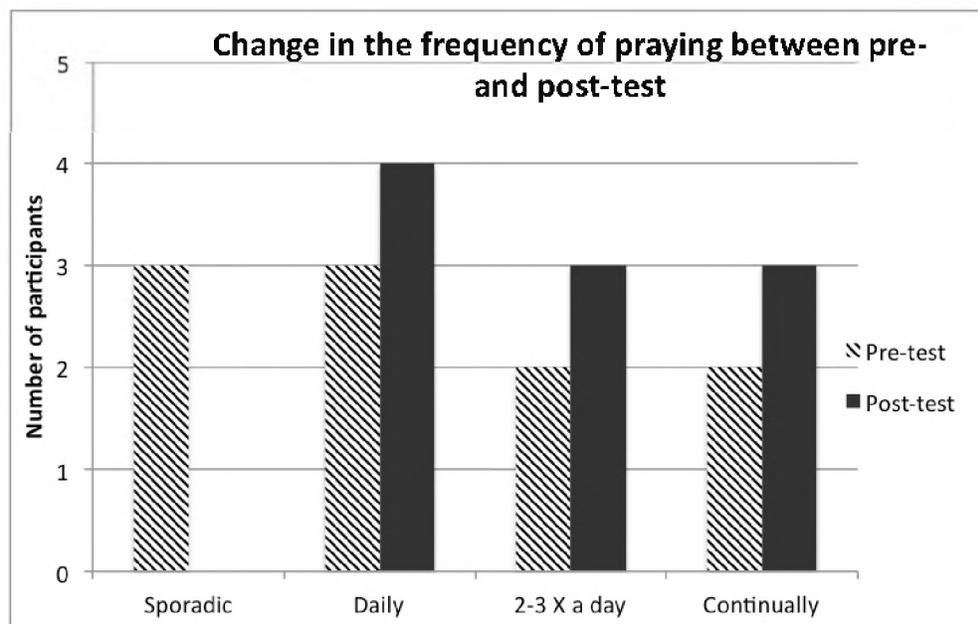


Figure 12. Change in the frequency of praying between pre- and post-test.

Another change that was revealed in the participant observer data was that participants’ comments suggested that as they began praying more frequently they shifted to praying more consistently in the morning. At each session, one or two

participants would say that they were beginning to set aside a specific amount of time in the morning for prayer.

This observation is also confirmed by the pre- and post-prayer-behaviour test data (see Appendices H and I: 259-263), as seen in Figure 13 (see 185). The findings show that participants tended to change the time of day they prayed over the duration of the course. In the pre-test, most participants said that if they prayed at all, they were more likely to pray at night before falling asleep. The post-test showed an increase of 125% in the number of participants who said they prayed in the morning. Both the qualitative and quantitative data show conclusively that as participants established a regular prayer life they prayed more in the morning. By the end of the course there was a small decrease in the number of participants who said they prayed at night before sleep, but the number of participants doubled who said they prayed throughout the day.

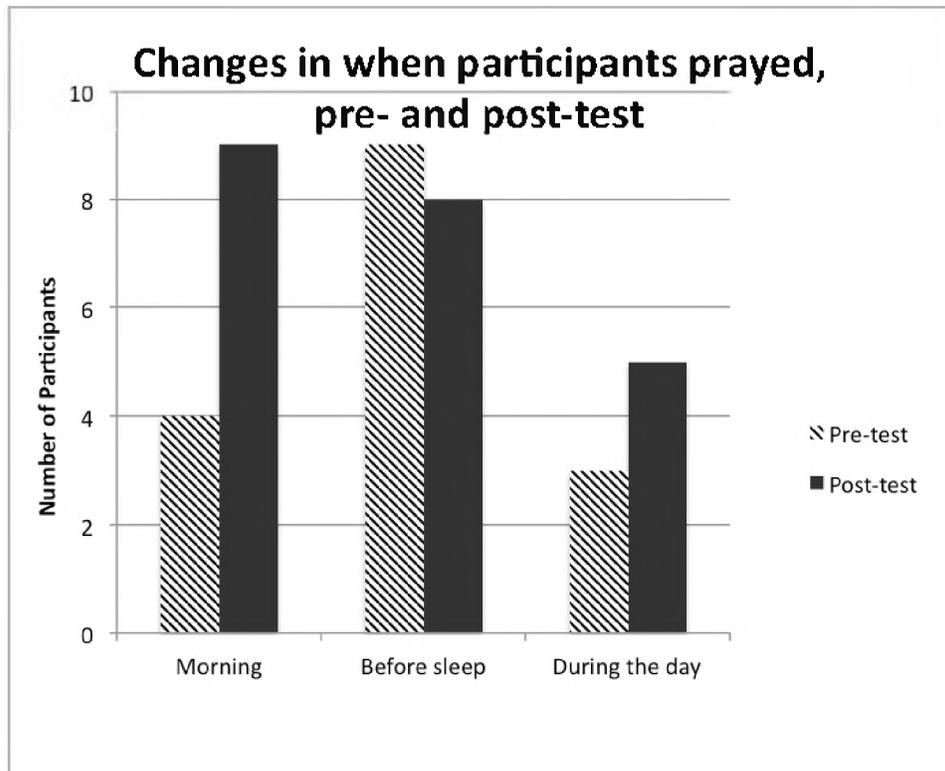


Figure 13. Changes in when participants prayed, pre- and post-test.

The participant observer data from the first session revealed most participants did not use any devotional resources to help them structure their prayer time. Most participants described their prayers as quick ones before falling asleep, while driving in the car or at some other time of day when faced with a particular issue or concern. A few admitted they were aware of resources such as Forward Movement’s *Day by Day* booklets that the parish provides, but they were not using them. None of the participants said they used scripture in their prayer time. This finding was consistent with the ESLI Survey 1 report (see Appendix E: Episcopal Spiritual Life Inventory Data Findings, Survey 1 224-238) that showed that at the beginning of the course the group percentage for Reflection on

Scripture was 10%—well below the Episcopal Norm of 15% or All Church Norm of 23%.

The prayer-behaviour pre- and post-tests showed that in the pre-test, most participants described their prayer time as unstructured, with episodic connections with God. In the post-test they mostly described a structured prayer format that included such things as breathing exercises, use of scripture, meditating with a devotional book or using one of the 10 prayer formats learned during the course. This would have been expected since the course introduced the participants to 10 different structured prayer practices and a stated objective was that they try the newly learned prayer practice at least three times through the week following the session.

The data from the pre- and post-prayer-behaviour test suggests that the prayers of the participants can be grouped in three general categories: 1. praise and thanksgiving, 2. petitionary requests, and 3. contemplation and silent meditation. The praise and thanksgiving category includes prayers of thanks to God for people, events and opportunities. The petitionary prayer category involves participant responses showing they made requests of God for such things as help dealing with personal issues, good health for family members or peace on Earth. The contemplation and silent meditation category included prayers where participant responses specifically said they used a contemplative prayer method or described a contemplative method such as “prayer is... opening to God and usually silent listening” (Participant comment, Session 6). Figure 14 shows that in

the pre-test there was a higher incidence of petitionary prayers. The post-test reveals a significant shift away from petitionary prayers to contemplative prayer (see Appendices H and I: 259-263).

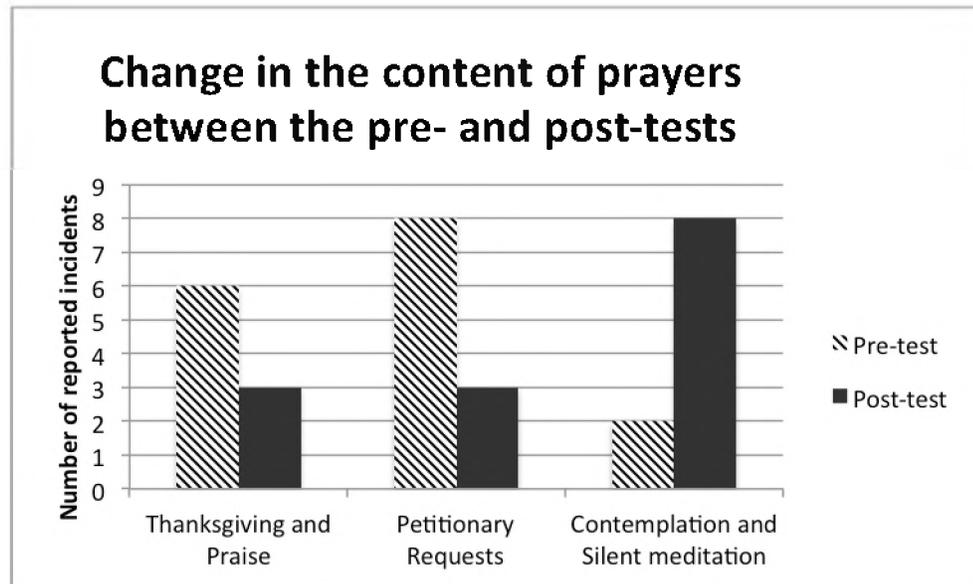


Figure 14. Change in the content of prayers between the pre- and post-test.

These findings were also picked up in the ESLI Surveys (see Appendices E and F: 224-254). The second survey showed increases in the group profile in the components entitled Spiritual Practices, specifically in the two categories of Solitude and Praying for Others. The Spiritual Vitality Components showed that the response percentages for Survey 1 for Solitude were 51%, increasing to 80% in Survey 2. Solitude was defined by the ESLI as “I specifically set time aside for God” (Dixon 2017). The Praying for Others component in Survey 1 was 30% increasing to 50% in Survey 2. It is defined as: “I ask God to help others as well as myself” (Dixon 2017). On the surface this might indicate a finding opposed to the prayer-behaviour test, suggesting an increase in petitionary prayers from the

first survey to the second. This is not the case, however, as the Praying for Others component has more to do with being concerned for the welfare of others as opposed to petitionary prayer that comes as a response to specific circumstances.

Certainly the findings from the participant observer data indicate a decrease in petitionary prayer and an increase in solitude prayer. Of all 10 prayer practices offered in the course, contemplation was by far the most popular, followed by *Lectio Divina*. One participant said, with five others nodding in affirmation, that “the contemplation prayer is the best gift I got from the program” (Participant comment, Session 7). As said in the Willow Creek *Reveal* study, there is a “dramatic rise in daily personal spiritual practices for the Close to Christ segment compared with the Growing in Christ segment” (Hawkins and Parkinson 2011, 70-73) (see Definition: Spiritual Continuum 147). Also, the way people pray changes between the two stages with those in the Close to Christ spending more time “listen[ing] to God during quiet times of solitude” (Hawkins and Parkinson 2011, 69).

Participant observer data from the seven weeks also showed participants made statements consistent with those indicating spiritual growth along the spiritual continuum as defined by Willow Creek, *Reveal* (Hawkins and Parkinson 2011, 48-64). The phrase that captures the feelings of the participants in Session 2 is “hungry and ready” (Co-facilitator comment, Session 1). By Session 5, participants were using phrases such as: “When I pray I am sensing a calm come over me” (Participant comment, Session 5).

Participant phrases such as “get closer to God”, “sense God’s presence” and “more open to God” were recorded in the participant observations in the last three sessions of the course but not at all in the first four sessions. In fact, in the orientation session, when the purpose of prayer was discussed, none of the participants offered relational concepts such as defining prayer as a conversation that deepened their relationship with God. This was confirmed in the participant emails. Only emails that were received at the end of the program contained phrases about how the course had helped them develop a closer relationship with God. One email response was: “I have never experienced anything like it. It was transformational” (Participant email, 13.12.17). Another said: “For the first time I am having these spiritual encounters” (Participant email, 15.12.17). And finally “I benefited a great deal from the series... and just get closer to God” (Participant email, 15.12.17).

Emails received after the last session of the course revealed that the participants recognized that they felt they were developing a deeper relationship with God. A participant said at the last session: “[This course] has changed me. I have a peace within and a calmness that regardless of what happens, you know you are never alone” (Participant comment, Session 7).

The ESLI data reports (Appendices E and F: 224-254) showed an increase in the Spiritual Vitality Index between the two surveys, going from 43 for Survey 1 to 64 for Survey 2. The index increase concurred with the participant observation data and the prayer-behaviour test findings above that show that over

the duration of the course individuals changed their prayer practices to being more frequent and contemplative.

In the Spiritual Vitality Components under the Belief category there were increases in five of the eight components, specifically the ones entitled: Trinity, Spiritual Growth and Interfaith Conversations. The *Spiritual Life Inventory Data Findings Report* notes that: “Anglicans place a high value on understanding the reality of God through the doctrine of the Trinity. While other denominations may seem more focused on Jesus” (RenewalWorks 2016, 5). Although this research project is not studying the effect of spiritual growth on the level of belief, the ESLI findings suggest there might be a connection.

There were also increases in six of the nine Spiritual Vitality Components under the Practices category. As noted above, the largest increase was in Solitude as a form of prayer. Finally, there were increases in four of the seven elements of the Faith in Action components. The Serving Those in Need on My Own was the only element that decreased between surveys.

The survey accurately picked up that participants were involved in a small group. The *Reveal* study shows that participation in a small group serves as a catalyst for growth along the spiritual continuum (Hawkins and Parkinson 2011, 18 and 275). As the survey report says: “Small group systems in a church help people to connect in spiritual friendship and mentoring relationships” (Hawkins and Parkinson 2016, 9). The value of being in a group was consistently noted in the participant observer data over the duration of the course. As one participant

said: “I realized I was not alone on this spiritual journey” (Participant email, 15.12.17). Another participant said: “I benefitted a great deal from the series in ways related to getting to know others from the church, feeling accepted by them and in developing a prayer practice beyond current methods” (Participant email, 13.12.17). This showed that the participants had a positive experience of participating in the small group and that it likely served as a catalyst for spiritual growth.

