

Note: This Work has been made available by the authority of the copyright owner solely for the purpose of private study and research and may not be copied or reproduced except as permitted by the copyright laws of Canada without the written authority from the copyright owner.

Cowie, Heather Lynn. "Silence and Storytelling: The Dance of Formation for the Ministry of Spiritual Direction." D. Min., Tyndale University College & Seminary, 2018.

Tyndale University College & Seminary

Silence and Storytelling:
The Dance of Formation for
the Ministry of Spiritual Direction

A Research Portfolio
submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirement for the degree of
Doctor of Ministry
Tyndale Seminary

by
Heather Lynn Cowie

Toronto, Canada

August 2018

Copyright © 2018 by Heather Lynn Cowie
All rights reserved

ABSTRACT

This portfolio develops the themes of storytelling and listening, silence and community and the necessity of the integration of theology and experience in our spiritual journeys. The role of private prayer and personal reflection in coming to a deeper experience of God's love is balanced with the gift of community in the development of our relationship with God. The experience of spiritual direction and *The Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius* inform this work as does the spirituality of the Reformed tradition. The spiritual autobiography elucidates the formation received in both of these Christian faith traditions and the program for the formation of spiritual directors continues the dual emphasis. The program for forming spiritual directors is grounded on the foundational experience of personal and transforming encounter with Jesus. The silence of the spiritual director as a starting point for developing a contemplative posture is highlighted in the fourth chapter as it explores the practice of silence in direct connection with the ministry of spiritual direction.

DEDICATION

I dedicate this portfolio to my family. First, to my parents who have always supported me in tangible and practical ways as well as by believing in me. I also dedicate it to my siblings, Jae, Kathy and Don. Their presence through all the seasons of my life and their ongoing support has helped me to become more truly myself.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I want to acknowledge the support of The Road Church in making it possible for this portfolio to come to completion. In particular, the leadership team, who gave me the time and space this work required, and the Women's Group, who listened to me and prayed for the help I needed to overcome the challenges inherent in this endeavor. I also want to acknowledge the help and support of Dr. Paul Bramer in the final editing of this portfolio as well as his encouragement throughout the Doctor of Ministry program.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF FIGURES	xiii
LIST OF TABLES.....	xiv
CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION.....	1
Telling Our Stories and Receptive Silence.....	1
My Ministry Context	2
Spiritual Direction and the Reformed and Evangelical Traditions.....	4
The Five Themes	7
CHAPTER TWO: A STORY OF LOVE: A SPIRITUAL AUTOBIOGRAPHY	15
God Holds It All	15
Early Childhood.....	15
Later Childhood/Early Adolescence.....	17
Falling in Love.....	21
Jesus Loves Me.....	22
Scripture	25
Sin and A Call to Love	25
God in My Past and Future.....	26
Growing in Faith and Discovering Gifts	27
Holsby Brunn.....	28
Bible College	29
Working in the Residence	32
Rainy Days in Vancouver and Beyond.....	34
Orientation.....	34
Disorientation	35
Reorientation	42
King’s Fold	46
Discerning the Call to King’s Fold.....	46
Formation through Community	48
Hospitality and Trust	51
Spiritual Direction	53
The Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius	59
The Principle and Foundation	60
Week One: Knowing Myself as a Loved Sinner	62
Week Two: Coming to Know, Love and Follow Jesus More	63
Week Three: The Passion.....	65
Week Four: The Joy of the Resurrection and the Love of God.....	67
Appropriation Days	68
Living into My Vocation	69

The Vocation of Spiritual Direction	69
Becoming a Pastor	72
Sin and Humility.....	73
The Future: Full of Hope.....	76
CHAPTER THREE: A PROGRAM FOR THE FORMATION OF SPIRITUAL DIRECTORS.....	78
Spiritual Direction: An Introduction.....	86
A Description of Spiritual Direction	87
What Spiritual Direction Is Not.....	88
Why Spiritual Direction is Important in Our Time and Culture	88
Retreats	89
Retreat One - Awareness of God’s Love.....	91
Retreat Two - Knowing Ourselves as Loved Sinners	93
Retreat Three - Coming to Know, Love and Follow Jesus more	93
Retreat Four - The Passion	94
Retreat Five - The Joy of the Resurrection and The Contemplation on Love of God	94
Theological Reflection.....	95
Foundational Themes and Topics.....	100
Knowing God and Knowing Ourselves.....	100
Image of God.....	100
Sexuality and Spirituality	101
The Enneagram	102
Spiritual Pathways	105
Streams of Christian Spirituality	106
The Role of the Holy Spirit in Spiritual Direction	108
Faith and Trusting in God’s Providence.....	108
The Story of Your Life with God: Graced and Sin History	109
Stages of Faith	109
Forgiveness.....	112
Discernment.....	113
The Place of Suffering in Our Christian Journey	113
Grief, Fear, Sorrow, Anger.....	114
Disorientation	115
Desolation, the Dark Night and Depression	115
The Kingdom of God and Justice.....	116
Vocation	117
Prayer Pathways to Experience and Explore.....	117
Silence and Solitude	118
Praying with Creation.....	119
<i>Lectio Divina</i>	119
Praying with/through the Creative Arts.....	119
Ignatian Gospel Contemplation.....	120

Examen	120
Breath Prayers and the Prayer of the Heart	121
Lament	121
Centering Prayer	121
Welcoming Prayer	122
Body Prayers	123
<i>Visio Divina</i>	123
The Practice of Spiritual Direction	124
Listening	124
Real plays	126
Practicum	127
Direction of Peers on Silent Retreat	127
Ongoing Practicum	127
Peer Supervision	128
Conclusion	129

CHAPTER FOUR: THE VALUE OF THE PRACTICE OF SILENCE IN PREPARATION FOR SPIRITUAL DIRECTION	131
Introduction	131
Opportunity or Problem	132
Response or Innovation	133
Definitions of Key Terms	133
Supervision, Permission and Access	136
Context	137
Models and Other Resources	139
Background from Autobiography and Model of Spiritual Formation	140
Other Resources	143
Project, Methodology, and Methods	145
Field	146
Scope	147
Methodology	148
Methods	148
Phases and Timetable	153
Ethics in Ministry-Based Research	155
Findings, Interpretation and Outcomes	156
Findings	156
Interviews	157
Mary's Story	158
Joshua's Story	163
Miriam's Story	168
Sarah's story	173
Journals	177
Interpretations	184
Interviews	185

Purpose and Approach to Direction Interview One and Two Compared	185
The Practice of Silence in Relationship to the Purpose of Direction.....	189
Journals.....	192
Outcomes	193
Conclusion and Implications	195
CHAPTER FIVE: CONCLUSION	198
APPENDICES	207
Appendix A: A Beginning Reading List	208
Appendix B: Retreat and Prayer Resources from The Spiritual Exercises ..	212
Appendix C: Process for Theological Reflection	219
Appendix D: Image of God	220
Appendix E: Discernment I: Ignatian Discernment.....	222
Appendix F: Discerning the Dark Night of the Soul, Spiritual Desolation and Depression	230
Appendix G: Introduction to <i>Lectio Divina</i>	237
Appendix H: Miscellaneous Prayer Experiences	240
Appendix I: Spiritual Direction Supervision Reflection	246
Appendix J: Research Study Permission Letter.....	247
Appendix K: Research Study Consent Form.....	249
Appendix L: Interviews for Spiritual Directors.....	250
Appendix M: Prompts for Journal Entries of Spiritual directors.....	251
REFERENCE LIST	252

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1. Overview occurrences of themes.....	178
Figure 2. Godward and not	180
Figure 3. Away from God.....	180
Figure 4. Not Present to directee.....	181
Figure 5. Discernment.....	181
Figure 6. Presence of God.....	182
Figure 7. Godward	183
Figure 8. Present to directee.....	184
Figure 9. Mood disorders.....	235

LIST OF TABLES

Table 1. Retreat One: Themes and practices	81
Table 2. Retreat Two: Themes and practices.....	82
Table 3. Retreat Three: Themes and practices.....	83
Table 4. Retreat Four: Themes and practices.....	84
Table 5. Retreat Five: Themes and practices	85
Table 6. Days of contemplation and Retreat Six: Themes and practices.....	86
Table 7. Theological reflection topics and readings	96
Table 8. Enneagram type descriptions	103
Table 9. Spiritual pathways (Perrine 2007,8)	105
Table 10. Streams of Christian spirituality	106
Table 11. James Fowler's Stages of faith and religious development	111
Table 12. Timetable for project	153
Table 13. Sources of data.....	157
Table 14. Retreat One: Scripture texts.....	212
Table 15. Retreat Two: Scripture texts	212
Table 16. Retreat Three: Scripture texts	213
Table 17. Retreat Four: Scripture texts.....	213
Table 18. Retreat Five: Scripture texts	213
Table 19. Focus and Fruit of Prayer The Spiritual Exercises	214
Table 20. The dark night of sense.....	230
Table 21. The dark night of the spirit	231

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

This portfolio contains three main genres of writing – autobiographical, theoretical, and empirical research, with five key themes – silence, storytelling, community, integration and love, brought together to elucidate and enhance aspects of the ministry of spiritual direction, especially in the Canadian Evangelical and Reformed traditions.

Telling Our Stories and Receptive Silence

One of the most deeply moving experiences I have ever had occurred during my first year of a Doctor of Ministry program in spiritual formation. It involved both community and silence and it took me completely by surprise. We were required to share some of our spiritual autobiography with one another in a small group and I was resisting the need for this. I was self-conscious about my writing and was not sure it would be good enough.

It was, however a requirement and I entered in with trepidation, grateful that I was not the first person required to read a section of my autobiography. We listened and held the story we had heard in silence for a few moments. In the end, I was so deeply touched by the sharing of each person's story that I was moved to tears and could hardly respond in a coherent manner. It was a profoundly sacred

experience for me and it reminded me of the sacredness inherent in all the times I listen to others' stories. The experience has been a touchstone throughout the Doctor of Ministry (DMin) program and in my ministry ever since.

My Ministry Context

That ministry is based in Calgary, Alberta where I have been a spiritual director for fourteen years and a Pastor for twelve. I came to faith and experienced my first formative biblical and theological training in an evangelical context in the Christian and Missionary Alliance (C&MA) denomination. I attended Ambrose University College (then Canadian Bible College) and subsequently Regent College in Vancouver where I received a Masters of Christian Studies in Old Testament. When I returned to Calgary in my late twenties after my college and seminary education I became a member of the Christian Reformed Church of North America (CRCNA) where I am now ordained as a Commissioned Pastor. I received my spiritual direction training through an ecumenical program in a Catholic context at Providence Renewal Centre in Edmonton, Alberta. It was a rich and diverse program with extensive experiences of silence and retreat.