The participant’s comments and emails revealed that there were positive feelings with the program, such as,

I don't think that I fully understood what the program would encompass and the depths to which it would go. I needed that challenge more than I was prepared to admit. I know that it sounds a bit obsequious, but the program was (for me) life changing. My eyes were opened to a whole new realm of spiritual practice and activity... things that I can carry with me. I still have lots to do, but the process does not end when the program wraps up” (Participant email, 13.12.17).

Other comments indicated that for some participants their relationship with God had deepened over the duration of the course. “Thank you for giving me a chance to get close to God” (Participant comment, Session 7).

Interpretation

The findings of the research project showed that lay leaders at Trinity Anglican Church who participated in a small group praxis-based prayer course had fewer negative feelings about praying in public and an increased sense of self-efficacy and confidence resulting in their willingness to lead in public prayer. The findings also showed that the course design addressed the four factors of self-

efficacy as shown in the participants' willingness to lead public prayer in increasingly larger groups, thereby exhibiting spiritual leadership behaviours. Finally, the findings also showed that participating in the practice of prayer—an expectation of the course—not only increased self-efficacy and a willingness to lead public prayer but it increased the spiritual maturity of the participants along the spiritual continuum.

It was observed in this research project that, consistent with Bandura's findings, one of the factors that adversely affects self-efficacy was the individual's emotional state. As Bandura says "a positive mood enhances perceived self-efficacy, despondent mood diminishes it" (Bandura 1994, 71-81). The research findings from the participant observer data show that more than half of the participants expressed a high level of negative feeling when they were told in the orientation session that one of the objectives of the course was to pray in public. Not only did these feelings prompt a sense of anxiety for the participants, they said it would prohibit them from exhibiting leadership behaviour such as leading prayer. This was confirmed in the findings from the prayer-behaviour test which revealed that 50% of the participants harboured negative feelings that would have prohibited them from praying in public. (See Figure 8, 175).

By the end of the course there were no negative feelings expressed about praying in public that would have prohibited them from exhibiting the prayer behaviour. This was confirmed by the prayer-behaviour post-test. It showed that after participation in the course, debilitating negative expressions were almost

completely eliminated and, if negative feelings were expressed at all, they were couched in terms suggesting that the feelings would not preclude them from executing the behaviour.

The presence of negative feelings, in and of themselves, may not result in an inability to act, but the perception and interpretation of those emotions and feelings stops the behaviour. As Bandura notes: “[P]eople who have a high sense of efficacy are likely to view their state of affective arousal as an energizing facilitator of performance, whereas those who are beset by self-doubts regard their arousal as a debilitator” (Bandura 1994, 71-81).

The findings from this research project show that at the beginning of the course some participants not only felt negatively toward praying in public but that they interpreted those feelings in such a way as to preclude them from completing the behaviour and praying in public. This is consistent with Bandura’s findings that if individuals feel that a particular action is possible but “they entertain serious doubts about whether they can perform the necessary activities [the positive information about their abilities] does not influence their behaviour” (Bandura 1977, 193). One participant wrote on the prayer-behaviour pre-test: “I am not confident in this area.” The person then refused to complete the written prayer for public use asked in Question 3. In the subsequent sessions, this participant, as with all the other participants, was required to write and offer a public prayer, which they did successfully. Bandura says that “extinguishing

arousal to threats will enhance self-efficacy” (Bandura 1997, 212). To best accomplish this:

8. One must, therefore, create an environment so that incapacitated phobics can perform successfully despite themselves. This is achieved by enlisting a variety of performance mastery aids. Feared activities are first modeled to show people how to cope with threats and to disconfirm their worst fears. Coping tasks are broken down into subtasks of easily mastered steps. Performing feared activities together with the therapist further enables phobics to do things they would resist doing by themselves. Another way of overcoming resistance is to use graduated time (Bandura 1994, 71-81).

The findings from this research project show that there was a decrease of 100% of the debilitating negative feelings that were expressed in the orientation session. This suggests that the four factors of self-efficacy were effectively deployed within the course and increased the self-confidence of the participants (see section Methods 161-165). Specifically, the small-group setting created a safe environment for learning and developing self-efficacy. The group norms (see Appendix L: Group Norms 266) were enforced, providing a supportive and affirming environment which gave participants the chance to receive feedback and affirmation from their peers, thus providing them with opportunities for social persuasion. Further, the co-facilitators modelled public prayer and the 10 prayer forms before assigning them to the participants for their trial. In this way the

participants were able to observe the facilitators in prayer, which normalized and made public what is often a private experience for Anglicans. One participant's response to this showed that this modeling was appreciated: "Then there's you and Diana—willing to risk in love and be totally genuine" (Participant email, 13.12.16).

Along with this, the course design used a praxis-based training model to give participants the opportunity to experience, reflect on and incorporate new learnings. The expectation to try out the prayer practice between sessions meant participants also had the opportunity to practice the prayer format and assess it as a suitable practice for their temperament and lifestyle. The prayer-behaviour test findings shown in Figure 10 (see 178) reinforced this concept that "mastery experiences" are a source of increased self-efficacy. As Bandura says, "strong efficacy expectations are developed through repeated success" (Bandura 1977, 195). Over the duration of the course participants got to successfully experiment with various prayer practices, including public prayer, which increased their self-efficacy and consequently improved not only their ability to compose suitable prayers for public use, but their confidence in themselves that they could successfully lead in public prayer.

An interesting finding was that although participants expressed negative feelings and indicated they felt incompetent to pray publicly, their written prayers for public use were as good as those who had expressed no negative feelings and had previous experience praying in public. In other words, participants' feelings

that contributed to low self-efficacy were not a reliable indicator of their actual behaviour skill and capability. This is consistent with Bandura's studies that showed individuals might have negative feelings and incorrectly assume they are unable to achieve the behaviour are in fact capable of executing the behaviour. As Bandura says: "people's level of motivation, affective states, and actions are based more on what they believe than on what is objectively true" (Bandura 1994, 71-81).

The findings of this project revealed that all participants were equally capable of executing the task and writing a prayer to say in public regardless of whether they felt positively or negatively toward the task. However, studies in self-efficacy indicate that only those who feel positively toward the task will feel confident enough to actually execute the behaviour and complete the task, and in this case, offer a public prayer. As Bandura says: "People who are beset with uncertainties about their personal efficacy not only curtail the range of their activities but undermine their efforts in those they undertake. The result is a progressive loss of interest and skill" (Bandura 1994, 71-81). This may account for why Trinity's leaders function confidently in their secular leadership roles, while refusing to execute the simplest spiritual practice normative for their spiritual leadership role.

Summing up, the findings, the prayer-behaviour post-test show that fewer negative feelings were expressed when compared with those of the pre-test, and that none of the post-test negative expressions were deemed debilitating. This is

consistent with other studies in this field that show increased self-efficacy fosters an internal confidence resulting in an individual exhibiting leadership behaviours, in this case, leading public prayer (Bandura 1977, 1999; Pajares 2002). The data shows that all four factors that are proven to increase self-efficacy were addressed in the course design and that they resulted in decreased negative feelings that would debilitate praying in public. This ultimately contributed to participants in the spiritual leaders course at Trinity Anglican Church improving their ability to write and develop the necessary confidence to lead a prayer in public (see Figure 10, 178).

These findings are consistent with the Willow Creek survey findings from the *Reveal* study. As they say: “Building faith privately through personal spiritual practices or within the confines of the church are relatively safe roads to travel for many people when compared to public displays of faith...But taking a risk is essential to building faith, and we observe an increasing willingness to do exactly that” (Hawkins and Parkinson 2011, 120).

Although, the activity of praying is not directly responsible for spiritual growth, it does serve as a catalyst for growth. As the authors say in *Move: What 1,000 Churches Reveal about Spiritual Growth*, the *Reveal* study “confirms incredible impact of personal spiritual practices on accelerating growth” (Hawkins and Parkinson 2011, 117). The *Reveal* research study defines spiritual growth as “increasing love of God and increasing love of others-Matthew 22:37-40” (Hawkins and Parkinson 2011, 18) As the authors suggest, this is because

“the depth of our relationship with Christ, like the depth of human relationships, develops with increasingly frequent and intimate communication” (Hawkins and Parkinson 2011, 117). Participant phrases and emails over the duration of the course showed that they were becoming more relational toward God, indicating that they were spiritually growing.

Recognizing that the practice of prayer is a catalyst for spiritual growth, Hawkins and Parkinson noted that “Prayer is...an important aspect of spiritual growth, helping those [in Stage 2 to] establish a daily rhythm of conversation with God” (Hawkins and Parkinson 2011, 57-58). This research project showed that over the duration of the course participants increased in their frequency of prayer (Figure 12, 183), increased in the use a structured format for prayer and moved from petition to solitude as a form of prayer (Figure 14, 187). This indicated that an outcome of practising the 10 prayer forms was to move along the spiritual continuum from Stage 2, Growing in Christ, to Stage 3, Close to Christ. In other words, the activity of praying drew the participants into a closer relationship with God.

The Spiritual Vitality Index of the ESLI report provides “a window into where your parishioners currently are in their spiritual journey” (ESLI 2017, 15). As a measure of the spiritual well-being of the community, in this case the small group, it showed an increased from 43 for Survey 1 to 64 for Survey 2. The Index, does not on its own indicate spiritual growth but, along with the participant observer and prayer-behaviour data, it confirms that by the end of the course,

participants were deepening their relationship with God and growing along the spiritual continuum.

The findings, therefore, of this research project show that, through participant observation data, the prayer-behaviour test data and confirmed in the ESLI data; a praxis-based, discipleship, small-group course increased prayer practices, fostered confidence in public prayer and accelerated spiritual maturity in Anglican lay leaders at Trinity Anglican Church, Aurora.

Conclusion and Implications

The findings from this research project showed that lay leaders at Trinity Anglican Church, Aurora, by participating in a praxis-based, discipleship small-group course, showed spiritual leadership behaviour by taking on a regular prayer practice and leading prayer in public. This was accomplished by increasing the self-efficacy of the participants and thereby increasing their willingness to pray, both publicly and privately. The theory of self-efficacy is that people are more likely to do certain behaviours if they believe in their capacity to accomplish them (Bandura 1994, 71-81). Certainly this data shows that after being taught a step-by-step process and gradually experiencing mastery of the task of praying in public and provided with encouragement from the group, Anglican leaders at Trinity can become willing prayers in public.

Participants' willingness to pray in public had no relation to their ability to publicly pray. Participants were unwilling to pray because of their lack of confidence. In other words, Anglican lay leaders at Trinity who feel anxious about

praying in public are almost certainly capable of doing so but are unwilling because of the negative feelings they feel toward the task.

Finally, the research project showed that an outcome from the activity of regularly praying, which was a central feature of the course, resulted in the spiritually growth of the participants along the spiritual continuum.

The research project showed that the small group served as an instrumental forum or catalyst for forming spiritual leadership. It did this by providing a place where the spiritual practice of prayer could be experienced, spoken about, rehearsed and incorporated into the life practices of the participants. Additionally, the small group provided a safe place for experiencing the four principles of self-efficacy, allowing the participants to grow in confidence in their abilities.

A model for developing spiritual leaders at Trinity Church contains these elements:

1. practising public prayer in a safe and supportive small group can lessen an individual's negative feelings and increase positive feelings toward their ability to pray in public,
2. lessened negative feelings and increased positive feelings will result in a increased sense of self-confidence in an individual's ability to pray in public,
3. increased self-confidence in an individual's ability to pray in public will result in a willingness to pray.

4. increased willingness to pray in public results in an individual exhibiting the spiritual leadership behaviour of praying in public.

An outcome of the course that focused on practicing 10 different prayer forms was that a regular prayer practice served as a catalyst for spiritual growth along the spiritual continuum. This was evident in:

1. an increasing number of comments over the duration of the course about drawing closer to God and into a deeper relationship with God;
2. a decreased use of petitionary prayers and increased use of prayers of solitude;
3. an increased used of structured prayer format for their daily prayer practice such as *Lectio Divina* or the examen;
4. the establishment of a regular prayer time and practice; and
5. an increase in the ELSI Spiritual Vitality Index that indicated that the spiritual well-being within the group had increased.

The study provided evidence that, as in with my own spiritual journey, more than liturgy and private spiritual devotions should be used at Trinity Anglican Church, Aurora to spiritually form the people. Spiritual leadership can be fostered through a small-group, praxis-based discipleship program that gives individuals an opportunity to increase in self-efficacy, become more confident sharing their faith experience and grow spiritually along the spiritual continuum. I have experienced that spiritual growth is fostered through a relationship with God and others. This field research project has shown that this is consistent with how other people spiritually grow. It is by relating with others that we integrate the

spiritual experience into meaning and it is by relating with God that we are shaped and formed into Christ's likeness.

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CHAPTER 5:

CONCLUSION

Spiritual growth, or formation, is the process of deepening one's relationship with God, others and the world. Spiritual practices act as catalysts for deepening these relationships and fostering spiritual growth and maturity. The Anglican Church emphasizes two spiritual practices to enable spiritual formation: corporate worship and personal devotions. A third spiritual practice of participation in a reflective small group would provide a bridge in the church between corporate worship and personal devotions and would ensure more confident spiritual lay leadership. It would also provide a more effective process for growth along the spiritual continuum for parishioners.