I am now serving as a pastor in a collaborative model of pastoring at The Road Church in Calgary. My current role on the pastoral team can be described as an executive pastor function; I oversee the staff and keep the big picture in view as we work together to fulfill ministry responsibilities. I also offer spiritual direction and train and supervise spiritual directors.

I meet primarily with directees who are situated in Reformed and Evangelical traditions. The primary way I offer direction is to see people in an ongoing way usually once a month. Some who come for direction are in leadership and appreciate a place where the time is for them to speak and to be listened to. Some come out of a need to talk about their longing for God; their desire for help and growth in matters of prayer; a dissatisfaction with their current prayer; a need for help or support in discerning a decision. Many are committed to spiritual direction as a regular spiritual practice that helps them pay attention to God and to their inner life. Those who come for direction come for many distinct reasons, but all are seeking a place to talk about their life with God in a safe and open environment. I also participate as a director at three silent retreats each year. These retreats give opportunity for each retreatant to meet with a spiritual director every day.

I have been involved in the past as a supervisor in a spiritual direction training program intended to draw participants from an evangelical context. In October 2016, I began co-directing a new spiritual direction training program in St. Albert, Alberta, The Studion School of Spiritual Direction. This program is based in part on the third chapter of this portfolio, the program for the formation of spiritual directors. Chapter 3 reflects my contribution to a collaborative program and is not a complete representation of The Studion School of Spiritual Direction's curriculum. However, it does accurately reflect the structure and

intention of The Studion program and the majority of the content of the chapter is being used in The Studion program.

The desire of Studion is to draw participants from many Christian faith traditions. The co-director of Studion and I believe spiritual direction and contemplative practices have much to offer Christians who value a personal and thoughtful faith, regardless of their denominational affiliation. The first cohort of Studion included Christians from Reformed, Catholic, Baptist, and Anglican churches.

Spiritual Direction and the Reformed and Evangelical Traditions

Spiritual direction is not that well known in the Reformed and Evangelical communities that I have connection to. This does not mean that attention to spirituality has been absent but that the forms have tended to be more communal. According to Ben Johnson in the chapter “Spiritual Direction in the Reformed Tradition” in the book *Spiritual Direction and the Care of Souls*, “the preferred methods of developing piety have been preaching, teaching, pastoral care and the administration of the sacraments” (Johnson 2004, 96). Howard Rice in *Reformed Spirituality* (Rice 1991) also identifies pastoral counseling, small groups, spiritual friendships and letter writing as some of the more typical approaches to soul care in the history of the Reformed tradition. Rice articulates quite a few reasons for the lack of the more structured, formal type of spiritual direction which is well known in the Catholic tradition in his chapter “The Reformed Tradition: Problems

and Possibilities” (Rice 1991, 45). Two of the ones that I see as influential in the CRCNA are the “rejection of individualism” (Rice 1991, 51) and the “rejection of sentimentality” (Rice 1991, 55). The “rejection of individualism” inhibits the practice of personal contemplative prayer. “One of the reasons for the negative attitude toward private religious practice springs from a deeply held Reformed conviction that it is not possible to have pure motives” (Rice 1991, 53). Although Rice wrote these words more than twenty years ago the suspicion toward contemplative practices is still present in the broader community of faith of which I am a part.

The other influential factor which continues to be prevalent is “the rejection of sentimentality.”

The Reformed tradition has been suspicious about some forms of spirituality because of a deep-seated concern about the dangers of sentimentality. The insistence that our faith must make sense is a call for the serious exercise of the mind...

Sentimentality is the excessive emotionalism, which prefers feelings to careful thought. The emotions, by themselves, are not very reliable guides to the Christian. Feelings may come from an encounter with God or they may spring from our own neurotic needs. (Rice 1991, 55)

The value of the “serious exercise of the mind” and the suspicion of feelings Rice expresses here has sometimes led to a denial of the role of feelings in our life with God. The overemphasis on the rational and cognitive functions and the undervaluing of the affective and feeling functions of the human person is a problem I personally experienced in my early spiritual formation. It is also something I hear in the stories of many, both as a pastor and a spiritual director.

Overall, in this period of its history the Reformed tradition has a very strong head but is prone to have an underdeveloped heart. The tradition as a whole would benefit greatly from a more heartfelt approach to spirituality. “The balance between the heart and mind is critical. We must test our emotional experiences in the light of what we know, but, at the same time, knowledge without personal experience of the heart is a dead kind of knowing” (Rice 1991, 57). Spiritual direction as it is being practiced in the Roman Catholic tradition provides a necessary corrective for these weaknesses. Janet Ruffing in the book *To Tell the Sacred Tale* (Ruffing 2011) describes the contemporary model of spiritual direction in the Catholic tradition as including the assumption that “the conversations focus on the experienced interaction of God with the person seeking direction and that person’s response to these movements both within prayer and within daily life” (Ruffing 2011, 20). This opportunity to tell stories about our life with God and the “experienced interaction” can aid with discernment and can give the Reformed Christian, who may be fearful of being misled, the community support they value. The emphasis on exploring the affective life which is present in the contemporary approach to spiritual direction provides a balance for a tradition that has a strong emphasis on the intellect and the teaching and preaching of the Word of God.

It is my hope to increase the appreciation and practice of spiritual direction and silence in Reformed and Evangelical traditions through this portfolio as it highlights the role of contemplative experience in the formation of followers of

Jesus and in spiritual directors specifically. It also underscores the place of stories in our life with God and one another. The two elements of silence and story point to the reality that solitude and community are counterpoints to one another and are necessary tensions in a balanced life with God. As Dietrich Bonhoeffer wrote in *Life Together*,

Let him who cannot be alone beware of community. He will only do harm to himself and to the community. Alone you stood before God when he called you, alone you had to answer that call; alone you had to struggle and pray; and alone you will die and give an account to God. . . .

But the reverse is also true: *Let him who is not in community beware of being alone.* Into the community you were called, the call was not meant for you alone; in the community of the called you bear your cross, you struggle, you pray. (Bonhoeffer 1954, 77) (Emphasis in original).

The tension in which silence and solitude are held with listening and community are present throughout this work.

The Five Themes

The experience of listening in the Spiritual Autobiography group draws together five key themes that are threads through this portfolio. The first thread is the place of stories and our ability to listen to them with compassion, both our own stories and those of others. The second is the role of silence and solitude in increasing our capacity to listen to God, ourselves and others. The third is the importance of community in our formation, the necessity of being together in ways that are life-giving. The fourth is the resulting integration in our journey of transformation, how integration of our whole person happens through our storytelling and our listening, our speaking and our silence. Undergirding and

overarching all is the power of love in our journeys of transformation; God's love but also the love of the communities of faith to which we belong. These themes are all interconnected but they are also distinct; rather than one monolithic rope they are threads, at times woven together so closely they appear almost to be one thing, at other times diverging on different courses with their own unique presence.

First of all, telling stories is an integral part of the ministry of spiritual direction. Stories are ubiquitous, they encompass all our experiences. Between the spiritual autobiography and the research project, stories contribute significantly to the content and structure of this portfolio. The ability to tell our story is also a key part of becoming a whole person and of growing in our relationship with God, with self and others. Stories in this work are understood as "a narration of the events in the life of a person" (Ammer 2002). It is important that we not only tell our stories but that our stories are listened to. The movement of this project begins with telling my story in the spiritual autobiography, then shifts to helping others to hear their own story and grow in their capacity to listen to others in both the model of formation and the research project.

Secondly, the practice of listening is present throughout; listening deeply and with the capacity to be quiet; listening from a place of silence and receptivity rather than a place of seeking to fix and control, to respond with pat answers or the need to bolster one's own reputation; listening to God, through the Spirit; and listening to another person by being as fully present as possible to the moment.

We each must learn to listen to God and to ourselves before we can fully hear another person. We must be able to hear our own stories with compassion before we have the capacity to extend God's compassion to others. We must be centered in God's love for us if we want to be able to extend His love to others. These capacities are all increased by our entry into silence and listening to God. The word silence is used throughout this work in various ways. It is used in general as the act of refraining from speaking audibly to other people, however as it's use varies from this basic understanding it will be defined more explicitly where necessary.

The practice of silence in the Christian tradition has a firm foundation in scripture. Jesus needed times of silence and solitude to listen for God as he shows in Mark, "Very early in the morning, while it was still dark, Jesus got up, left the house and went off to a solitary place, where he prayed" (Mark 1:35 [NIV]). Margaret Magdalen in the book *Jesus, Man of Prayer* writes, "[Jesus] went apart to cure his loneliness. He needed the silence of eternity as a thirsting man in the desert needs water. And he essentially needed the silence of eternity which was interpreted by love. For he who was love incarnate had his own needs to love and be loved. His deepest need, and likewise ours, could be met only by God" (Magdalen 1987, 56). The role of silence in our life with God is vital. Henri Nouwen in *The Way of the Heart* writes, "Silence guards the inner heat of religious emotions. This inner heat is the life of the Holy Spirit within us. Thus, silence is the discipline by which the inner fire of God is tended and kept alive"

(Nouwen 2003, 45). Without silence, our life with God can remain shallow and underdeveloped. In our current context of ever-present noise and distraction we can easily avoid hearing what our own heart needs and wants to say and how God wants to address us in those places. Dallas Willard, in the book *The Spirit of the Disciplines*, writes,

Only silence will allow us life-transforming concentration upon God. It allows us to hear the gentle God whose only Son ‘shall not strive, nor cry; neither shall any man hear his voice above the street noise’ (Matt. 12:19). It is this God who tells us that ‘in quietness and trust is your strength’ (Isa. 30:15, NAS). (Willard 1988, 164)

The role of silence is explored most explicitly in chapter 4, the research project, but it is also very present in the spiritual autobiography and the model for the formation of spiritual directors.