At Trinity Anglican Church, lay leaders said they felt incompetent when asked to exhibit leadership behaviours such as offering a prayer in public. This was as a result of only being spiritually formed through corporate worship and personal devotions. The findings from the research project showed that the praxis-based small-group discipleship program *Lift High the Cross* prayer module was effective in increasing self-efficacy in leadership behaviours associated with public prayer. The research showed that before taking the program lay leaders had the ability but lacked the confidence to complete the task of praying publicly. The program was also effective in helping participants establish a regular prayer practice, resulting in the leaders developing more mature prayer practices, such as prayers of solitude, rather than merely using petitionary prayers. Finally, by

participating in the small group and taking on a regular prayer practice, the findings showed the participants moved along the spiritual continuum.

This confirmed my own experience in church leadership in which I exhibited competent secular leadership skills while feeling incompetent with spiritual leadership abilities. Eventually, over-reliance on my own abilities left me spiritually depleted because I was operating from a rational functional perspective rather than relying on the work of the Holy Spirit. It was through the interaction first with a mentor and then with a small group of my DMin cohort that I became confident in my relationship with Christ and deepened spiritually.

The Anglican Church worldwide is calling for intentional discipleship in recognition of the need for confident witnessing of faith from both clergy and laity. If a church such as Trinity does not spiritually form lay leaders in this way it will not be able to model spiritual leadership abilities for the next generation and will leave them ill-equipped for growing in their relationship with God. But the spiritual formation journey of the laity must also be made by our clergy. The *Lift High the Cross* program or any other discipleship initiative must begin with transformed clergy leadership who have themselves experienced God's redeeming love and can speak of its healing grace and humbling joy. As the Archbishop of South East Asia, the Most Rev. Moon Hing, a co-contributor to the 2016 Lambeth report *Intentional Discipleship and Disciple-Making* says, a decision to follow Christ "is simply the most challenging, the most beautiful, the most costly, the most rewarding journey we could ever choose to begin."

The conclusion is that we grow spiritually in the context of a relationship with Christ that then compels us to move toward others. When our faith experience is kept private and not given a chance to be spoken about and shared, we do not benefit from the opportunity to grow in intimacy with God and others. Consequently our faith experience becomes hollow and stalls.

A small-group, praxis-based discipleship program is an effective vehicle for lay leadership training in an Anglican setting for equipping individuals to confidently exhibit leadership behaviours such as praying in public and growing in their relationship with God. The implication of these findings for Trinity Anglican Church is that more effort needs to be made to encourage parishioners to participate in discipleship small groups in order to develop confidence in spiritual leadership and a deeper relationship with God. An implication for me as a leader is that I must re-orient my priorities so that I intentionally focus my efforts on equipping and nurturing the confidence of the spiritual lives of parishioners. I also must change my assumption that lay leaders are lacking the capability to lead spiritually. The research project showed that primarily they lack confidence—the consequence of the lack of opportunity to grow in self-efficacy facilitated through the praxis-based small group.

Trinity, Aurora, like most other Anglican Churches, has many rich resources to offer through its emphasis on liturgy and encouraging personal devotions. Small groups that attend to fostering strong, confident spiritual leaders will help the church better respond the God's call to "go and make disciples of all

nations” (Matthew 28:19). This is a significant issue for mainline denominations in the West today which face declining attendance. If people are not confident speaking openly about their experience of God and sharing their faith they will not be able to offer these experiences to the next generation.

The Anglican Diocese of Toronto and RenewalWorks, the ministry of Forward Movement that oversees the Episcopal Spiritual Life Inventory, have both shown interest in the findings of the research project and the themes of this portfolio. The Archbishop of Toronto will be inviting other parishes to engage in the *Lift High the Cross* program next year to assess its effectiveness beyond Trinity Aurora. RenewalWorks is interested in reviewing the curriculum to assess its suitability for the American Episcopal Church context. This is an indication that the issues raised in this portfolio are a common concern for the church leadership and that the research findings may provide some insight for responding to the spiritual needs of the church today.

APPENDICES

Appendix A: Consent Form

Consent to Participate in Research

The research study: *Fostering spiritual growth in Anglican lay leaders through a praxis-based, discipleship, small group, program.*

Researcher: Dawn Louise Davis

Rev. Canon Dawn Davis is an ordained Anglican priest serving as the incumbent of the parish of Trinity, Aurora. Formerly, she served as the Director of Ministry Resources and Human Resources for the Diocese of Toronto, specializing in training and development. She has a Masters of Divinity from the Atlantic School of Theology and an accreditation as a human resource professional (retired) from the Human Resources Professional Association of Ontario. Currently Dawn is a DMin candidate in the Tyndale Doctor of Ministry: Spiritual Formation program.

Purpose of the research:

The research being conducted will form a part of the analysis of Dawn's DMin (Doctor of Ministry) in Spiritual Formation Action Research Project.

- To assess the spiritual efficacy of a training and small-group reflection program in prayer.
- To build the confidence and competence of the participants as a spiritual leader.
- To facilitate the spiritual growth of the participant lay leaders.
- To extrapolate results so that the church, at all levels, may better understand and address the spiritual formation needs of leaders, which, in turn, may result in the leaders' ability to share their faith and disciple others in their faith.

Definition (s):

Corporate worship is the central experience of spiritual formation for Anglicans. The result is that many Anglicans have a private spirituality, and lay leaders will often express discomfort in leading public prayer or talking about spiritual experiences. The Anglican Church has identified that it can not grow and remain vibrant and viable unless its leaders are confident in their capacity to share their personal experience of God's love in their lives and thereby able to make further disciples.

- Discipleship programs are training programs that help develop spiritual

formation along the spiritual continuum.

- A praxis-based method is used in this project. It involves the on-going cycle of learning as a skill, practising the skill and reflecting on the experience of the skill as it is incorporated into the life practices of the participant.
- A small group is group of up to 12 individuals who develop a level of trust where, through the open sharing and reflecting on spiritual experiences, spiritual growth can take place.

Procedures

The program will begin with an orientation session to review program, its goals and objectives, and issues of confidentiality, norms and standards of behaviour. There will be a pre- and post-survey that will be collated and analyzed. Participant-observer data will also be collected and analyzed from naturally observed behaviour that occurs within the sessions. All survey material will be anonymous as no names will be associated with any of the survey material. All reports and findings will be shared with the participants at the completion of the research project.

What you will be asked to do in the research:

Participation is voluntary. Participants will be invited to be part of a six-week research project including:

- 10 different prayer practices,
- Training on how to do the prayer practices,
- Encouragement to pray over a week,
- Participation in a small-group

The program will be co-facilitated by the Rev. Diana McHardy, a certified spiritual director and trainer at Regis College, University of Toronto.

The program will begin with an orientation session to review the goals and objectives of the program, and the issues of confidentiality, norms and standards of behaviour. There will be a pre-and post-survey and participant-observation data will be collated, compared and analyzed. All survey material will be anonymous. No names will be associated with any of the assessments and findings. All reports and findings will be shared with the participants at the completion of the research project.

Part 1. Participants will be asked to complete a spiritual inventory that will be administered by a third-party facilitator. The spiritual inventory assessment resource is a product of the Episcopal Church USA, Renewal Works a ministry of Forward Movement. Questions from the survey will focus on knowledge, skill

and experience of the spiritual life of the participant.

Part 2. Spiritual Leaders Program

- Participants will be asked to attend a two-hour orientation session to review the goals and objectives of the research project, as well as issues of confidentiality and the risks and benefits of the program.
- Participants will be asked to sign that they agree to comply with the confidentiality requirements, as well as the norms and standards statement.
- Participants will attend a two-hour course each week for six weeks (including the orientation session). The courses will train participants in 10 prayer techniques such as: lectio divina, visio-divina, Ignatius' prayer of imagination, contemplation, prayer through music and movement, intercessory prayer, and the invocation of Jesus' name.
- Participants will learn how to set up a sacred space in their home and will be taught the sacred practice of journaling so they can record their experiences of the various prayer practices.
- Participants will be taught how to conduct public prayer and will be given numerous opportunities to practise public prayer in a safe and trusting environment.
- Participants will develop a daily prayer practice and will commit to three 20-minute prayer sessions a week for a year.

Part 3. Participants will be asked to complete the spiritual inventory administered by the same third-party facilitator. The findings from the two assessments will be collated, compared and analyzed.

Anticipated Date(s): Part 1 will take place in early October 2016. Part 2 research program courses will take place between October 2016 and December 2016. Part 3 will take place at the completion of the six-week course, likely late November or early December 2016.

Location: This six-week research project will take place in the Upper Room of the Rectory at Trinity Anglican Church, Aurora.

Workshop: Invitation letters will be sent out to all the lay leaders of the parish. Participants will be selected on a first-come first-served basis.

Costs and fees: All costs associated with this research project will be covered by Trinity Anglican Church.

Risks and discomforts:

The risks associated with this research project are no greater than what

participants might expect to encounter in the normal participation in a small reflective group within the church.

Benefits of the research and benefits to you:

Participants in this program may experience spiritual growth brought about by a regular prayer life and an opportunity to speak openly about their spiritual experiences. They can also expect to experience feelings of self-confidence in their ability to pray both publicly and privately. Participants will experience a deeper knowledge of one another. This may result in developing lasting and loving relationships. Participants may have a transformative spiritual experience that has a positive and enduring change in their lives.

Participants may also benefit from the knowledge that that they have contributed to a better understanding and addressing of spiritual formation needs within the wider church.

Voluntary participation:

Participation in this research project is completely voluntary. Participants, if they agree to be part of this research project, may decide to cease participating at any time and will not be required to state a reason. A decision to cease participation in the program will not influence their relationship with the researcher or bring about any undue harm to the ongoing nature of that relationship with the researcher or with staff of Tyndale University and Seminary either now or in the future.

Withdrawal from the study:

Participants may withdraw from the study at any time and for any reason. The decision to stop participating, or to refuse to answer questions in particular, will not affect the participants' relationship with the researcher, Tyndale University and Seminary, or any other group associated with this project. In the event that a participant withdraws from the study, all associated data collected will be immediately destroyed, wherever possible.

Confidentiality: *will be provided to the fullest extent possible by law.*

The spiritual inventory survey will be administered, collated and analyzed by an independent third-party. The participant-observer data will be collected by both facilitators of the program. The data will be collated and analyzed by the researcher. All assessments will be anonymous, and all identifying details will be removed. All data will be provided in an aggregate form. All documentation associated with the research project will be stored in a locked cabinet in the researcher's home, off-site from the parish. The researcher alone will have access to all research documentation. The final report will not be destroyed after the study. The researcher will also retain archive control of all the material collected for five years. Copies of the completed analysis and final written results for this research project will be placed in library circulation, library archives, DMin office and TREN.

Research Ethical Review Board Approval

This research has been reviewed and approved by the Tyndale University and Seminary Research Ethics Review Board and conforms to the standards of the Canadian Tri-Council Research Ethics guidelines. If you have any questions about this process, or about your rights as a participant in the study, you may contact: myself, Dr. Mark Chapman at Tyndale University Seminary or David Moore, senior warden at Trinity.

Legal Rights and Signatures:

I (research participant's name), consent to participate in *Fostering spiritual growth in Anglican lay leaders through a praxis-based, discipleship, small-group program* conducted by Dawn Davis. I (research participant's name), have understood the nature of this Doctor in Ministry Action Research project and agree to participate. I am not waiving any of my legal rights by signing this form. My signature below indicates my consent.

Signature: _____ **Date:** [Click here to enter a date.](#)

Participant Name: [Click here to enter text.](#)

Signature: _____ **Date:** [Click here to enter a date.](#)

Principal Investigator's Name: Dawn Davis

Additional consent(s)

I understand that aggregate group data from a pre- and post-survey may form part of the analysis and as such will be included in the final research document. The analysis will be viewed by select members of the Tyndale Seminary hearing committee. The final research project will be placed in library circulation, library archives, DMIN office and TREN.

I authorize the researcher to collect this data from my course participation.

Signature: _____ **Date:** [Click here to enter a date.](#)

Participant Name: [Click here to enter text.](#)

Signature: _____ **Date:** [Click here to enter a date.](#)

Principal Investigator's Name: Dawn Davis

Additional Questions or Comments can be directed to

The principal researcher: Dawn Davis at _____ or
David _____ : Trinity warden, at _____

**Appendix B:
Natural Church Development Status Chart**

Trinity Aurora (3) 2014 04 06

April-2014

Pastor for 7 years: The Rev. Canon Dawn Davis

| Profile | Date | Minimum Factor | Maximum Factor | Min - Max Difference | Average |
|---------|--------|------------------------------|---------------------------|----------------------|---------|
| 3 | Apr-14 | 42.7 Passionate spirituality | 73.7 Loving relationships | 31.0 | 60.0 |
| | | | | Change 2 - 3 | +3.6 |
| 2 | Sep-11 | 31.6 Passionate spirituality | 79.0 Gift-based ministry | 47.4 | 56.4 |
| | | | | Change 1 - 2 | +4.2 |
| 1 | Mar-10 | 24.9 Passionate spirituality | 68.8 Gift-based ministry | 43.9 | 52.2 |

**Appendix B:
Natural Church Development Status Chart**

Trinity Aurora (3) 2014 04 06

April-2014

Pastor for 7 years: The Rev. Canon Dawn Davis

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Appendix C: Survey Invitation

Survey Invitation Letter

RESEARCH WORKING TITLE: *Fostering spiritual growth in Anglican lay leaders through a praxis-based, discipleship, small group, program.*

PARTICIPANTS: Anglican lay leaders. Adult parishioners who serve as members of a committee or ministry.