Thirdly, the role of community in our transformation has been a very important part of the DMin program and it is reflected in this work. In this work the word community refers to a group of Christians with a commitment to encouraging and supporting one another in their faith journeys. It is not limited to church congregations but includes other communities where spiritual formation, faith, and/or service are central to their reason for existing. Two examples of this kind of community are the DMin cohort and the community of resident staff at King’s Fold Retreat Centre. We are shaped by our relationships with each other. Our ability to both be sharpened and sharpen one another is dependent on being part of communities that are committed to journeying together (Prov. 27:17). As

Peter writes in his second epistle mutual affection and love in increasing measure are necessary to growing in our knowledge of Jesus.

For this very reason, make every effort to add to your faith goodness; and to goodness, knowledge; and to knowledge, self-control; and to self-control, perseverance; and to perseverance, godliness; and to godliness, mutual affection; and to mutual affection, love. For if you possess these qualities in increasing measure, they will keep you from being ineffective and unproductive in your knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. (2 Pet. 1:5-8)

The place of faith communities in my own formation is clear in the spiritual autobiography. The program for the formation of spiritual directors is built on the foundation of a community that will pray, reflect, discuss, and share life together. The research project in chapter 4 has the least focus on community. Although the individuals who participated are all part of spiritual communities they are not connected to one another. The role of community in the formation of each of the participants in the research project is explored to some extent in their stories, but the emphasis of the fourth chapter is on the effect of the silence that was practiced and not on their experience of community.

Fourth, the desire for integration was clearly present in each of the stories I listened to as well as the one I told that first year in our Spiritual Autobiography groups. As each one was telling their story the longing for healing and becoming a whole person was present. The longing for healing and wholeness is the longing for integration. This is a thread that is also present in all three projects. My own journey of integration is the central story in my spiritual autobiography. The desire to facilitate the integration of people who are training to become spiritual

directors is at the core of the program for the formation of spiritual directors. The practice of silence before spiritual direction that was the intervention of the research project has at its heart the desire for a deeper capacity to listen freely and fully to another out of the director's own sense of centeredness and wholeness. This rests on the reality of the director having experienced a certain degree of integration in their own lives.

Finally, over all and in all and through all there is the love of God, expressed through Jesus his Son and realized through the power and work of the Holy Spirit. This is the foundation, the framework and the centre. To know and share this love is the goal of all. Paul writes:

For this reason I kneel before the Father, from whom every family in heaven and on earth derives its name. I pray that out of his glorious riches he may strengthen you with power through his Spirit in your inner being, so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith. And I pray that you, being rooted and established in love, may have power, together with all the Lord's holy people, to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ, and to know this love that surpasses knowledge—that you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God. (Eph. 3:14-19)

Nouwen draws the connection between the movement that occurs in contemplative silence and our ability to reveal God's love in *The Way of the Heart* as he discusses the goal of all ministry.

Isn't the purpose of all ministry to reveal that God is not a God of fear but a God of love? And couldn't this be accomplished by gently and carefully converting the empty silence into a full silence, the anxious silence into a peaceful silence, and the restless silence into a restful silence, so that in this converted silence a real encounter with the loving Father could take place? (Nouwen 2003, 52-53)

The goal of ministry revealing that God is a God of love and the necessity of the minister, whether pastor, spiritual director, teacher, counsellor, or any other minister, lay or professional, having a personal and experiential knowledge of this truth is the reason this work matters.

The program for the formation of spiritual directors and the research project on the role of silence in preparing for spiritual direction both focus on the value of the full, peaceful and restful silence of which Nouwen speaks (Nouwen 2003, 52). This is what helps us listen well, to God, ourselves and one another, but the autobiography is the story on which all else rests as my own experience of silence has been transformative. The role of silence in my own movement toward inner freedom is immeasurable. In addition, as I have accompanied many people in silence during retreats and in the Studion formation program I have seen how important it is for healing and wholeness in others' lives as well. When students of the Studion entered into their first silent retreat there were many complaints and grumblings. It was clear that many wondered about the value of this practice. When we gathered after eight months of the program for a time which did not include a silent retreat almost everyone in the group expressed disappointment that they would not have the opportunity to be in extended silence. They had to experience silence to realize its value. The experience of silence is not normative in our culture, but its value is tremendous in helping us learn how to listen to our interior life and to God.

It is my hope that through this portfolio the important place of story, silence and community in the integration of one's faith and in the deepening of one's life with God will be shown. It is also my hope that the reality of God's love for each of His children will break through to the heart of each reader.

CHAPTER TWO:
A STORY OF LOVE:
A SPIRITUAL AUTOBIOGRAPHY

God Holds It All

Now I lay me down to sleep,
I pray the Lord my soul to keep.
If I should die before I 'wake,
I pray the Lord my soul to take.

– (New England Primer 1750, 23)

Early Childhood

When I reflect on my early childhood I have a sense of safety, security and nurture.

I have a photograph of my brother and I, I am sitting on his lap and only my mother's arm is seen, her hands making sure that my six-month old self was safe on my two-year old brothers lap as the picture was snapped. This is an image that I feel a powerful attraction to-it catches what my early childhood was like. My strongest memories are of playing with Don, my mother is present; in the vicinity but not right there playing with us. Don and I are the youngest of four children. My older brother and sister, Jae and Kathy, were in school by the time I was born. My early memories of them and of my father, although fond, are not nearly as present to me as the ones of my Mom and Don.

My grandparents on my father's side visited usually twice a year and although their presence was not constant it was memorable. Every second year my Grandparents spent Christmas with us and these were particularly special times. My grandfather was a great storyteller, he was a true gentleman with a warm personality. My grandmother was also generous and kind. My grandfather had a very important influence on my spiritual life as did the close relationship with my brother Don, both of which I will say more about later.

During the time of my early childhood I recall a sense of awareness that there was a God, although His presence was not felt in a very close way. Prayer was very simple and mostly confined to bedtime prayers, "Now I lay me down to sleep. . . ."

We lived in a safe neighbourhood in the city of Calgary, where we knew our neighbours and played in the front yard and the street as well as in the back yard. I was very shy and did not want to venture too far from the familiar and safe physical and emotional environment that was my home. In contrast to these feelings of safety and security there are two experiences that had a strong influence on my life. One was a recurring dream I had as a child; I don't know how young I was when it started but certainly before I was in school. My whole family was crossing a bridge over a deep ravine. It was a suspension bridge that was made up of wooden slats. Many of these slats were missing, leaving gaping holes and I was always the last one crossing. Many times in the dream I would fall through the holes in the bridge and wake up terrified of dying.

The second experience happened while on a train trip from Winnipeg to Thunder Bay when I was about 4 years old. My grandfather worked for the railway and our family had berths for sleeping. I insisted that I could sleep in a berth by myself even when my parents suggested that it might be better for me not to be alone. I woke up in the night very afraid and ended up sharing my Mom's berth. My Dad was annoyed with me and although looking back I understand why he was irritated at being woken in the middle of the night, this experience had a deep impact on me. Of course, it was never the intention of my parents, but I took into myself at this young age the message that it was not okay to be afraid.

I have shared these two experiences at this point in my story because they are places Jesus later met me in powerful ways and are part of the unfolding story of His love and healing in my life.

Later Childhood/Early Adolescence

As I reflect on my elementary school years and beyond, my recollection of events and feelings grows sharper. Although I was very shy as a child, at the same time I had a settled sense of who I was and did not feel pressured by others to conform. When I was in grade three, I changed schools' mid-year as our family moved to a new area of the city. In the first weeks of the new year the process of finding my place in the school social hierarchy was an important part of this transition. It seemed in the beginning that I might make it into the cool group but after a couple of weeks I settled into the normal group. I did not feel disappointed by this fall from grace and perhaps even felt relief that I was where I belonged. I

had no desire to pretend to be different than I was in order to fit in with a group. I am not sure where this sense of self came from, but I am grateful for it and think it saved me from succumbing to peer pressure as I entered my teens.

In terms of my spiritual life during this time, my family did not attend church. Although faith was part of both of my parents' upbringing, they experienced the negative impact power politics has on a faith community and left the organized church in disillusionment when I was a baby. When I was in about grade five I had a friend who went to church and I felt an interest in it and a desire to go. I believed in God and I was curious about church but not curious enough to overcome my shyness or my desire to be in familiar surroundings.

Around this time there was an event in our life that created a sense of instability in our family. My Granny, my grandmother on my mother's side, had been struggling with mental illness since I was very young. She would occasionally come to stay with our family for a couple of days when my parents travelled but I did not know her very well. One day she came to live with us. My sister told me, only a couple of years ago, that she had arrived unannounced on my parent's doorstep with suitcase in hand.

She lived with us for several years but at the beginning her unexpected arrival created a feeling of unsettledness and transition in our home. There was lots of upheaval as my parents shifted everyone around to make room for Granny. She lived for a few months in Don's room while they moved Jae to the basement, Kathy to his old room and Granny into the room that had been Kathy's. Through

these years she was a quiet presence, but she did not interact with us very much. As I look back on this part of our family life I wish my parents could have talked with us more openly about the change this brought to all of us and even more importantly about my Granny's state of health. I am sure they felt overwhelmed and the fact that they did not know how to talk about it is clear. This situation highlights the pattern in my family of not knowing how to talk about difficult things or express uncomfortable emotions. For my mother, I believe this also created some fear of what was out of her control and an increased desire for peace and order.

For the most part I experienced her desire for peace and order as a positive influence in our family life. I felt we had a well-ordered home that was not too tightly controlled. We had spaces to make a mess and spaces to keep tidy. Hospitality was something my parents were good at and they were comfortable with having extra people around. Sleepovers were a common occurrence and friends were always welcome to be in our home. Our home was certainly orderly, and we had our chores to do but I never felt like I was constrained to be excessively tidy. At the same time, there was not a great deal of freedom to express strong emotions, particularly negative ones. I did not feel free to express fear, anger or grief, although more positive emotions were more acceptable. There was a lot of laughter, particularly around the dinner table.

My father also had a high value for common sense and if we were foolish or did things that were contrary to common sense, as most children do, we would

know that he was not very happy with us! I knew very clearly that my Dad loved me, and I loved being his little girl but he was somewhat distant emotionally. As an adult, it is easy to see why. His father was away for work most of his growing up years and my grandfather lost his father at a very young age. My family history includes at least two generations of absent fathers. My father had a deep love for his family and he expressed that in many ways but for him the primary way when we were young was by providing well for us. He expressed his love with generosity and constancy and for the last twenty years of his life I was able to receive his love in the ways he knew how to give it. I thank God for giving me the insight to see this as I became more mature. I am also grateful that I have experienced the healing that knowing the emotionally intimate love of my Father in Heaven has brought.

When I was in Junior High School in grade seven I made a new friend, a Christian who went to church regularly. I started to attend CGIT, *Canadian Girl's in Training*, with her at the Presbyterian Church in my neighbourhood. CGIT's purpose is:

As a Canadian Girl in Training
Under the leadership of Jesus
It is my purpose to
Cherish Health
Seek Truth
Know God
Serve Others
And thus, with His help,
Become the girl God would have me be.
(CGIT 2018)

I am sure I did not know this purpose at the time that I was attending CGIT, but it was a good place to be and I began to learn more about the Christian faith.

I went to church once or twice with my friend, but I was made aware of my lack of knowledge about matters of faith in a negative way. A Sunday School teacher was not kind to me when I didn't know where to find a book of the Bible and this lack of knowledge caused me to feel embarrassment at church, so although I continued to attend CGIT I did not attend Sunday School or church services again. I did, however, go to summer camp and this was a positive experience of Christian community. I felt that God was real and I began to pray more consistently but I really didn't understand the Christian story.

I had no idea who Jesus was.

Falling in Love

Nothing is more practical than
finding God,
That is, falling in love in a quite
absolute final way.

What you are in love with,
what seizes your imagination,
will affect everything.

It will decide what will get you out of bed in the morning.
What you will do with your mornings.
How you will spend your weekend,
What you will read,
Who you know,
What breaks your heart
What amazes you with joy and gratitude.

Fall in love,
Stay in love, and
It will decide everything.

– (Arrupe, 2011, 40)

Jesus Loves Me

At the same time that I was being drawn to God and beginning to learn about faith, my brother Don was beginning his own spiritual journey, also through the influence of a friend. I was about thirteen at this time and while my relationship with God was developing in a slow and steady way Don had a very dramatic conversion experience at summer camp. He came home from camp with a zeal for Jesus that was beautiful and offensive at the same time. Passion was not tempered by wisdom or discernment and this caused some chagrin on the part of my parents.

When Don came home from camp he promptly told my parents, myself and probably my other siblings that we needed to be born again and to accept Jesus as our Saviour. My parents, who had been raised in the church and already considered themselves to be Christians, were offended but gracious. They told my brother that this way of faith was fine for him and he was free to follow it, but to please respect their own belief in God. With me he found a much more open and receptive audience as I was already on a path of seeking to know God more. When Don began to share more of the gospel story with me, I was drawn to Jesus. I was amazed that He could love me so much and I felt a strong pull toward Him. I wondered how anyone could resist His love and yet it was several months of learning, wondering and longing before I felt sure that I was following Jesus.

I began to go church with Don the summer after I finished Junior High School. I found a very open and welcoming community in the youth group and I had a born-again experience at a youth event just over a year after Don's conversion. It was a Friday evening fun event followed by a time of worship and sharing. Don gave his testimony at the end of the evening and talked about how he had come to know Jesus and the difference that was making in his life. We were asked to respond, and I prayed that Jesus would come into my heart. I experienced a moment of shifting and settling in my heart that ended most of my doubts about whether I was saved. I expressed my desire to surrender to Jesus in a prayer and felt a release of emotion; I wept and then a deep sense of peace followed. At that time in my life I was rather disconnected from my emotions and did not have a lot of experience in articulating or expressing what I felt, but I knew I felt love and peace and joy.

In the faith tradition where this happened this was typical of what would be expected in a conversion experience, and at the time I interpreted this as the moment of conversion. Now I see the whole journey as a conversion experience, from the beginning of longing for God, through that moment of surrender and invitation and up to the present where conversion continues to happen in ongoing ways.

During the three years that I was involved in the youth group I was mentored very well by a young couple in the church who were influential in the

growth of my faith. There was a true sense of community and solid biblical teaching during these early years of my journey.

Another early crisis point in my faith came about a year after this experience. I was on a youth retreat in the winter at a camp in the foothills west of Calgary. The speaker's topic was the Holy Spirit. This was totally new to me; I had never heard of the Trinity or anything about the Holy Spirit before. I was enthralled. I think some in our group found the teaching a bit boring – it certainly wasn't the typical highly emotive motivational speaking that was common at youth events, but I loved it. I was eager to learn and very grateful for the teaching.

The theology of the Holy Spirit in the Christian and Missionary Alliance that was taught at that time is that there is a second crisis experience of filling of the Holy Spirit subsequent to salvation that all Christians should experience. At the time of the retreat I prayed that the Holy Spirit would fill me. I don't recall any great emotional response, but I believe a deeper sense of surrender to God's presence and movement was the fruit of this prayer. I don't adhere now to the theology of the filling of the Holy Spirit being a necessary second crisis, but I do believe there was a profound filling of the Spirit and a decisive moment of change. I have come to interpret this experience over the course of many years of following Jesus in the context of ongoing crisis-process moments of sanctification, rather than the one and only "second blessing" that I was taught at the time.

At some point during this year of coming to faith I noticed that my dream of falling through the bridge into the chasm far below had stopped. My fear of death just went away and I am convinced this was a result of the spiritual reality of my very real and personal faith in Jesus.

Scripture

I had a desire to grow and learn and the Bible was a very central part of the spirituality of the tradition I was saved in. Scripture was becoming important to me as well. My mom bought my first Bible as a gift, it was a small leather-bound bible and I loved reading it. I am grateful for the way the Spirit gave me this desire to read His word and a love for the Scriptures. This love has shaped many of my life choices since that time. God also gave me a capacity to remember His word and to absorb the story of salvation that Scripture tells. One time our youth group was on a long bus trip from Calgary to Winnipeg for a youth conference. To pass the time some of the youth leaders began a Bible quiz. I knew many of the answers to the questions. Don was surprised at how much I knew and asked me how I had learned so much in the short time I had been a follower of Jesus. I just shrugged and responded that I had been reading the Bible, especially the New Testament. I recognize now what a lovely gift this desire to know God's word and the capacity to remember it was.

Sin and A Call to Love

As I began to grow in my faith, to learn about the Bible, surrender to the Holy Spirit and trust in God, God also started to convict me of sin. I remember

having a very lucid moment in prayer after reading some scripture in my room where I realized with stunning clarity that I did not know how to love. I realized that I did not even really feel love toward my parents. The depth of my selfishness and self-absorption hit me powerfully and was a shock to me. I felt true repentance and grief and began to pray that God would help me to learn how to love. God gave me the wisdom, by His Spirit, to know that this was not a problem I could fix on my own, that I needed to depend on Him to change my heart; the very core of myself, in order to be able to love.

I don't remember the passage of scripture I was reading but Matt. 22:37-39 comes to mind. "Jesus replied: "'Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.' This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: 'Love your neighbor as yourself'" (Matt. 22:37-39). Jesus was making himself known to me through His word, His Spirit and His church. I am so grateful for the ways the Spirit guided me at this time.

God in My Past and Future

During my high school years, I began to sense that my vocation would be ministry although the specifics of what this would look like took a long time to become clear. I wanted to follow God wholeheartedly and I truly dedicated myself to Him. It felt as though God had reached His hand into my family and plucked Don and I out for Himself. As I have reflected on the sense of God choosing us I have come to the conclusion that it is partly because of his promise

to be faithful to the generations. “I will establish my covenant as an everlasting covenant between me and you and your descendants after you for the generations to come, to be your God and the God of your descendants after you” (Gen. 17:7). My grandfather, my dad’s father, was a man of deep and quiet faith and I believe that my brother and I coming to faith in our teen years is related to his faithful prayers for his family. “For the Lord is good and his love endures forever;/his faithfulness continues through all generations” (Ps. 100:5). Whenever my grandparents would visit they would take us to church and there was a calm and centred presence in my grandfather that drew all of us to him.

When I was in grade eleven both he and my granny who lived with us passed away. Grief was new to me and I felt quite alone in it as my parents were not comfortable with sadness, and my older siblings had moved away from home. The capacity to name and be present to hard emotions was something my family of origin did not do very well. I did not know how to make space within myself to process my feelings but this did not prevent my having them. The only course known to me was to push them aside after feeling them briefly. Not a great strategy for ongoing health but all I was capable of at the time.

Growing in Faith and Discovering Gifts

For this reason, since the day we heard about you, we have not stopped praying for you. We continually ask God to fill you with the knowledge of his will through all the wisdom and understanding that the Spirit gives, so that you may live a life worthy of the Lord and please him in every way: bearing fruit in every good work, growing in the knowledge of God, being strengthened with all power according to his glorious might so that you may have great endurance and patience, and giving joyful thanks to the

Father, who has qualified you to share in the inheritance of his holy people in the kingdom of light. For he has rescued us from the dominion of darkness and brought us into the kingdom of the Son he loves, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins.

– (Col. 1:9-14)

Holsby Brunn

Finding one's purpose in life and figuring out what we are made to do is part of the journey of young adulthood and for me there were many refinements of the general sense of calling I felt as a sixteen-year old. After finishing high school and working for a year I decided to attend a small bible school in Sweden (Holsby Brunn) for six months and then to travel in Europe before pursuing more formal education.

The year away at Holsby Brunn was a time of experiencing community, gaining some independence and discerning the next steps of my education and life. One incident that occurred while I was in Sweden that was a gift of God's love for me happened toward the end of my time there. I had inherited a ring from my Granny that I wore all the time. One day I lost the ring. I shared this loss with many at the school; it was very precious to me as it was one of the few mementos I had of her. One of the other students prayed that he would find it. Later, he described how he was emptying the wastebasket in the women's washroom and the ring just popped out onto the floor! This experience was an affirmation of God's generous love for me. He cared enough about a small ring to restore it to me and in the process, build the faith of a community.

While in Sweden I decided to continue with a Bible College education and applied to Canadian Bible College (CBC) with the intention of completing a degree in Biblical Studies and preparing for a career as a missionary. It was difficult to tell my parents of this decision because I knew their desire for me was to go to university and study something that would give me a secure future. When I told them, they were disappointed but also expressed support and reminded me that all they wanted was for me to be free to pursue my dreams.

Bible College

I began to study at CBC the following year. I lived on campus and thrived as a student. I enjoyed my studies and made some good friends. I began to see what some of my gifts were and had the opportunity to use them in the context of student life.