RESEARCHER: Rev. Canon Dawn Davis is an ordained Anglican priest currently serving as the incumbent of the parish of Trinity Church, Aurora. Formerly she served as the Director of Ministry Resources and Human Resources for the Diocese of Toronto, specializing in training and development. She has a Masters of Divinity from the Atlantic School of Theology and an accreditation as a human resource professional (retired) from the Human Resources Professional Association of Ontario. Currently Dawn is a DMIN candidate in the Tyndale Doctor of Ministry – Spiritual Formation program.

PURPOSE: The research being conducted will form a part of the analysis of dawn's DMIN (Doctor of Ministry) in Spiritual Formation Action Research Project.

- To assess the spiritual efficacy of a training and small group reflection program in prayer.
- To build confidence and competence as a spiritual leader.
- To facilitate the spiritual growth of Anglican lay leaders.
- To extrapolate results so that the church, at all levels, can better understand and address the spiritual formation needs of leaders, which in turn, may result in confident lay leaders equipped to disciple others in their faith.

DEFINITION: Corporate worship is the central experience of spiritual formation for Anglicans. The result is that many Anglicans have a private spirituality and lay leaders will often express discomfort in leading public prayer or talking about spiritual experiences. The Anglican Church has identified that it can not grow and remain vibrant and viable unless its leaders are confident in their capacity to share their personal experience of God's love in their lives and thereby able to make further disciples.

- Discipleship programs are training programs that help develop spiritual formation along the spiritual continuum.

- A praxis-based method is used in this project which involves the on-going cycle of learning a skill, practicing the skill and reflecting on the experience of the skill as it is incorporated into the life practices of the participant.
- A small group is group of up to 12 individuals who develop a level of trust where, through the open sharing and reflecting on spiritual experiences, spiritual growth can take place.

METHOD: Participation is voluntary. Participants will be invited to be part of a 6-week research project that will:

- Introduce them to 10 different prayer practices,
- Train them in how to do the prayer practice,
- Encourage them to rehearse the prayer practice over a week,
- Provide a forum for discussion, feedback and reflection in a small group setting of their experience with the prayer practice.

The program will be co-facilitated by the Rev. Diana McHardy, a certified spiritual director and trainer at Regis College, University of Toronto.

The program will begin with an orientation session to review the goals and objective of the program and the issues of confidentiality, norms and standards of behaviour. There will be a mandatory pre and post survey which will be collated, compared and analyzed. A weekly journal will be kept to record comments and behaviour of participant in order to assess behaviour competency. All survey material will be anonymous with no names associated with any of the assessments and findings. All reports and findings will be shared with the participants at the completion of the research project.

Part 1. Participants will be asked to complete a spiritual inventory that will be administered by a third-party facilitator. The spiritual inventory assessment resource is a product of the Episcopal Church USA. Questions from both this assessment survey along with the participant-observe data from the weekly journals and logs will focus on knowledge, skill and experience of the spiritual life of the participant.

Part 2. Spiritual Leaders Program

- Participants will be asked to attend a 2 hour orientation session to review the goals and objectives of the research project and issues of confidentiality and risks/benefits of the program.
- Participants will be asked to sign that they agree to comply with the confidentiality requirements and the norms and standards statement.

- Participants will attend a 2 hour course each week for six weeks. The courses will train participants in 15 prayer techniques such as: lectio divina, visio-divina, Ignatius prayer of imagination, contemplation, prayer through music and movement, intercessory prayer, and invocation of Jesus name.
- Participants will learn how to set up a sacred space within their home and taught the sacred practice of journaling so they can record their experience of the various prayer practices.
- Participants will be taught how to do public prayer and given numerous opportunities to practice public prayer in a safe and trusted environment.
- Participants will develop a daily prayer practice and commit to three 20-minute prayer sessions a week, for a year.

Part 3. Participants will be asked to complete the spiritual inventory and administered by a third-party facilitator, again. Data from it and the participant-observer records will be collated, compared and analyzed.

Anticipated Date(s): Part 1 will take place in early October 2016. Part 2, the research program courses will take place between mid-October to December 2016. Part 3 will take place at the completion of the six-week course, likely late November, early December 2016.

Location: This six-week research project will take place in the Upper Room of the Rectory, at Trinity Anglican Church, Aurora.

Workshop: Invitation letters will be sent out to all the lay leaders of the parish. Participants will be determined on a first-come-first-served bases.

Costs and fees: All costs associated with this research project will be covered by Trinity Anglican Church.

Confidentiality: In an effort to maintain standards of confidentiality, no names will be assigned to individual assessments. All survey reports and findings will be anonymous and of the aggregate pool of participants.

Questions, Comments or if you would like to complete a survey or participate in the workshop please email Dawn Davis at:

Dear Church Leader,

Thank you for the countless hours of dedicated ministry and your ability to show God's love to the world.

Now it is time for the church to reach out to you as colleagues in ministry. Please consider this program as a gift. It is our hope that you will experience a further empowerment and a deepening of your authority as an equipped spiritual leader.

I consider it a privilege to be in ministry with you. I ask God's blessing on you and our continued life together.

Yours in Christ,
Canon Dawn Davis

Your clergy guides on the journey:

Canon Dawn Davis,
Rev. Diana McHardy

Registration

If you feel that this program fits into your spiritual journey then please contact me.

Rev. Canon Dawn Davis



Life High the Cross
Empowering Spiritual Leaders

Trinity Anglican Church
"Connecting Spiritual Journeys"

Life High the Cross

Your service as a leader at Trinity is known and to acknowledge it, we would like to show our appreciation.

We are offering you a one-year spiritual leadership program, to help enrich your already significant contribution to parish life.

This program is designed to enhance your spiritual journey in a manner that is relevant to your ministry and filled with fun!

We will be exploring together:

- Discerning your life's call
- Discovering a prayer style that works for you
- Encountering the scripture anew
- Enhancing your Anglican identity

This one-year program is designed for active leaders in the church.

This journey together will include:

- One opening off-site retreat
- Three sets of six-week, small-group sessions, one each in the fall, winter and spring
- Some required reading for discussion
- Practice that will enable you to be comfortable with prayer, the Bible and Anglican identity.
- The opportunity to engage in one-on-one spiritual guidance with one of the clergy.

The program will deepen, renew and lift your ministry to a new high through encouraging, equipping and resourcing.

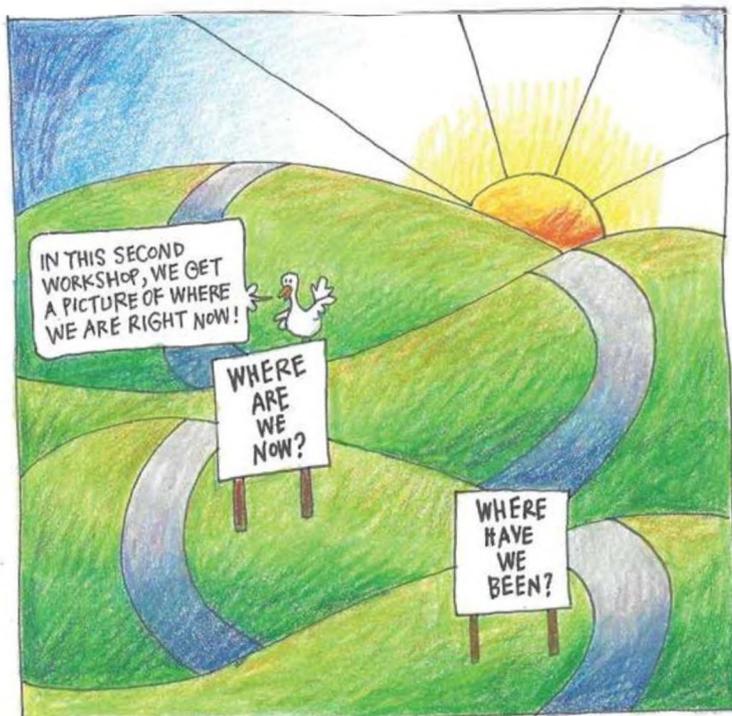
By participating in this program you will:

- Learn a lot about yourself and God
- Have an opportunity to explore your faith journey
- Enjoy a sense of community among your peers
- Access the resources of clergy
- Develop confidence as a Christian leader

Ephesians 1. The gifts Jesus gave were that some would be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, some pastors and teachers, to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ, until all of us come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to maturity, to the measure of the full stature of Christ.



**Appendix E:
Episcopal Spiritual Life Survey Findings,
Survey 1**



Where are we now?

*RenewalWorks*TM

Spiritual Life Inventory Data Findings for
Trinity Church

Part 1: For use with Workshop #2

November 2016

© 2016 RenewalWorks

The Spiritual Life Story of Trinity Church

Introduction

As you and your congregation embark on the workshops of RenewalWorks, it is important to understand that a focus on the spiritual life is hardly a new topic. From the first pages of the Bible, God encounters Adam and Eve with this question: Where are you?

The work ahead is about answering that question. Where are you personally and where is the parish as a whole in relationship to God? In the Christian tradition, we look to the life and ministry of Jesus to answer this question. When Jesus was asked to name the greatest commandment, he referred to his own scriptures, quoting Deuteronomy 6:4-5:

Hear, O Israel: The LORD is our God, the LORD alone.

You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, and with all your soul and with all your might.

In the Jewish tradition, faithful people would recite these verses several times a day as a way to focus on what their own spiritual journey was about: love of God and love of neighbor. Jesus told his listeners this commandment was key to their discovery of a deeper, more vital life with God. Often the vitality of a parish is quite simply reflected in where people give their hearts (beliefs and attitudes) and how they live that out in service.

Two pieces of advice as you read this report:

1. The report information is more about your people than your church. Parishioners brought with them to this church a lifetime of experiences, biases, beliefs and habits.
2. Find your story in the numbers but do not get bogged down by individual data points. Instead, look for trends.



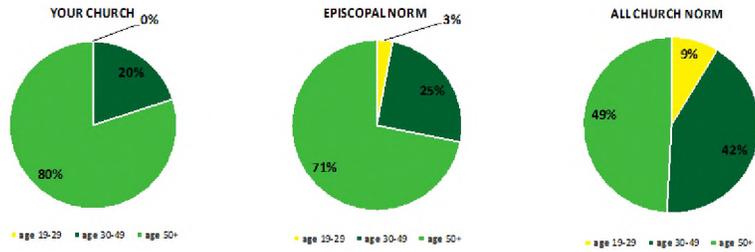
Of note: the data findings in this report compare results to two different databases. The first is the Episcopal Norm of which, more than 100 churches have participated. The second is the All Church Norm, which represents more than 1,600 churches that have participated since 2008. For this report, the All Church Norm is based on a comparison of churches with an attendance of more than 250.

Response Rate and Demographics

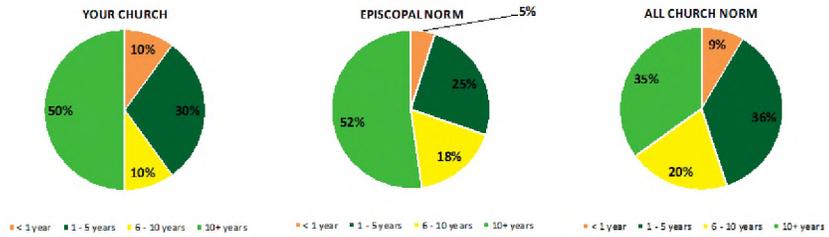
Trinity Church response rate of 3%

Please note that the average response rate for the Spiritual Life Inventory is around 40 percent, although smaller churches have much higher response rates.

Age of Parishioners

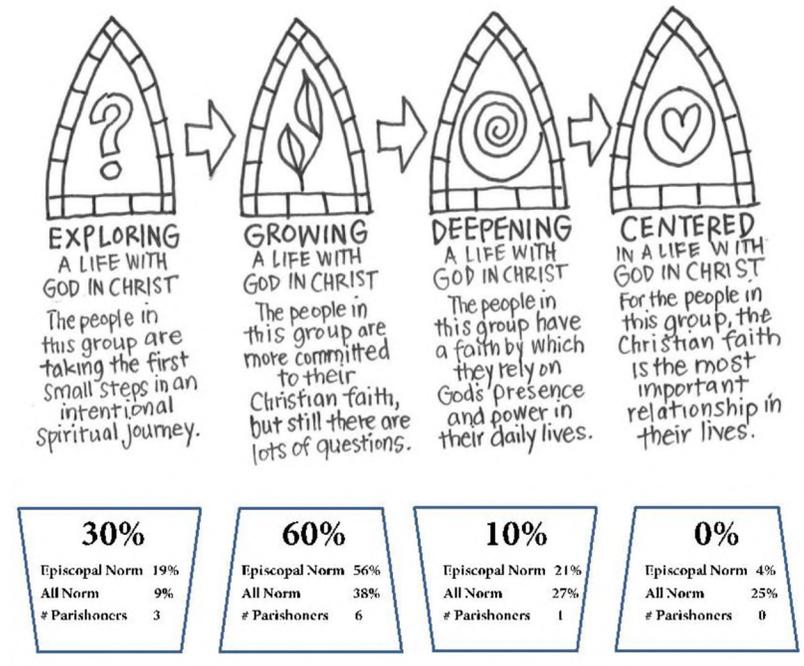


Tenure/Length of Time Attending This Church



Spiritual Continuum Profile

This chart profiles how your parishioners view their place on the spiritual continuum. Comparison to the Episcopal Norm and the All Church Norm is provided. The booklet *Footsteps* by Jay Sidebotham offers detailed information about the four stages in the continuum. Remember that the continuum represents the path of an individual's relationship with God. Our hope is that parishioners will continue to deepen that relationship and continue to move along the continuum.