During my second year at Bible College two things happened that had an ongoing impact on my life, one more immediate than the other. I felt that I was being called to go to the Philippines on a short-term mission for ten months as part of my education. The purpose of the mission was focused on the evangelism and discipleship of university students. While going through the medical that was part of the application process my doctor discovered that I had endometriosis, a disease that was affecting my ovaries. I had to have surgery and learned that there was a possibility I would never have children. At the time, I was twenty-one and in the optimism of youth I didn't really think too much about it, but it was always something that hovered over me and came to have more importance later on.

However, I recovered well from the surgery and continued with my plans to go to the Philippines later that year. There were four of us on the team; the two men were stationed in Manila and myself and another young woman in Iloilo City.

The second thing that had a momentous and transformative effect was that the young woman I was partnered with and I had a disagreement on our way to the Philippines that was never resolved. We shared a room for ten months and she never spoke to me when we were alone. The disagreement was really my fault; I was not tactful or sensitive to her. I did sincerely apologize but she was unable to forgive me until a few years later. Although I don't take full responsibility for the continuation of the tension between us, I must own that I was the initial cause of the breakdown of our relationship. Partly because of the tension that was constantly present between us it was a difficult experience and one of the loneliest years of my life.

Some good things that came out of this experience are that I learned to be much more sensitive to people around me, a bit more gentle, and I think a little less eager to express my opinions right away. There were a few other gifts in the year, including working with some wonderful people in Iloilo City and the relationships with my other teammates but overall it was a humbling and difficult experience. The time overseas also confirmed that my gifts were definitely not in the area of evangelism but were connected to helping people to grow in their faith.

I returned to CBC the following year and decided to complete a Bachelor of Theology. I was the only woman in my year enrolled in that degree and as a result was also the only woman in many of my classes. I did not feel a sense of needing to prove anything by being there, it was just the right degree for me. There was quite a conservative view of women in leadership in the denomination as a whole at that time; although there were pockets of exceptions. I didn't feel a need to fight against this view but I also didn't fit the typical ministry opportunities laid out for women. I did not recognize it at the time, but I was beginning to feel some dissonance with the tradition where I had come to faith.

There were many gifts that I received in my church and denomination; two that I will always be grateful for are that I had found a sense of belonging and a good foundation in the Scriptures. On the other side though, there was a moralism and a conservative perspective on women in leadership that was beginning to disconnect with my journey with Jesus. I did not feel this very acutely at the time but looking back this is where the dissonance began. This sense of finding a different way with Jesus continued to develop later.

When I returned from the Philippines I began to be involved in student leadership and in my last year I served as a resident assistant (RA) in the dormitory. This was a time when some of my relational gifts were used and affirmed. I loved being present to others and providing a safe place for young women to share their life with me and with one another.

There was a moment during my year as an RA where I realized that God had been faithful to answer my prayer to become a more loving person. There was one woman on my floor who was more demanding and difficult to love (as there is in any group). One day when I was praying for the women on my floor I felt an overwhelming love for her and the awareness that this was God's love being poured into me. I was reminded of the prayer I had prayed as a new Christian and felt gratitude that God had been answering my prayer even when I was not aware of it.

During this period, I began to experience an increasing capacity to be present to emotions, my own and others, through the help of a spiritual director and a deepening relationship with God. There was yet some distance to travel on that journey but it was beginning. I was introduced to spiritual direction at this time by one of the professors at CBC through the book *Working the Angles* by Eugene Peterson (Peterson 1987). I was drawn to receive it from first hearing about spiritual direction but the sense of a call to become a director came much later.

Working in the Residence

I loved being an RA so much that I became one of the Resident Directors (RD) after I graduated. This was a part time position where I continued to live in the dorm; my main responsibilities were to support the RA's, help oversee the residential program and mentor students. This role was a good fit for me and it was a time of awakening to my vocation.

I was reading the scripture passage from Isaiah 58 one day and I recognized that for me the call “to be with the hungry” was going to be for those who were hungry in a spiritual sense more than a physical one. When I read this passage, I knew this scripture was being spoken to me:

Is not this the kind of fasting I have chosen:
to loose the chains of injustice
and untie the cords of the yoke,
to set the oppressed free
and break every yoke?
Is it not to share your food with the hungry
and to provide the poor wanderer with shelter—
when you see the naked, to clothe them,
and not to turn away from your own flesh and blood?
Then your light will break forth like the dawn,
and your healing will quickly appear;
then your righteousness will go before you,
and the glory of the Lord will be your rear guard.
Then you will call, and the Lord will answer;
you will cry for help, and he will say: Here am I.

If you do away with the yoke of oppression,
with the pointing finger and malicious talk,
and if you spend yourselves in behalf of the hungry
and satisfy the needs of the oppressed,
then your light will rise in the darkness,
and your night will become like the noonday.
The Lord will guide you always;
he will satisfy your needs in a sun-scorched land
and will strengthen your frame.
You will be like a well-watered garden,
like a spring whose waters never fail.
(Isa. 58:6-11)

I was beginning to realize that my vocation would be to walk with those who desired freedom.

As the RD, I began to pray for peace, that my room and my presence would be a peaceful place for the women to feel safe and at rest, a place of

shelter. God answered my prayer and my room in the residence was a small oasis for students. At the time, I was able to recognize this to some degree but I had no idea of the “immeasurably more” (Eph. 3:20) that God would give. I have been told many times over the years that I have a non-anxious presence and I know that is a result of this prayer. God has nurtured this gift and deepened it through all that has come between that prayer and the present. At times, I have stewarded it intentionally and at times God’s grace has preserved it in spite of me. God in His goodness continues to answer the prayers that He gives. The prayer to learn how to love, the prayer to be a person of peace came from Him and He has shown His faithfulness in answering the prayers that have truly expressed my desire to become all that God wants me to be.

Rainy Days in Vancouver and Beyond

Lord, I know not what I ought to ask of Thee. Thou lovest me better than I can love myself. O Father, give to thy child what he knows not how to ask. . . . Teach me to pray. Pray thyself in me.

– (Fenelon 1962, 19-20)

Orientation

During my second year as RD I decided that it was time for me to continue my studies the next year. I had taken some courses at seminary while working in the residence and my love for Scripture became even more focused in a new love for the Old Testament. I decided that I wanted to pursue an academic career so that I could teach the Old Testament in a cross-cultural context. Sensing that it would be a good place for me, I made plans to go to Regent College in Vancouver to pursue a Master’s of Christian Studies in Old Testament (MCS).

I lived in Vancouver for three years and it was a time of learning both academically and personally. It was also a time of experiencing my own brokenness more deeply and a time of loss, confusion and disorientation. Later I learned the word desolation and this describes my experience for the last half of my Regent education. Desolation is that time of experiencing distance from God; sometimes because we turn our face away from Him and sometimes because we feel that He has turned His face away from us.

For the first year and a half in seminary I enjoyed myself very much. I was discovering the unique calling I have to friendship and accompanying others. There was a rich international community at Regent and I began to get to know people from all over the world and from many denominations. I was enjoying the learning and found a sense of community at my church and at the college. I felt a sense of confidence in God and a deepening confidence in myself. I did not know what lay ahead but I felt that I was moving toward life.

Disorientation

Then during my second year of living in Vancouver there was a perfect storm of circumstances that resulted in a period of grief, depression and disorientation.

I discovered that although I loved learning I was not a true scholar. This was a difficult realization as the whole reason I had come to Regent to study was to pursue an academic career. Also, as I got to know many international students I realized that some of my presuppositions about working cross-culturally in

education were very culturally arrogant. There were elements of a colonial perspective that were brought to the surface and this, along with my not-too-positive experience of living and working in the Philippines, made me realize I was not called to work in a cross-cultural setting.

With these two realizations, that I was not being called to ministry overseas and that I was not going to be an academic, I entered into a time of deep uncertainty. I had no idea what I was going to do.

Around the same time that some of these truths were sinking in I took a course on spiritual direction and met with Dr. James Houston for direction three times. The first time we met he made an observation that led to many months of processing much of the grief that had accumulated in my life. There had recently been three deaths in my family within months of each other. My grandfather on my mother's side passed away, this was sad but he was in his eighties and his death had been very quick and painless. Then in the summer my twenty-one year old cousin was tragically killed when he fell off a cliff late one night close to the cabin their family loved. A few months later my grandmother on my dad's side passed away. These deaths added to the grief that had accumulated within me that I had never known how to process.

I also began to grieve for the wounds of the past that came from my family of origin. All the repressed negative emotions that had been unacceptable began to be uncovered and felt – anger, sorrow and grief being the big three. There was the unexpressed grief from my teen years for my grandfather and grandmother

that needed to be released as well as the new grief that had come in the last year, but there were also many accumulated sorrows and wounds that needed to be felt.

Among these wounds was the sense of not being special to my mom and dad. I hadn't realized it before, but I had always felt that my brothers and sister had something special about them that my parents were good at celebrating. Jae was the smart one, Kathy the popular one, and I felt Don was the sunshine in my mother's eyes. For me the only specialness I felt was recognized was that I was the youngest and this had nothing to do with who I was, only my position in the family. I also needed to feel the pain of not being able to meet some of the implicit expectations in my family of origin. The three expectations I could name that I felt from my father were that I should always have common sense, be responsible and never be afraid. Although it was very difficult, this was a time of great healing. I began to feel the truth that God was different from my father: that God truly did love me unconditionally and that He would not demand from me what I could not give. I also came to understand that these were the same expectations my father had experienced from his parents as a child and I was able to have a deeper compassion for him.

I began to face the sense of dissonance I felt about the role of women in my denomination and to process it. There was a lack of freedom to express who I was within the denomination as a whole, although not within my local congregation. This was not a crisis for me but there was an unfolding awareness that I was becoming dissatisfied with the confines of my denomination.

One of the courses I took at Regent was on the life of King David. As I began to come to terms with the probability that I would never have children I felt a strong connection to Michal – Saul’s daughter and David’s wife.

Now Saul’s daughter Michal was in love with David, and when they told Saul about it, he was pleased. (1 Sam. 18:20)

As the ark of the Lord was entering the City of David, Michal daughter of Saul watched from a window. And when she saw King David leaping and dancing before the Lord, she despised him in her heart. (2 Sam. 6:16)

When David returned home Michal rebuked David but David replied, “It was before the Lord, who chose me rather than your father or anyone from his house when he appointed me ruler over the Lord’s people Israel—I will celebrate before the Lord. I will become even more undignified than this, and I will be humiliated in my own eyes. But by these slave girls you spoke of, I will be held in honor.”

And Michal daughter of Saul had no children to the day of her death. (2 Sam. 6: 21-23)

When Michal was rebuked by David (and God) for expressing herself, I felt defensive on her behalf. I wrestled with God about this and recognized there was a danger that I might move to a place of bitterness. For me this was Michal’s sin, that she let bitterness about her situation take root and twist her heart. I wrote this poem as I wrestled with God’s invitation to freedom from the restrictions that my family, culture, the institution of the church and fear had placed on me.

Words of Life

Words that roll in my heart
That never roll off my tongue
Are they yours to be given
Beyond my own?

I fear to let them out
Expose my heart to
ones who may devour it
I fear to keep them in

Rotting and decaying until
All that's left is dust
Dry and stagnant
Barren as Michel

I feel something deep within
untouched as yet by light
hidden,
waiting,
to bring forth life

Around the same time I was becoming friends with a man whom I found very interesting and attractive. There was a very good sense of community in the group of young adults in my church and this was where I began to get to know him. Our group had a retreat in December of that year and I was beginning to form a more serious attachment. This man and I were just friends but I felt an intellectual, personal and spiritual connection. When I went home to Calgary for Christmas I was sure that things would develop in our relationship after the Christmas break. While I was in Calgary, I came across this poem and wrote it in my journal,

Epitaph for George Grey from The Spoon River Anthology

I have studied many times
The marble which was chiseled for me-
A boat with a furled sail at rest in a harbor.

In truth it pictures not my destination but my life.
For love was offered me and I shrank from its disillusionment;
Sorrow knocked at my door, but I was afraid;
Ambition called to me, but I dreaded the chances.

Yet all the while I hungered for meaning in my life
And now I know that we must lift the sail
And catch the winds of destiny
Wherever they drive the boat.

To put meaning in one's life may end in madness,
But life without meaning is the torture
Of restlessness and vague desire-
It is a boat longing for the sea and yet afraid.
(Masters 2010, George Grey)

I felt that I was ready to move beyond fear and to risk loving and being loved. When I returned to Vancouver a friend informed me that she and he had spent lots of time together over the holiday and were now dating. I felt devastated.

Being disappointed in love is part of life and he and I were only friends but there were other dynamics going on. This became a turning point for me in my relationship with God. Of course, I felt some heartache about the loss of a hope but more than that I felt a deep sense of confusion because I had been sure we were meant to be together. I was resonating deeply with the poem by Edgar Lee Masters—the sense of living life on the edge of risk and on the edge of love and the invitation to “lift the sail” even though I was afraid. When I attempted to “catch the winds of destiny” I felt my boat was shattered on the rocks.

I entered into a period of about six months of darkness. Yet in the darkness I felt God was holding me; there was a sense of peace even there, although it was far below the surface. Ps. 139:7-12 became a very meaningful verse to me in this season,

Where can I go from your Spirit?
Where can I flee from your presence?
If I go up to the heavens, you are there;
if I make my bed in the depths, you are there.
If I rise on the wings of the dawn,
if I settle on the far side of the sea,
even there your hand will guide me,
your right hand will hold me fast.

If I say, “Surely the darkness will hide me
and the light become night around me,”
even the darkness will not be dark to you;
the night will shine like the day,
for darkness is as light to you. (Ps. 139:7-12)

I remained for many months in this season of desolation, of feeling far away from God and of turning my face away from Him. More than having my heart broken, my trust in myself was broken and my apparent trust in God was shown to be very shallow.

I felt betrayed by God. A passage that spoke to me and helped me to express my feelings in prayer was Jeremiah 15:18, “Why is my pain unending and my wound grievous and incurable? You are to me like a deceptive brook, like a spring that fails” (Jer. 15:18). I felt this very strongly and accused God of being a deceptive brook and a spring that failed.

I was out of kilter, out of my depth and wandering in a desert wasteland. I was lost but thankfully I was not alone. God was gracious and compassionate. God did not forsake me even though I railed against Him. He held me fast in the darkness and the flailing of my confusion and uncertainty. He helped me to grieve, to feel all that I needed to feel and to slowly, very slowly build a trust in Him that was more authentic and deeper than what had been before. After many months, I came to see that in reality I had been an immature discerner and had not been willing to move to a place of holy indifference where my desires were concerned. The kind of holy indifference that I discovered I was lacking was that ability to step back from my desire and wait for God to help me be open to His

will. Our desire is important and holy indifference is not an attitude that says, “I don’t care” or “it doesn’t matter,” rather it says, “I want what God wants, trusting it is the best for me, even if it means giving up what I feel attached to in this moment.” Indifference throughout this work is understood as the capacity to hold what we want with an open hand and let go of unhealthy and sometimes compulsive attachments.

Reorientation

Reorientation was the road that God was leading me on, although it seemed a “one step forward, two steps back” kind of journey at times. The reality of new life coming out of death, of water flowing in the desert, was beginning to take hold. Another poem I wrote in that season expressed this newness:

Renewing Water

A well

 A spring

 A cistern

So many tears

 Stored up for years

Now

 A river gushing

 Uncontrolled

 Relinquished

 Let go

A dam broken in a storm of grief

I never thought I would be

 Grateful

Released they bring life

 New and compassionate

A gift from Jesus
Who also wept

When I finished my degree at Regent in 1996 I returned to Calgary to live after ten years of being away. I did not know what I would do or where I would live. I did not feel hopeless, but I did feel very aimless. I was in a very different place than I had anticipated I would be when I finished my degree and I was still feeling uncertain about how much I really wanted to trust God.

God was faithful to me anyway. I was provided with an apartment to live in at very little expense and I soon found work at a Christian bookstore. Since I had no sense of what I wanted to do long term, being in a bookstore seemed a better place than many to work while I waited for more clarity about the future. I wrote in my journal sometime soon after I moved to Calgary,

Love has never been offered me; previously this has been because I kept away, as far away as one can, because I was afraid of what it would take from me. Now I find that I rushed into love without waiting to see if it would be offered back –it wasn't and it has taken much from me. It has also given some wisdom, some understanding, some depth. I never realized before how shallow a person I was. Now, when I cry I don't want to be where I am, but when I don't cry I know I am being false, running away again from being a real person, being a person with pain as part of their existence. . . . I know now that God is helping me to face the chaos, the nonsense, the mystery and to live in the knowledge of His unchanging, unconditional, faithful love. I keep trying to run away but He is gentle and good and He brings me back, time and again to the reality of disappointment and grief. I am not good at letting go of dreams once they have been taken into my heart, or of people either. . . . God help me be honest and help me be free. (Journal sometime in 1997)

God has been faithful to continue to answer my prayer for honesty and freedom.

There has been ongoing movement back and forth in my relationship with God:

desolation and consolation, wandering and return, but always God's faithfulness holding me.

After a few months in Calgary I also found a church community that I felt I could be at home in. For a few months after my return to Calgary I was discerning whether I should stay a member in an Alliance church or whether it was time to settle the dissonance that I felt by finding a new home. I was grateful for all that I had received there but it did not feel like home to me anymore. I felt that God was giving me freedom to find a new place to belong and I began the search for a new church.

A friend from Vancouver moved to Calgary about six months after I did, and we became roommates. She was also looking for a church home and we began to attend different churches in the city. We went to a church in our neighbourhood called New Hope Church one Sunday expecting that a fellow student of hers would be preaching. We were obviously late for the service and her friend was not preaching. We found out the next day that we had gone to a completely different church than we meant to. It was a good service, people were friendly, and it was within walking distance of our apartment, so we decided to return the following week on time. Over the next month we discovered that they had only been holding Sunday services for a few weeks when we "happened" to attend and that we both had acquaintances that attended. This mistake turned out to be a very providential one. I became a member and started to become involved in the community and in leadership. I am now a pastor in the same church,

although we have gone through many transitions since then including a change of name.

I worked at the bookstore for four years and knew that the time was coming for me to step out into ministry. I began to think about the question of what next a year before it became clear where I was to be. The years I had been in Calgary had been a time of re-turning my face toward God and discovering that although I had felt far away from Him at times He was never far away from me. What seemed a crisis of faith He had actually used to deepen my faith and my trust.

During the last two years of my time in Calgary this prayer by William Barclay was posted on my fridge door and was a prayer I prayed often as the time of transition approached:

O God, you are our refuge.
When we are exhausted by life's efforts;
When we are bewildered by life's problems;
When we are wounded by life's sorrows:
We come for refuge to you.

O God, you are our strength.
When our tasks are beyond our powers;
When our temptations are too strong for us;
When duty calls for more than we have to give to it:
We come for strength to you.

O God, it is from you that all goodness comes.
It is from you that our ideals come;
It is from you that there comes to us the spur of high desire and the restraint of conscience.
It is from you that there has come the strength to resist any temptation, and to do any good thing.

And now as we pray to you,
Help us to believe in your love so that we may be certain that you will
hear our prayer;
Help us to believe in your power,
so that we may be certain that you are able to do for us above all that we
ask or think;
Help us to believe in your wisdom, so that we may be certain that you will
answer, not as our ignorance asks, but as your perfect wisdom knows
best.

All this we ask through Jesus Christ our Lord.
Amen. (William Barclay in Job and Shawchuck 1983, 88)

King's Fold

Do not forget that the value and interest of life is not so much to do
conspicuous things . . . as to do ordinary things with the perception of their
enormous value.

– (Teilhard de Chardin, Goodreads 2018)

Prayer, then, necessarily involves growth in freedom – not the freedom to
be whoever we want, but the ability to freely become who God is calling
us to be;
not the freedom to do whatever we want,
but the freedom to love others as we have been loved, in ever widening
circles.

– (Dyckman and Carroll 1981, 48)

Discerning the Call to King's Fold

I left the bookstore in the year 2000 to become a resident staff and
community member of King's Fold Retreat Centre with a very clear call from
God. I was looking for a good fit for my gifts and wondering where that would be
when I went on a leadership retreat for the church and heard that King's Fold was
looking for staff. This stayed with me, so I volunteered in order to find out more
about what it would be like to live and work there.