Spiritual Vitality Components: Beliefs

Three distinct components—beliefs, practices, and faith in action—make up the measurement of the spiritual vitality of your parish. A key element to understanding spiritual vitality is the extent to which people understand and embrace core Episcopal **beliefs**. How do people understand the eucharist, language of the trinity, or the notion of salvation by grace?

- Episcopalians place a high value on Holy Eucharist. Participation and understanding of this sacrament, in all its mystery, is close to the heart of most parishes and parishioners.
- Episcopalians place a high value on understanding the reality of God through the doctrine of the **Trinity**. **While other denominations may seem more focused on Jesus, research shows that Episcopalians value the understanding of God as creator, redeemer, and sustainer.**
- For parishioners in the first two (earlier) stages of the spiritual continuum, the church and church-led activities will be crucial to moving their spiritual journey forward.

Of note: the graphs included in this report measure how individual parishioners strongly agree with each of the belief statements listed. A comparison to the Episcopal Norm and the All Church Norm is also provided to give context in understanding how your parishioners compare with a larger sample.

Spiritual Vitality Components: Beliefs (at a glance)



Spiritual Vitality Components: Practices

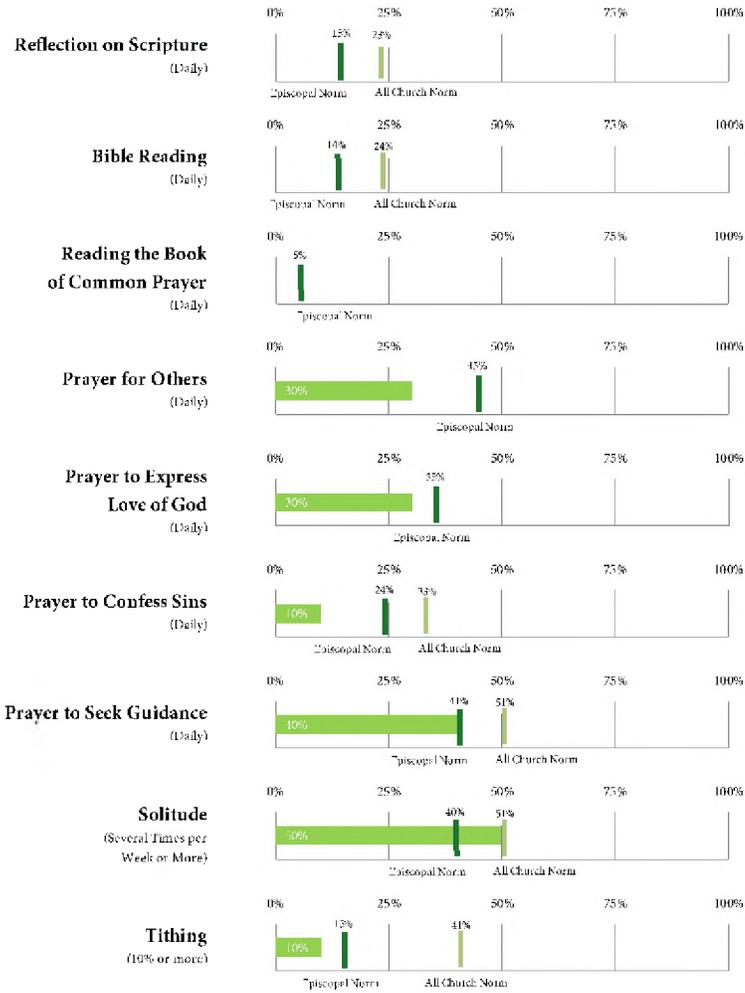
Each individual has a responsibility for the **practice** of his or her faith, not just for an hour on Sunday but in his or her own life. There is an element of ownership here, a call to take responsibility for one's own spiritual journey much like you would for your physical well-being. For example, are people engaging in scripture or prayer outside of church? Vibrant healthy churches are made up of people who practice spirituality every day. We cannot overstate the power of personal spiritual practices as a way to catalyze spiritual growth. The results in this section explore what spiritual practices are important to your parish and parishioners.

- Engagement with scripture is the single most influential spiritual practice for ALL stages of spiritual growth. Make sure to concentrate on ways your parish engages in scripture. One way to facilitate meaningful small spiritual conversation is through small groups.

Prayer to confess sins is significant for those in more mature stages of spiritual growth.

Higher tithing responses link to higher spiritual maturity, indicating those who will support God's work regardless of their contentment with the individual church.

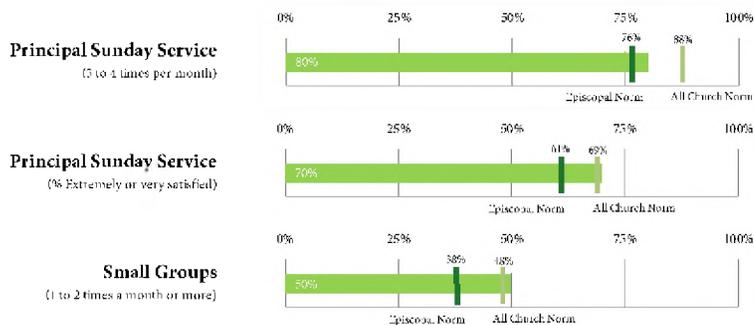
Spiritual Vitality Components: Practices (at a glance)



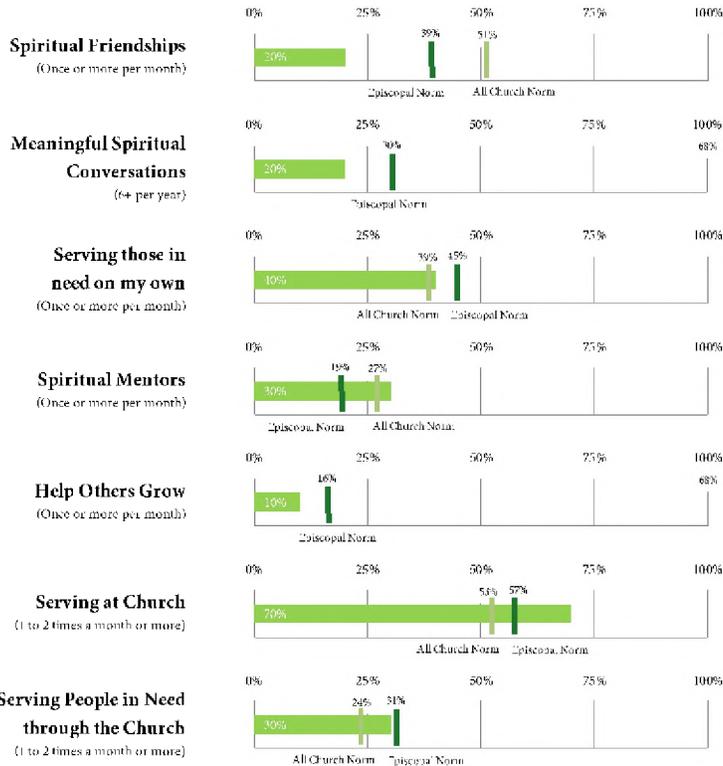
Spiritual Vitality Components: Faith in Action

Sometimes referred to as service, **faith in action** is the way that parishioners seek and serve Christ in all persons, in fulfillment of the baptismal covenant. This service can take many forms, inside or outside of the church. As the New Testament letter to James says, faith without works is dead, so one measure of spiritual vitality is service. A characteristic of Episcopal practice is a strong service component.

- Episcopalians demonstrate a strong commitment to service to people in need. A growth opportunity emerges in deepening an understanding of how that service is an expression of our faith, indeed our discipleship of Jesus.
- The Baptismal Covenant, with its five promises describing the commitments made in the Christian life, can be useful in focusing on service in the world. Three out of five of those promises have to do with ministries of outreach.
- Small group systems in a church help people to connect in spiritual friendship and mentoring relationships.



Spiritual Vitality Components: Faith in Action (at a glance)



Summary of Trinity Church Spiritual Profile

We understand that this report presents a lot of data and information that can be overwhelming to process in a single sitting. Digest it over time, taking time to pray and slowly reflect on the contents. Look to identify trends rather than focusing on a single data point to create overall conclusions.

Often, churches ask for help interpreting their reports. We have provided a brief summary for you below. Ultimately how you use this information is completely up to you, the workshop team and the congregation - our hope is that it begins a conversation and a commitment to move forward in the journey to deepen your love of God and neighbor.

PARISH SUMMARY FOR YOUR CHURCH

Your data shows that overall there is a strong sense of complacency that has engulfed parishioners. They express interest in maintaining the status quo over challenging and furthering themselves in a spiritual journey. In fairness to them, it is hard for one to know they are stalled if they are not aware that there is a journey, or what that journey may entail. This is a familiar archetype for many Episcopal churches, especially those whose majority parish tenure is greater than 10 years, are highly educated, suburban and with higher average annual incomes. We often say that the Episcopal Church is rooted and restless, but mostly rooted.

On a positive note, parishioners have positive feelings towards their clergy. With this credibility, the Heart of the Leader will be crucial to jumpstarting, rejuvenating and renewing the overall health of the parish. (Please note that by leader we mean clergy, staff, vestry and ministry lay leaders. This group may consider a retreat, planning session to explore this concept and their overall church mission further.) It is not enough for a church to be welcoming. It must teach and challenge its parishioners to go further in their journey to love God and neighbor which will require study, active participation and curiosity. The leadership team must model this belief and be united and inspired to own the idea of spiritual growth as a priority.

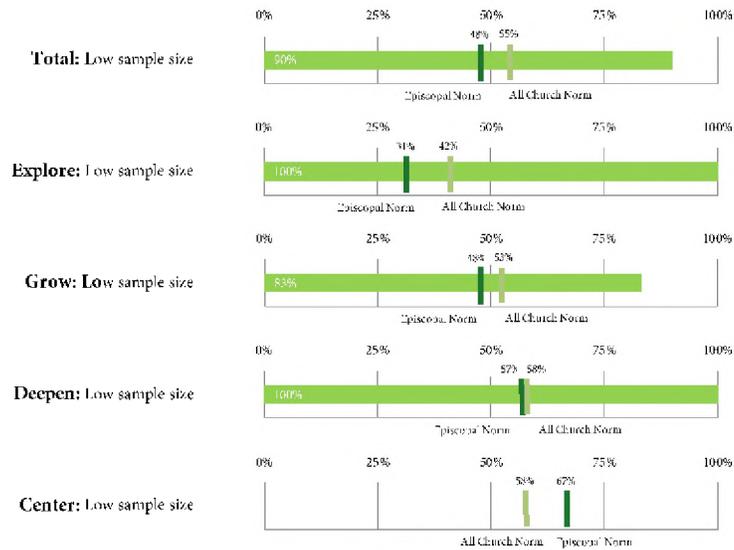
Introducing or emphasizing the idea of discipleship may help the parish understand that the spiritual journey is never ending and requires practice, energy, reflection and commitment from them personally and through church activities. Shoring up core Episcopalian beliefs and practices will be key. Bold, church-wide initiatives would be welcomed and could create energy for refocusing the church mission. Examples may include deeper engagement and understanding of the eucharist, encouragement of public/private morning and evening prayer or a church-wide bible reading campaign.

Satisfaction

Every congregation includes people who express some level of dissatisfaction with “the church’s role in my spiritual growth.” The All Church Norm is 18%, although numbers vary widely, from low single-digits to almost half the congregation.

The following chart indicates overall satisfaction with your church’s role in spiritual growth (% extremely or very satisfied).

Overall Satisfaction with your Church’s Role in Spiritual Growth (% extremely or very satisfied)



Based on your church sample size of 10

Satisfaction (continued)

To shed some light on what causes dissatisfaction, the following chart uses the Priority Score calculations to highlight the top five priorities for the dissatisfied people in your congregation. In other words, out of the 37 factors assessed in the survey, these are the five areas that are highly important but people are dissatisfied with the way they are being addressed.

| Priority Ranking | Top Five Priorities for the Dissatisfied (Based on level of importance and satisfaction) |
|------------------|---|
| 1 | Helps me develop a relationship with Jesus Christ |
| 2 | Challenges me to grow and take next steps spiritually |
| 3 | Clergy and lay leaders model and consistently reinforce how to grow spiritually |
| 4 | Clergy and lay leaders are authentic about their struggles |
| 5 | Not in Episcopal 6.0 |

Spiritual Catalyst Profile

Trinity Church

As you consider the spiritual continuum as it represents your congregation (see "Spiritual Continuum Profile") what are the catalysts that will help people to move from one stage to another. Your data indicates the following areas of strength and opportunity for your church:



- The biggest opportunity areas for your church.
- An opportunity area for your church.
- Not an area you need to focus on.
- An area of strength, but possibly over-resourced.

Spiritual Vitality Index

The Spiritual Vitality Index was created for parishes wanting an overall comparison to the All Church Norm database. Although this number offers some insights, it also shouldn't be the sole focus. Your Spiritual Vitality Index number is not a pass/fail or letter grade like in school. Rather it is a window into where your parishioners currently are in their journey of faith. Use this information to create a culture that more fully supports the spiritual growth of parishioners. And note that perhaps the most useful insight from the inventory will be discovered when in a couple years, your congregation goes through this process again.