The first weekend I volunteered at King's Fold I decided by Saturday late afternoon that this was definitely not the ministry for me. I had a Bachelor of Theology and an MCS in Old Testament and I resisted the idea of being in a place where my main responsibilities would be to cook and clean. I did not think serving was one of my gifts. To my surprise, on Sunday I found myself asking what the next steps to applying would be. I returned to volunteer again and God spoke very clearly to me about His invitation to come to King's Fold. The passage of scripture that was read during one of the morning prayers was Luke 9:23-25,

Then he said to them all: "Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross daily and follow me. For whoever wants to save their life will lose it, but whoever loses their life for me will save it. What good is it for someone to gain the whole world, and yet lose or forfeit their very self? (Luke 9:23-25)

I knew that this scripture was for me. God also brought the story of Jesus washing His disciples' feet to my attention and spoke very clearly to me that it is at the core of what it means to be a Christian to learn how to serve. Later in the week I heard God say, as clearly as if He had spoken it audibly, "This is a place where you can learn to walk in the Spirit. You are free to choose not to be here and I will still be with you, but this is my best for you."

I decided that I wanted God's best and asked God to help me learn how to be a servant and to give up my pride. After making this decision I was filled with an indescribable joy as I continued cooking and cleaning for the remainder of my volunteer week!

Formation through Community

The ministry of King's Fold is one of service and hospitality. When I joined the resident staff, I did so with a deep conviction that God's invitation to me was to learn how to serve and to learn how to walk in the Spirit in a deeper way. I knew that God was calling me to grow in holiness and, as Adrian Van Kaam would describe it, to live out of the spiritual dimension more fully. "Van Kaam stresses the importance of the spiritual dimension to the life of an individual. . . . He says that the spiritual dimension is the integrating dimension of life. It holds all the other dimensions in consonance. It is the dimension most concerned with living according to God's purposes" (Standish 2014, 37).

The four years that I spent living and working at King's Fold were very formative and rich for many reasons. Some of these formative experiences were living in community, where I experienced healing in my life; expressing the gift of hospitality; trusting in God's Spirit to meet people who were on retreat; learning how to serve; participating in spiritual direction training and silent retreat; and learning how to practice God's presence in mundane work.

Living in community can be a challenging but also transforming experience. The idea of loving others is quite easy to entertain in the abstract but when one lives in community it requires perseverance, the capacity to forgive and a love that is beyond our own. In the book *Father Arseny* there is a passage that speaks to the power of sacrificial love, "True love enriches a person, brings him happiness, and gets reborn again and again in others. . . . It is kindness, limitless

faith in God, prayer and the help of others” (Boeteneff 1998, 205). This way of love is healing and I experienced it while living at King’s Fold, both as someone who received this kind of love and as I grew in being able to offer it. Laboring and living with others in an intentional spiritual rhythm with a commitment to resolving conflicts and working through difficulties grew my capacity to love and forgive. In my experience of living in this kind of intentional community there was no choice but to trust in the Spirit.

While I was on staff at King’s Fold I experienced a great deal of healing in the area of my personal identity. Although in many ways I had a very secure sense of myself even as a child, I never felt confident in my beauty or attractiveness as a woman. Through several relationships and one particular circumstance God worked His wonderful transformation in me in my early thirties.

There were many very positive relationships in the community at King’s Fold that were a healing influence. One was with a man who came to be part of the community for a summer, while he was living at King’s Fold we spent lots of time together and became good friends. I felt attracted to him and at first feared that I would fall in love with him and be wounded as I had been in the past. As our relationship developed I had a strong sense that although we may not fall in love romantically, loving him would be a healing experience for me. I wrote in my journal at that time, “I think that somehow God is going to use this relationship to teach me how to love more deeply and freely.” This proved to be true. I did “fall in love.” He did not. But I felt that he loved me and this love was

healing and freeing. God's invitation to love, no matter what the return or the cost, was something that I could finally accept. In doing so I experienced the healing power of love.

One scripture that became meaningful for me was Song of Sol. 2:14. I felt, and continue to feel, that these are God's words to me:

My dove in the clefts of the rock,
in the hiding places on the mountainside,
show me your face,
let me hear your voice;
for your voice is sweet,
and your face is lovely. (Song of Sol. 2:14)

God's desire is for me and He thinks I am lovely. It does not matter what anyone else says.

I read the book *Prayer: Living with God* by Simon Tugwell (Tugwell 1978) during this time and it was one of the most influential books I have read. It was a situation of the right book coming into my hands at the right time and it continues to be one of my favourites. Some passages that connect directly with the healing I was experiencing and that spoke powerfully to me are related to learning how to love and moving toward freedom in our life. The invitation to resist being afraid of love and what it might cost was what I felt God was whispering to me through this book and my experiences at the same time. Tugwell writes, "Christians are not to be cowards, we must not be afraid of pain. We must not shut our hearts against desire, but learn how to desire rightly, so that our whole wanting apparatus can be healed, so that eventually it will find its full satisfaction in him who alone can satisfy us. We cannot learn to love God by

learning not to love” (Tugwell 1978, 96). Through this relationship in the midst of disappointed hopes I experienced the healing power of love and felt free to experience the truth of the following words by Tugwell:

Something wounds you, something gets into you that dislodges you from complacency, from being God to yourself. You discover an ache, a hole in your heart, a need. So off you set to look for “him whom my soul loves”. And you meet creatures first. And they say to you, “What you are looking for is not here, but he has passed by, scattering beauty as he went”. What attracts us in creatures is something of *his* beauty....So our experience of being attracted, of feeling desire, is tremendously important; and so also is our experience of frustration. Frustration should not lead us to harden our heart, and make ourselves insensitive and invulnerable, but should remind us that we are being referred on, directed further...And this means learning how our love proceeds from and is situated within God’s love. Then our joy in creatures will be a part of his joy in his own creation, a part of our joy in him. (Tugwell 1978, 101-102)

Contrary to my experience in Vancouver, where love had led to a place of desolation and disorientation, this experience of loving a man had deepened my trust in God and my capacity to embrace the suffering that love brought to me. I continue to be grateful for how God made clear to me that I was “being referred on, directed further” into His love. Although I still struggle sometimes with a desire to run away, I hold onto Tugwell’s exhortation that Christians are not to be cowards who avoid the pain that love brings. We can only throw ourselves on God’s mercy and attempt to trust in His love to carry us.

Hospitality and Trust

Learning to express the spiritual gift of hospitality was also a rich part of this season of my life. This was an important part of the work God was forming me for and calling me to. There was a very real awareness that the work was

God's more than mine. There was great freedom to trust that God would meet people during their time of retreat and my part was to create a welcoming and safe place for them. God was the one who would minister when I stood back and let Him do His thing. Before the experience of working at King's Fold I was too concerned with what I would do to meet peoples' needs or to teach them or change them. Thomas Kelly in *A Testament of Devotion* speaks of this way of approaching ministry, "Too many well-intentioned people are so preoccupied with the clatter of effort to do something *for* God that they don't hear Him asking that He might do something *through* them" (Kelly 1992, 73). My time of ministry at King's Fold was a time of learning how to let God do something through me rather than continuing to strive to do something for God.

I was also shaped in my time at King's Fold through beginning to practice God's presence in a more intentional way. A quote from Brother Lawrence was on the bulletin board above the desk where I often worked and in the laundry room where I would fold sheets and towels,

Oh my God, since You are with me, and I must now, in obedience to Your commands, apply my mind to these outward things, I ask You to grant me the grace to continue in Your presence. To this end make me prosper through Your assistance. Receive all my works, and possess all my affections. (Lawrence and Laubach 1988, 102)

The rhythm of mundane and manual labor that was my life at King's Fold taught me to be more aware of God in the daily tasks and to practice His presence as much as possible in the day, to learn "that it was a great delusion to think that time set aside for prayer should be different from other times, that we were

equally obliged to be united to God by work in the time assigned to work as by prayer during prayer time” (Brother Lawrence 1977, 38). The Community Rule of King’s Fold is based on a Benedictine Rule and includes intentional communal times of prayer, work, play and rest. This way of living helped to grow the desire to be faithful to God in all aspects of my life.

Spiritual Direction

One of the opportunities I was able to pursue while I was on staff at King’s Fold was to participate in a two-year Spiritual Direction Training course. Through this program I felt that God was helping me to become more fully who He made me to be and also that He was preparing me for the life and ministry that was on the horizon. This was done through many integrative learning opportunities, the practicum, and two experiences of silent retreat which were part of the program. The confirmation that I had the gifts necessary for this ministry came early on in my training and this contributed to the sense of God’s particular call to the ministry of spiritual direction.

When I had been part of the resident community at King’s Fold for three years a summer staff asked me how long I thought I would stay at King’s Fold. Until that question was asked I thought I could stay forever but the answer came to me in that moment: One more year. I don’t remember if I answered the question verbally, but the interior movement was clear and distinct. Later, when I reflected on my interior response, I realized the sense of one more year was connected to the completion of my spiritual direction training. At that time, I was

half way through the two-year program. This moment of revelation began a process of discerning whether it was truly time for me to leave King's Fold.

Out of this initial surprising and strong interior movement there came a season of waiting and praying. Danny Morris and Charles Olsen describe the necessity of searching for the mind and will of God in the book *Discerning God's Will Together*, "The process of discernment invites us into the heart and life of the triune God. Decision making can no longer be defined as doing what we think is best; it should be a search for the mind and will of God within a community of people with whom God has chosen to dwell" (Morris and Olsen 2012, 58). The community that I invited into this searching included my spiritual director, some of my peers in the spiritual direction program, and the Director of King's Fold. Although I had a strong inner sense of the timing of this change I knew this needed to be tested. Also, if it did prove to be the right time to leave King's Fold I needed to discern what I would do next.

Morris and Olsen write, "The question of willingness must be answered before the process of discernment begins: Are we willing to do God's will even before we know it" (Morris and Olsen 2012, 35)? I needed to wrestle with the desire to stay at King's Fold; I loved the ministry there and had not anticipated leaving so soon. Then I had to wrestle with the question of whether I would be willing not only to leave King's Fold but also to leave the Calgary area where I had been living for eight years and had many ties. I felt God was inviting me to

become indifferent not only about staying or leaving King's Fold but about staying or leaving the Calgary area as well.

The questions that Morris and Olsen pose were the questions that God was inviting me to struggle with. "The questions of indifference are these: Are we willing to let something die to give God room to start something new? What will we lay aside or leave behind so that we will be open to new gifts of grace or new expressions of ministry" (Morris and Olsen 2012, 73)? For several months, I sat with these questions in prayer and over time let the answers unfold within me. One thing that became clear over this time was that the call away from King's Fold was a call to the ministry of spiritual direction. This was the new gift of grace and the new expression of ministry that was at the root of a need for the change in my circumstances.