Episcopal churches tend to score between 43 and 69.

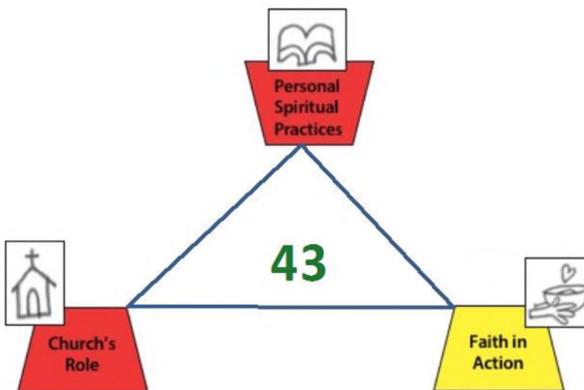
Three main areas are used in determining the Spiritual Vitality Index.

The Church's Role. Does your church set clear and high expectations for growth in relationship with God, through deeper discipleship of Jesus? How does the church encourage/focus parishioners on a spiritual journey? Is scripture embedded in all activities and meetings?

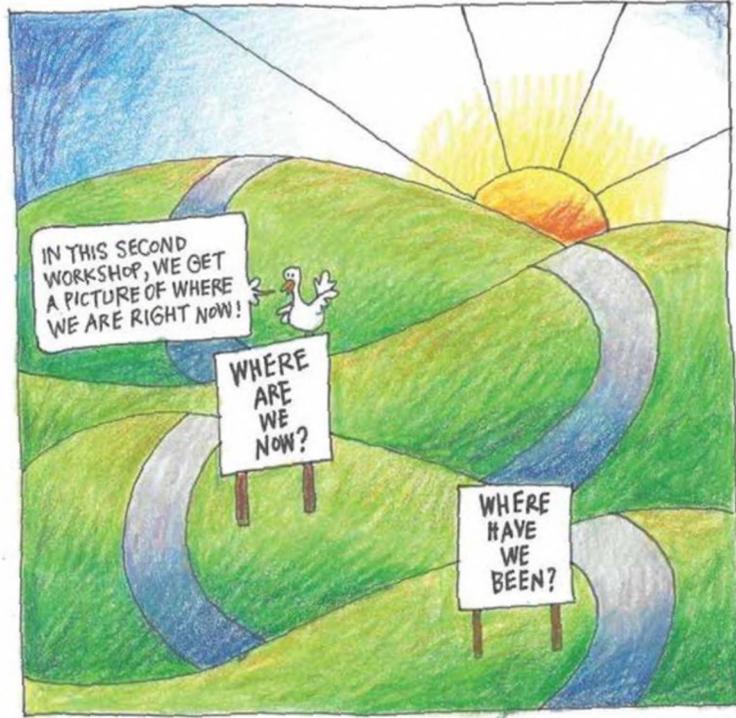
Personal Spiritual Practices. Does your church teach and encourage personal spiritual practices?

Faith in Action. Does the church provide opportunities to serve God in a way that parishioners understand their service as an expression of their love of God and neighbor?

Spiritual Vitality Index



**Appendix F:
Episcopal Spiritual Life Survey Findings,
Survey 2**



Where are we now?

RenewalWorks™

Spiritual Life Inventory Data Findings for
Trinity Church, Aurora – Wave 2

Part 1: For use with Workshop #2

January 2017

© 2017 RenewalWorks

The Spiritual Life Story of Trinity Church, Aurora – Wave 2

Introduction

As you and your congregation embark on the workshops of RenewalWorks, it is important to understand that a focus on the spiritual life is hardly a new topic. From the first pages of the Bible, God encounters Adam and Eve with this question: Where are you?

The work ahead is about answering that question. Where are you personally and where is the parish as a whole in relationship to God? In the Christian tradition, we look to the life and ministry of Jesus to answer this question. When Jesus was asked to name the greatest commandment, he referred to his own scriptures, quoting Deuteronomy 6:4-5:

*Hear, O Israel: The LORD is our God, the LORD alone.
You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, and
with all your soul and with all your might.*

In the Jewish tradition, faithful people would recite these verses several times a day as a way to focus on what their own spiritual journey was about: love of God and love of neighbor. Jesus told his listeners this commandment was key to their discovery of a deeper, more vital life with God. Often the vitality of a parish is quite simply reflected in where people give their hearts (beliefs and attitudes) and how they live that out in service.

Two pieces of advice as you read this report:

1. The report information is more about your people than your church. Parishioners brought with them to this church a lifetime of experiences, biases, beliefs and habits.
2. Find your story in the numbers but do not get bogged down by individual data points. Instead, look for trends.



Of note: the data findings in this report compare results to two different databases. The first is the Episcopal Norm of which, more than 100 churches have participated. The second is the All Church Norm, which represents more than 1,600 churches that have participated since 2008. For this report, the All Church Norm is based on a comparison of churches with an attendance of more than 250.

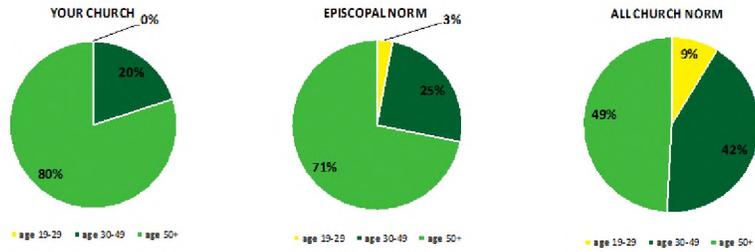
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Response Rate and Demographics

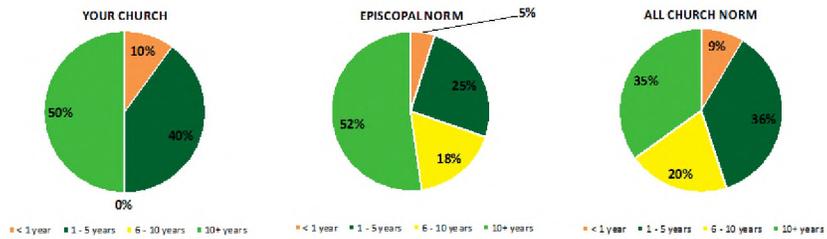
Trinity Church, Aurora – Wave 2 response rate of 3%

Please note that the average response rate for the Spiritual Life Inventory is around 40 percent, although smaller churches have much higher response rates.

Age of Parishioners

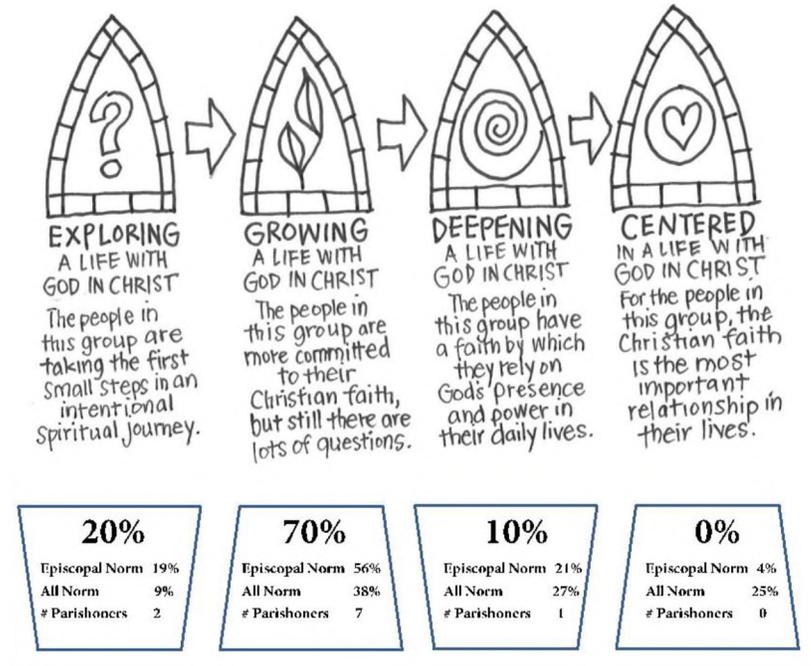


Tenure/Length of Time Attending This Church



Spiritual Continuum Profile

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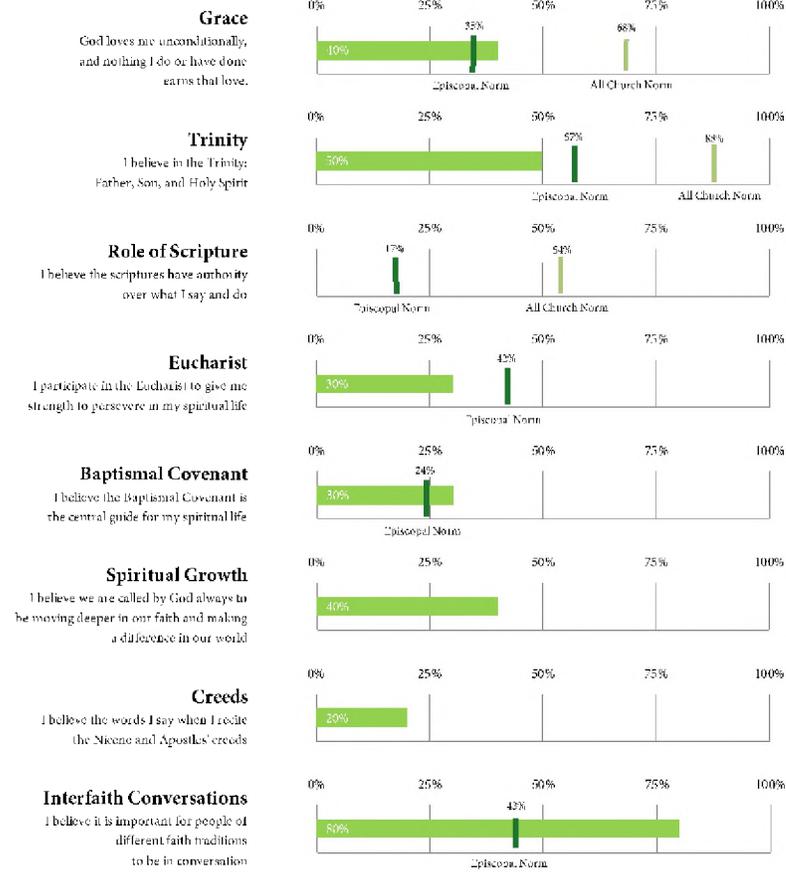
Spiritual Vitality Components: Beliefs

Three distinct components—beliefs, practices, and faith in action—make up the measurement of the spiritual vitality of your parish. A key element to understanding spiritual vitality is the extent to which people understand and embrace core Episcopal **beliefs**. How do people understand the eucharist, language of the trinity, or the notion of salvation by grace?

- Episcopalians place a high value on Holy Eucharist. Participation and understanding of this sacrament, in all its mystery, is close to the heart of most parishes and parishioners.
- Episcopalians place a high value on understanding the reality of God through the doctrine of the **Trinity**. **While other denominations may seem more focused on Jesus, research shows that Episcopalians value the understanding of God as creator, redeemer, and sustainer.**
- For parishioners in the first two (earlier) stages of the spiritual continuum, the church and church-led activities will be crucial to moving their spiritual journey forward.

***Of note:** the graphs included in this report measure how individual parishioners strongly agree with each of the belief statements listed. A comparison to the Episcopal Norm and the All Church Norm is also provided to give context in understanding how your parishioners compare with a larger sample.*

Spiritual Vitality Components: Beliefs (at a glance)



Spiritual Vitality Components: Practices

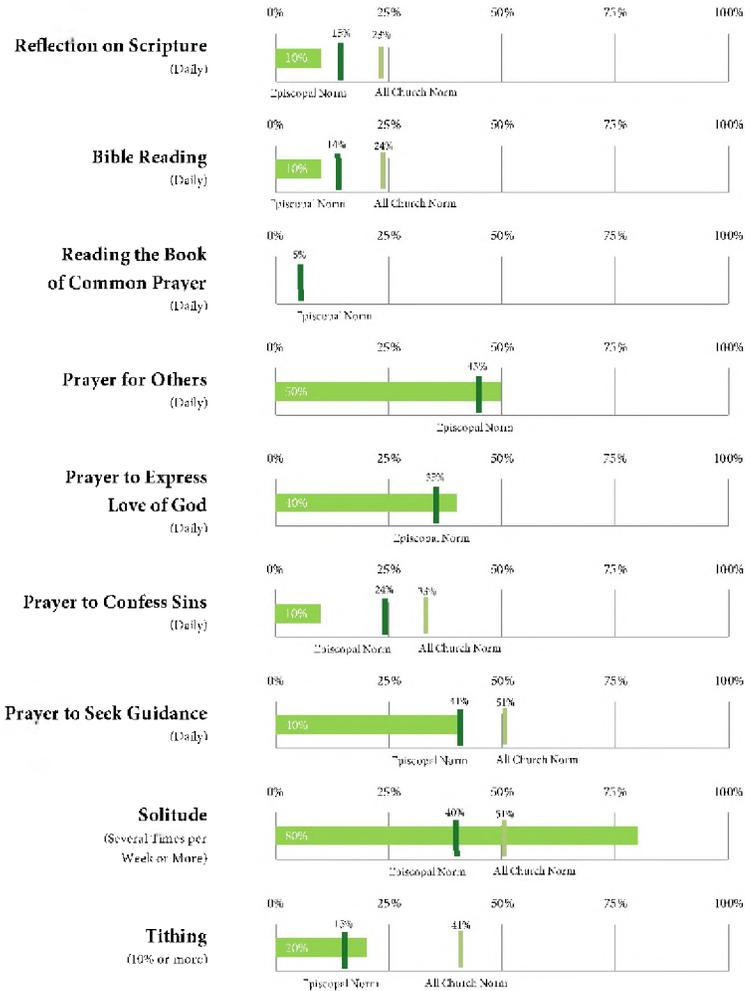
Each individual has a responsibility for the **practice** of his or her faith, not just for an hour on Sunday but in his or her own life. There is an element of ownership here, a call to take responsibility for one's own spiritual journey much like you would for your physical well-being. For example, are people engaging in scripture or prayer outside of church? Vibrant healthy churches are made up of people who practice spirituality every day. We cannot overstate the power of personal spiritual practices as a way to catalyze spiritual growth. The results in this section explore what spiritual practices are important to your parish and parishioners.

- Engagement with scripture is the single most influential spiritual practice for ALL stages of spiritual growth. Make sure to concentrate on ways your parish engages in scripture. One way to facilitate meaningful small spiritual conversation is through small groups.

Prayer to confess sins is significant for those in more mature stages of spiritual growth.

Higher tithing responses link to higher spiritual maturity, indicating those who will support God's work regardless of their contentment with the individual church.

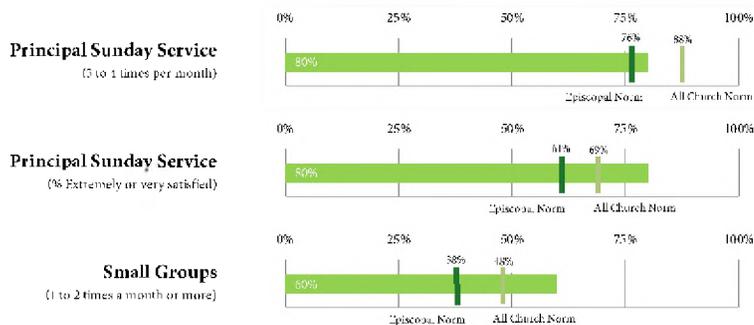
Spiritual Vitality Components: Practices (at a glance)



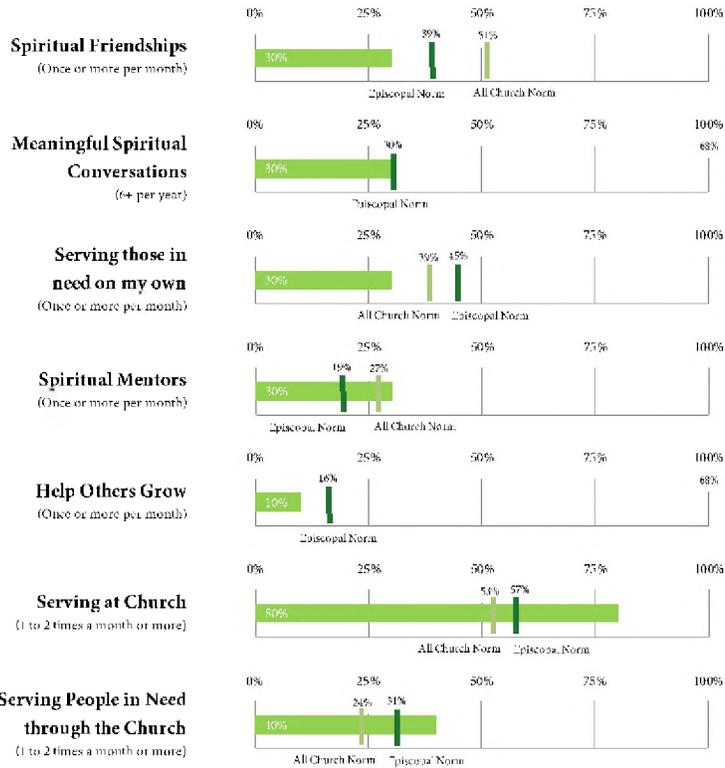
Spiritual Vitality Components: Faith in Action

Sometimes referred to as service, **faith in action** is the way that parishioners seek and serve Christ in all persons, in fulfillment of the baptismal covenant. This service can take many forms, inside or outside of the church. As the New Testament letter to James says, faith without works is dead, so one measure of spiritual vitality is service. A characteristic of Episcopal practice is a strong service component.

- Episcopalians demonstrate a strong commitment to service to people in need. A growth opportunity emerges in deepening an understanding of how that service is an expression of our faith, indeed our discipleship of Jesus.
- The Baptismal Covenant, with its five promises describing the commitments made in the Christian life, can be useful in focusing on service in the world. Three out of five of those promises have to do with ministries of outreach.
- Small group systems in a church help people to connect in spiritual friendship and mentoring relationships.



Spiritual Vitality Components: Faith in Action (at a glance)



Summary of Trinity Church, Aurora – Wave 2 Spiritual Profile

We understand that this report presents a lot of data and information that can be overwhelming to process in a single sitting. Digest it over time, taking time to pray and slowly reflect on the contents. Look to identify trends rather than focusing on a single data point to create overall conclusions.

Often, churches ask for help interpreting their reports. We have provided a brief summary for you below. Ultimately how you use this information is completely up to you, the workshop team and the congregation - our hope is that it begins a conversation and a commitment to move forward in the journey to deepen your love of God and neighbor.

PARISH SUMMARY FOR YOUR CHURCH

Your data shows that overall there is a strong sense of complacency that has engulfed parishioners. They express interest in maintaining the status quo over challenging and furthering themselves in a spiritual journey. In fairness to them, it is hard for one to know they are stalled if they are not aware that there is a journey, or what that journey may entail. This is a familiar archetype for many Episcopal churches, especially those whose majority parish tenure is greater than 10 years, are highly educated, suburban and with higher average annual incomes. We often say that the Episcopal Church is rooted and restless, but mostly rooted.

On a positive note, parishioners have positive feelings towards their clergy. With this credibility, the Heart of the Leader will be crucial to jumpstarting, rejuvenating and renewing the overall health of the parish. (Please note that by leader we mean clergy, staff, vestry and ministry lay leaders. This group may consider a retreat, planning session to explore this concept and their overall church mission further.) It is not enough for a church to be welcoming. It must teach and challenge its parishioners to go further in their journey to love God and neighbor which will require study, active participation and curiosity. The leadership team must model this belief and be united and inspired to own the idea of spiritual growth as a priority.

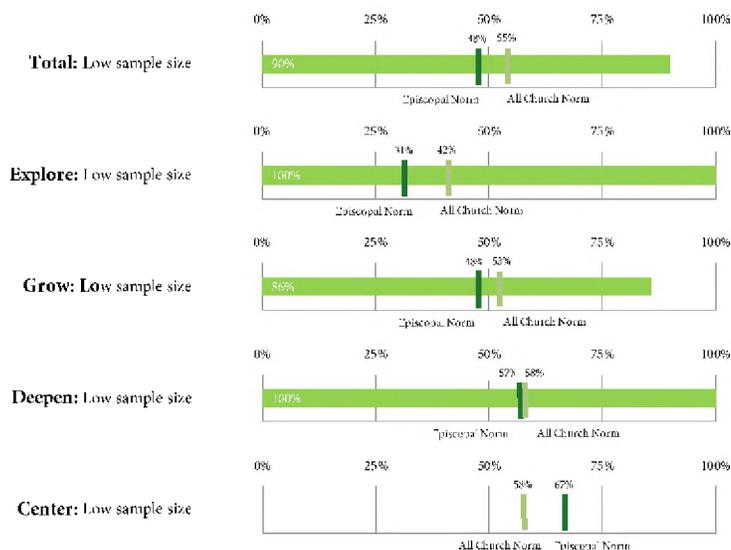
Introducing or emphasizing the idea of discipleship may help the parish understand that the spiritual journey is never ending and requires practice, energy, reflection and commitment from them personally and through church activities. Shoring up core Episcopalian beliefs and practices will be key. Bold, church-wide initiatives would be welcomed and could create energy for refocusing the church mission. Examples may include deeper engagement and understanding of the eucharist, encouragement of public/private morning and evening prayer or a church-wide bible reading campaign.

Satisfaction

Every congregation includes people who express some level of dissatisfaction with “the church’s role in my spiritual growth.” The All Church Norm is 18%, although numbers vary widely, from low single-digits to almost half the congregation.

The following chart indicates overall satisfaction with your church’s role in spiritual growth (% extremely or very satisfied).

Overall Satisfaction with your Church’s Role in Spiritual Growth (% extremely or very satisfied)



Based on your church sample size of 10

Satisfaction (continued)

To shed some light on what causes dissatisfaction, the following chart uses the Priority Score calculations to highlight the top five priorities for the dissatisfied people in your congregation. In other words, out of the 37 factors assessed in the survey, these are the five areas that are highly important but people are dissatisfied with the way they are being addressed.

| Priority Ranking | Top Five Priorities for the Dissatisfied (Based on level of importance and satisfaction) |
|------------------|---|
| 1 | Helps me develop a relationship with Jesus Christ |
| 2 | Challenges me to grow and take next steps spiritually |
| 3 | Clergy and lay leaders model and consistently reinforce how to grow spiritually |
| 4 | Clergy and lay leaders are authentic about their struggles |
| 5 | Not in Episcopal 6.0 |

Spiritual Catalyst Profile

Trinity Church, Aurora – Wave 2

As you consider the spiritual continuum as it represents your congregation (see “Spiritual Continuum Profile”) what are the catalysts that will help people to move from one stage to another. Your data indicates the following areas of strength and opportunity for your church:



- The biggest opportunity areas for your church.
- An opportunity area for your church.
- Not an area you need to focus on.
- An area of strength, but possibly over-resourced.

Spiritual Vitality Index

The Spiritual Vitality Index was created for parishes wanting an overall comparison to the All Church Norm database. Although this number offers some insights, it also shouldn't be the sole focus. Your Spiritual Vitality Index number is not a pass/fail or letter grade like in school. Rather it is a window into where your parishioners currently are in their journey of faith. Use this information to create a culture that more fully supports the spiritual growth of parishioners. And note that perhaps the most useful insight from the inventory will be discovered when in a couple years, your congregation goes through this process again.

Episcopal churches tend to score between 43 and 69.

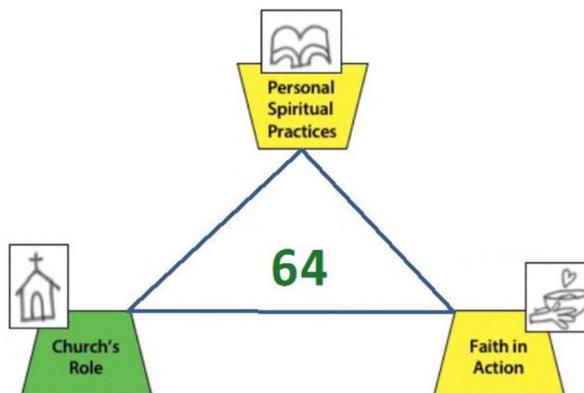
Three main areas are used in determining the Spiritual Vitality Index.

The Church's Role. Does your church set clear and high expectations for growth in relationship with God, through deeper discipleship of Jesus? How does the church encourage/focus parishioners on a spiritual journey? Is scripture embedded in all activities and meetings?

Personal Spiritual Practices. Does your church teach and encourage personal spiritual practices?

Faith in Action. Does the church provide opportunities to serve God in a way that parishioners understand their service as an expression of their love of God and neighbor?

Spiritual Vitality Index



Appendix G: Spiritual Leaders Curriculum

Lift High the Cross: Anglican Discipleship Program for Spiritual Leaders Curriculum

First Retreat

Leaders:

- Oriented to the program.
- Learned about the Myers-Briggs personality temperament and how temperament affects prayer styles.
- Created a visual depiction of the spiritual journey.
- Shared their spiritual life-story.

Module 1: Communicating with God

Session 1: What is Prayer?

Leaders:

- Reflected on earliest memories of prayer and assumptions about prayer.
- Reflected on what prayer is.
- Learned and experience the fundamentals of meditative prayer: breathing, silence, imagery.
- Learned how to pray the Examen.
- Committed to praying the Examen three times during the week and establish a sacred space.

Session 2: Leading Prayer

Leaders:

- Learned how to lead public prayer and were given a short collect formula as a guide.
- Were assigned a scenario and wrote a prayer to suit the situation and then shared it one other participant.
- Learned about Doodle Intercessions and how to pray for others with colour. Closed with a Body Prayer.
- Were assigned responsibility for opening and closing prayers for the upcoming sessions.
- Committed to praying for others, at least three times during the week.

Session 3: Lectio and Contemplation

Leaders:

- Learned the Lectio Divina prayer process.
- Learned about contemplative prayer and centering prayer.
- Were assigned a scenario and wrote a prayer to suit the situation and then shared it two other participant.

- Committed to contemplation and or lectio, three times during the week.

Session 4: Praying with Icons

Leaders:

- Reflected on their image of God and how that image facilitates and limits their relationship with God.
- Explored the interior paintings in the chapel.
- Learned how to pray with icons. Chose an item from the table/altar and pray using the item.
- Led the opening and closing prayers.
- Committed to 5, 20 minute prayer sessions during the week.

Session 5: Praying with Movement

Leaders:

- Learned about prayer through movement.
- Walked the Labyrinth.
- Did a walking prayer around the neighbourhood of the church.
- Led the opening and closing prayers.
- Committed to 5, 20 minute prayer sessions during the week.

Session 6: Praying for forgiveness

Leaders:

- Reflected on the topic of forgiveness: confession, absolution, repentance and reconciliation.
- Identified a hurt that needed to be forgiven.
- Learned about online prayer resources such as Pray as you Go, Contemplative Prayer Outreach and Sacred Spaces.
- Led the opening and closing prayers.
- Committed to praying the process of forgiveness.
- Reviewed the overall program.

Module 2: Engaging with Scripture

Session 1: Bible 101

Leaders:

- Were given an overview the Old and New Testament.
- Explored the differences between translations.
- Reflected on the difference between reading the bible as a text book, play book or as spiritual text.
- Led the opening and closing prayers.

Session 2: Small Group Facilitation 101

Leaders:

- Learned how to facilitate a short bible meditation; how to prepare, how to organize your material, how to get the discussion going and how to help the bible have meaning for today.
- Experienced an inductive bible study method
- Led the opening and closing prayers.

Session 3 – 6: Bible study

Leaders took a turn leading a bible study in either the inductive, Lectio Divina or Luther’s Garland of Prayer or Four-Pages bible study methods. The bible studies were from the Torah, the psalms, the prophets, the gospels and the epistles. Participants continued to open and close the sessions with prayer.

Module 3: Called to Ministry

Session 1: Spiritual Gifts and Leadership

Leaders:

- Completed a spiritual gifts inventory and reflected on their gifts in leadership.
- Reflected on God’ call and their gifts for leadership in ministry.
- Led the opening and closing prayer or short bible meditation.

Session 2: Discernment

Leaders:

- Gathered Myers Briggs and spiritual gifts material and identified one thing or area in their lives where God is at work.
- Learned about Ignatius Discernment process.
- Developed a plan for how to be open to the working of the Holy Spirit.
- Led the opening and closing prayer or short bible meditation.

Session 3: Creeds

Leaders:

- Learned about the development of the church’s understanding of Christ’s divinity.
- Traced the development of the creeds and began to explore some of the challenges facing today’s creedal statements.
- Defined their belief in the Trinity.
- Led the opening and closing prayer or short bible meditation.

Session 4: Anglican Spiritual Tradition

Leaders:

- Explored Anglican spiritual heritage through an experiential process of reflective stations throughout the chapel.
- Reflected on key elements that make up our Anglican Spiritual traditions.
- Led the opening and closing prayer or short bible meditation.

Session 5: Death and Dying

Leaders:

- Reflected on why bad things happen to good people by reflecting on the book of Job.
- Reflected on the dying process and how to die and live well.
- Led the opening and closing prayer or short bible meditation.

Session 6: Group Spiritual Direction

Leaders:

- Participated in a group spiritual direction session to reflect further on our 'one thing'.
- Led the opening and closing prayer or short bible meditation.

Final Retreat

Leaders:

- Designed a Rule of Life listing their spiritual practices, discernment and spiritual gifts inventory.
- Affirmed each other's ministry capacities and the ways in which we graced each other's lives.
- Designed and participated in a closing graduation Eucharist and meal
- Received a Bible.

**Appendix H:
Prayer-Behaviour Pre-Test Responses,
Question 1**

Data Sheet 3

Question 1: Pre-Prayer Questionnaire Responses

Using Data Sheet 1

Data coded and collated: Jan. 11, 2017

Dawn Davis

Question #1 Can you please describe your prayer life? How long do you pray? When do you pray? What form do your prayers take?

| | | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 | 11 | Total |
|-----------------------------|--|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|----|----|-------|
| Regularity of Prayer | The regularity of the participant's prayer-life. Does the participant pray routinely or is prayer sporadic and happen spontaneously? | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| | Sporadic | | 1 | | | 1 | | | 1 | | | 1 | 4 |
| | Daily | 1 | | 1 | | | | 1 | | | | | 3 |
| | Two or three X a day | | | | 1 | | | | | 1 | | | 2 |
| | Constantly | | | | | | 1 | | | | 1 | | 2 |
| When | The part of the day the participant says they pray. | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| | Morning | | | | 1 | | 1 | | 1 | 1 | 1 | | 5 |
| | Before sleep | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | | 1 | 1 | | 1 | 1 | 1 | 9 |
| | During the day | | | 1 | | | 1 | | | | 1 | | 3 |
| How Long | The length of time in minutes the participant spends in prayer. | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| | 5-10 min | | 1 | | | | | 1 | | | | | 2 |
| | 10-20 min | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| | 20-30 min | | 1 | | | | 1 | | | | | | 2 |
| Form | Does the participant's pray with a structured prayer, devotional resource or use written prayers or liturgy? Unstructured prayers have no order and are likely in the form of short arrow prayer. | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| | Structured | | | | 1 | | 1 | 1 | | 1 | | | 4 |
| | Unstructured | 1 | 1 | 1 | | 1 | 1 | | | 1 | | 1 | 7 |

| | | |
|--------------------------|---|-------------------|
| Content: | What form does the prayer take? Is it asking God for something, praising God, conversing with God or being in the presence of God? | |
| | Thanks | 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 6 |
| | Petition, requests | 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 8 |
| | Contemplation | 1 1 2 |
| Petition Content | When using petitionary prayer, what are the topics the individuals tending to ask for help with? | |
| | Guidance | 1 1 2 |
| | Family | 1 1 2 |
| | Help (worries, issues) | 1 1 1 1 6 |
| | Health | 1 1 2 |
| | Creation | 1 1 |
| Structured Prayer | If using structured prayer, what prayers or structural formats did participants mention using? | |
| | Lord's Prayer | 1 1 2 |
| | Journal | 1 1 |
| | Examen | |
| | Lectio-divina | |
| | Forgiveness | |
| Where | Where did the participants mention they prayed? | |
| | Car | 1 1 2 |
| | Bed | 1 1 1 1 5 |
| | Church | 1 1 |
| Description | How participants described their prayers? | |
| | Silent | 1 1 1 1 5 |
| | Conversation | 1 1 |

**Appendix I:
Prayer-Behaviour Post-Test Responses,
Question 1**

Data Sheet 4

Question 1: Post-Test Responses

Using Data Sheet 2

Data coded and collated: Jan. 11, 2017

Dawn Davis

Question #1 Can you please describe your prayer life? How long do you pray? When do you pray? What form do your prayers take?

| | | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 9 | 10 | 11 | 12 | Total |
|--------------------------------------|--|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|----|----|----|-------|
| Regularit y of Prayer | The regularity of the participant's prayer-life. Does the participant pray routinely or is prayer sporadic and happen spontaneously? | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| | Sporadic | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| | Daily | 1 | 1 | | | 1 | | | | | 1 | 1 | 5 |
| | Two or three X a day | | | | 1 | | 1 | 1 | | | | | 3 |
| | Continually | | | 1 | | | | | 1 | 1 | | | 3 |
| | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| When | The part of the day the participant tends to pray. | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| | Morning | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | | 9 |
| | Before sleep | | 1 | 1 | 1 | | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | | 8 |
| | During the day | | 1 | 1 | | | 1 | | 1 | 1 | | | 5 |
| | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| How Long | The length of time in minutes the participant spends in prayer. | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| | 5-10 min | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| | 10-20 min | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| | 20-or more | | | | | | 1 | | 1 | | | | 2 |
| | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Form | Does the participant's pray with a structured prayer, devotional resource or use written prayers or liturgy? Unstructured prayers have no order and are likely in the form of short arrow prayer. | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| | Structured | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | | 10 |
| | Unstructured | | | | | | | | | | | 1 | 1 |
| | | | | | | | | | | | | | |

| | | | | | | | | | | | |
|--------------------------|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Content: | What form does the prayer take? Is it asking God for something, praising God, conversing with God or being in the presence of God? | | | | | | | | | | |
| | Thanks | | 1 | | | | 1 | | 1 | | 3 |
| | Petition, requests | 1 | | | | | 1 | 1 | | | 3 |
| | Contemplation | | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | | 8 |
| | | | | | | | | | | | |
| | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Petition Content | When using petitionary prayer, what are the participants asking for? | | | | | | | | | | |
| | Guidance | | | | | | | | | 1 | 1 |
| | Family | 1 | | | | | 1 | 1 | | | 3 |
| | Help (worries, issues) | | | | | | 1 | | | | 1 |
| | Health | | | | | | 1 | | | | 1 |
| | Creation | 1 | | | | | | | | | 1 |
| | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Structured Prayer | If using structured prayer, what prayers or structural formats did participants mention using? | | | | | | | | | | |
| | Written prayer | | | | | 1 | | | | | 1 |
| | Journal | | 1 | | | | | | | | 1 |
| | Body/waking | | | | | | 1 | 1 | | 1 | 3 |
| | Examen | 1 | | 1 | 1 | | 1 | 1 | | | 5 |
| | Lectio-divina | | | | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | | | 4 |
| | Forgiveness | | | | | | 1 | | | | 1 |
| | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Where | Where do the participants say they pray? | | | | | | | | | | |
| | Car | | | | | | | | 1 | | 1 |
| | Bed | | | | | 1 | | | 1 | | 2 |
| | Church | | | | | | | | | | |
| | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Type | How participants describe their prayer? | | | | | | | | | | |
| | Silent | | | | | | | | | | 0 |
| | Conversation | | | | | | 1 | | | 1 | 2 |

**Appendix J:
Effect of Experience on Feelings Toward Praying**

Prayer-Behaviour Pre- and Post Test Responses to Question 2 for feelings toward praying in public compared with the experience of previously praying in public.

| Participant | Previous Experience | Pre-test | Post-test |
|-------------|---------------------|----------|-----------|
| 12 | Yes | n/a | Positive |
| 2 | Yes | Negative | Positive |
| 3 | No | Negative | Positive |
| 4 | No | Negative | Positive |
| 8 | No | Negative | n/a |
| 10 | No | Negative | Positive |
| 11 | No | Negative | Positive |
| 1 | Yes | Positive | Positive |
| 5 | Yes | Positive | Positive |
| 6 | No | Positive | Positive |
| 7 | Yes | Positive | Positive |
| 9 | Yes | Positive | Positive |

**Appendix K:
Prayer Assessment Rating Table**

Prayer-Behaviour Pre- and Post Test Responses to Question 3, Prayer Assessment Rating Table.

| Prayer-Behaviour Pre-test | | | | | | | |
|---------------------------|------|-----------|--------|---------|---------|-------|-------|
| Part'pant | Lead | Salutat'n | Thanks | Topical | Mediate | Grace | Total |
| 1 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 1 | 4 |
| 2 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 5 |
| 3 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 1 | | 1 | 4 |
| 4 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| 5 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 1 | 4 |
| 6 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 2 |
| 7 | 1 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 1 | 4 |
| 8 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| 9 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 2 |
| 10 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 3 |
| 11 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 1 | 4 |
| 12 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Average Assessment Rate | | | | | | | 2.7 |

| Prayer-Behaviour Post-test | | | | | | | |
|----------------------------|------|-----------|--------|---------|---------|-------|-------|
| Part'pant | Lead | Salutat'n | Thanks | Topical | Mediate | Grace | Total |
| 1 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 1 | 3 |
| 2 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 6 |
| 3 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 5 |
| 4 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 1 | 4 |
| 5 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 1 | 4 |
| 6 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 1 | 4 |
| 7 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 5 |
| 8 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| 9 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 4 |
| 10 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 5 |
| 11 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 3 |
| 12 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 1 | 4 |
| Average Assessment Rate | | | | | | | 3.9 |

**Appendix L:
Group Norms**

Spiritual Leaders Group Norms

“do unto others as you would have them do unto you” (Matt. 7:12).

- < We will respect the dignity and worth of each person.
- < We will listen to all contributions to seek understanding and learning.
- < We will participate in the group as comfortable and our sharing will be genuine and honest.
- < We will not interrupt while another person is speaking.
- < We will be sensitive to differences of cultural and watch for ways to ensure all participate.
- < We will be responsible for our own feelings.
- < We will commit to discussing differences during the meeting.
- < We will hold in confidence and trust all contributions shared by group members.
- < We will practice a spirit of humility recognizing that no one person has the whole answer.
- < We will give permission for each person to grow into the fullness of God’s call.
- < We will commit to being open to the work of the Spirit who can do more than we ask or imagine.

Signature

Date

**Appendix M:
Confidentiality Agreement**

Spiritual Leaders
Confidentiality Agreement

As a participant in the Spiritual Leaders research project held at Trinity Aurora and led by Rev. Dawn Davis, I may have access to information and material which is of a private and confidential nature relating to individuals in the group. At all times, I shall respect the privacy and dignity of my fellow participants.

I shall not discuss, divulge, or disclose such information, unless there is a legitimate purpose related to my association with the Church and its initiatives.

I understand and agree to abide by the conditions outlined in this agreement, and they will remain in force even if I cease to have an association with Trinity, Aurora. I also understand that my duty to protect the privacy and confidentiality of personal information extends beyond my affiliation with the Church.

Signature

Date

**Appendix N:
Rate Table for Participant's Opening
and Closing Prayers**

| Assessment Rating of Participant's Opening and Closing Prayer | | | | | | | |
|---|------|-----------|--------|---------|---------|---------|-------|
| Part'pant | Lead | Salutat'n | Thanks | Topical | Mediate | Request | Total |
| 1 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 5 |
| 2 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 5 |
| 3 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 5 |
| 4 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 4 |
| 5 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 6 |
| 6 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 5 |
| 7 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 3 |
| 8 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 6 |
| 9 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 5 |
| 10 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 5 |
| 11 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 1 | 4 |
| 12 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Average Assessment Rate | | | | | | | 4.8 |