The question first surfaced in August and in January, during a time of silent retreat, I had a vision of starting off on a trip with Jesus. Jesus and I were at the airport, I was checking my bag at the desk and felt a moment of panic because I did not know where I was going and I did not even have a ticket. Jesus came close beside me and reminded me that he had the itinerary and the tickets and if I would only trust in Him all would be well. This was a vision that I often sat with in prayer in the months between January and when I left King's Fold in August.

My sense of the call to the ministry of spiritual direction had been growing and the experience I was gaining in my training affirmed that this was going to be a central part of my vocation. I realized that the amount of direction I was being

invited to do in the future would not be possible if I remained a part of the resident staff at King's Fold. The way that Thomas Kelly describes "a concern" is what I feel spiritual direction is for me: "A concern is God-initiated, often surprising, always holy, for the Life of God is breaking through into the world. Its execution is in peace and power and astounding faith and joy, for in unhurried serenity the Eternal is at work in the midst of time, triumphantly bringing all things up unto Himself" (Kelly 1992, 85). I was beginning to have a sense of the centrality of the call to spiritual direction although there had been inklings in the past. Those I had invited into the discernment process affirmed this call.

God had spoken an invitation to walk with those who suffer a few years before. At the time I told God very bluntly I couldn't do it and He replied that He knew I couldn't but one day I would be ready. This invitation had come soon after I returned to Calgary from Vancouver and I did not yet have the capacity to walk with others in their pain. Now the time had come for my heart to be enlarged, "The heart is stretched through suffering, and enlarged. But O the agony of this enlarging of the heart, that one may be prepared to enter into the anguish of others! Yet the way of holy obedience leads out from the heart of God and extends through the Valley of the Shadow" (Kelly 1992, 43). I had been slowly gaining the resilience and capacity to enter into the Valley of the Shadow with others.

I knew that God was calling me to a ministry of spiritual direction, but the question remained for a few weeks about where. After coming to a true place of

indifference about where I would live and an openness to go anywhere, I felt that God was leading me to settle in Calgary. It was a city where I had some relationships and contacts to begin in the ministry of spiritual direction and I wanted to remain close to my parents as they were getting older. The next challenge to trust was realizing that I had no idea how I would make a living. I knew that I could not do so exclusively through spiritual direction and since my education was in Theology I did not have too many practical skills to fall back on. I experienced a season of anxiety where I was able to say Yes to God's invitation to leave King's Fold but was unable to see very much of what would come after. At that time God showed me that trusting in Him was an act of faith and it did not matter if I felt completely peaceful about it; all I had to do was to be willing to follow Him and He would provide for me.

A prayer that I prayed often in this season was *The Making of A Mind* by Pierre Teilhard de Chardin:

Above all, trust in the slow work of God,
We are quite naturally impatient in everything
to reach the end without delay.
We should like to skip the intermediate stages.
We are impatient of being on the way to something
unknown, something new,
And yet it is the law of all progress that is made by
passing through some stages of instability -
and that it may take a very long time.

And so I think it is with you,
Your ideas mature gradually - let them grow,
Let them shape themselves without undue haste.
Don't try to force them on,
as though they could be today what time

(that is to say, grace and circumstances acting on your own good will)
will make of you tomorrow.

Only God could say what this new spirit
gradually forming within you will be.
Give our Lord the benefit of believing
that his hand is leading you,
and accept the anxiety of feeling yourself in suspense and
incomplete. (Teilhard de Chardin, 2004, 102-103)

The final line of this prayer was particularly poignant for me, “accept the anxiety of feeling yourself in suspense and incomplete.” In the midst of a clear calling to a change in every area of my life I felt very much in suspense. I also felt God’s presence and constant invitation to trust.

The moment of realization in the midst of that summer conversation was a moment of grace where God clearly and distinctly gave me awareness of what was to come, but the quiet process of testing that sense was a very necessary part of the discernment. Through this slow process God was able to move my heart to a place of indifference and I was able to trust that it was time to move on. The following prayer of St. Teresa expresses what God was speaking to my heart during the time of discernment, the following time of unsettledness and the season of more active trust that God had invited me into.

Let nothing disturb you
Let nothing frighten you.
Those who cling to God
will lack nothing
Let nothing disturb you
Let nothing frighten you
God alone is enough
(St. Teresa in Nouwen 2013, 27)

The Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius

He Desired Me So I Came Close

He desired me so I came close

No one can near God unless He has
Prepared a bed for
You.

A thousand souls hear His call every second, but most every one then looks into their life's mirror and says, "I am not worthy to leave this sadness."

When I first heard His courting song, I too
Looked at all I had done in my life
And said,

"How can I gaze into His omnipresent eyes?"
I spoke those words with all
My heart,

But then He sang again, a song even sweeter,
And when I tried to shame myself once more from His presence
God showed me His compassion and spoke a divine truth,

"I made you, dear, and all I make is perfect.
Please come close, for I
Desire You."

– (St. Teresa in Ladinsky 2002, 274)

When I left King's Fold I took a short Sabbatical and made *The Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius* (Puhl 1951) on a forty-day silent retreat at Loyola House in Guelph, Ontario. *The Spiritual Exercises* are a very structured way of praying through the Gospels. There were a few days off but for the most part the structure every day was to meet with a spiritual director, to participate in Communion and to pray for four one-hour periods, and a fifth in the night if I woke up. The silence of this retreat was characterized by the intentional refraining from all talking with

other people, with the exception of the meetings with a spiritual director. The silence extended into all communal activities as well as being an integral part of the prayer periods. It did not preclude talking to God during prayer or listening to some music which would contribute to the overall attentiveness to God's presence and leading during times of rest. This time of extended silence, intense prayer and intimacy with Jesus was an amazing experience.

There was a beautiful garden at the retreat centre that was visible from a long bank of windows outside of the dining room. I spent many hours there and a metaphor that comes to mind for the time of retreat is a garden. I was a garden in all stages of growth at the same time. There were seeds that were ready to sprout right away, other seeds were planted that have been coming to life since the retreat, and some that are probably still waiting to grow. Some seeds were buried deep in me and needed the nurture and tender care of Jesus to come to life. There were also noxious weeds that had been present for many years that needed to be rooted out slowly and patiently.

The Principle and Foundation

The content of the *Exercises*¹ is formed primarily around the life of Jesus but the truth that must be experienced before entering into them is called the

¹ The 'weeks' of the Spiritual Exercises are not literal seven-day weeks but sections. The forty days at Guelph consisted of five Preparations days focusing on the Principle and Foundation. The first 'week' was six days, the 'second' week was twelve days, the third week was five days and the fourth week was five days. The end of the retreat consisted of five Appropriation days to help integrate and begin to articulate all that had been received in the silence. There were 3 days of rest interspersed after the Principle and Foundation, week one and week two.

principle and foundation. The principle and foundation of the *Spiritual Exercises* is to comprehend the following:

The goal of our life is to live with God forever.
God, who loves us, gave us life.
Our own response of love allows God's life to flow into us without limit.

All the things in this world are gifts of God,
presented to us so that we can know God more easily
and make a return of love more readily.

As a result, we appreciate and use all these gifts of God
insofar as they help us develop as loving persons.
But if any of these gifts become the centre of our lives,
they displace God
and so hinder our growth toward our goal.

In everyday life, then, we must hold ourselves in balance before all of
these created gifts insofar as we have a choice and are not bound by some
obligation.

We should not fix our desire on health or sickness, wealth or poverty,
success or failure, a long life or a short one. For everything has the
potential of calling forth in us a deeper response to our life in God.

Our only desire and one choice should be this:
I want and I choose what better leads
to God's deepening his life in me (St. Ignatius of Loyola 2004)

When we can truly believe that God loves us and that we are made to return His
love and live with Him in freedom then we are ready to face our sin. The truth
that is comprehended deeply in the *Exercises* is that we can only face our sin with
honesty and courage when we know without doubt God loves us. Otherwise we
let our sin separate us from God, rather than letting it lead us to deeper
dependence on Him.

The first five days of the retreat were focused on the Principle and
Foundation. The verse, "The Lord appeared to us in the past, saying: 'I have loved

you with an everlasting love; I have drawn you with unfailing kindness.” (Jer. 31:3) was one that God spoke to my heart. I felt ready to pray that I would be able to “choose what better leads to God’s deepening his life in me.” I knew that I was not fully there, but I also knew that God loved me unfailingly and generously anyway.

Week One:
Knowing Myself as a Loved Sinner

The prayer of the first week is focused on the seriousness of sin, wanting to feel the consequences of sin in the broadest and deepest way we can, and ultimately to point us to dependence on Jesus because we recognize he is the only hope for us. During this week, I had two experiences in prayer that were very powerful. One was that I saw a picture of myself being three quarters solid and one quarter transparent, then the picture changed and I was fully solid. In the second prayer, I had a picture of a very dark and broken part of myself in prison, then a compassionate and well part of myself came to her and led her to Jesus. God received this most hidden and shameful part of me as He did the prodigal son. He clothed her with the best robe and gave her a ring and threw a party. Through subsequent prayer times I came to realize that these two prayers were pictures of the same truth. God was bringing integration to my whole self. He knows and accepts all of me, from the most broken and shameful parts to the best parts.

Another interior movement during this week was a deeper comprehension of the gravity of sin in my life. I wrote in my journal, “I saw how [my sins] limit the expression of God’s love to the world through me – how every time I let pride influence me I am limiting God’s life in me and therefore potentially through me to others. . . . When there is not life there is death.” Some other sins that Jesus brought to my attention were my complacency, laziness and self-centeredness. This week brought me face to face with my sin in a deeper way but also with God’s grace. I wrote, “I felt like God was reminding me to trust – to see his power to make His will come about – to see His ability to change my heart.”

A gift of this time was the recognition that my life would truly be meaningless if I was separated from God. I could not bear to think about what my life would have been like if He had not saved me. Because of God’s mercy and Jesus’ presence my life was full of goodness and light; it was truly abundant life.

Week Two:
Coming to Know, Love and Follow Jesus More

The prayer during the second week of the *Exercises* is to know Jesus more, to love Him more and to follow Him more closely. This prayer was answered.

I experienced the incredible and overwhelming love of the Trinity more than I ever had before. The mystery that Jesus chose to become human became more real to me. I felt the reality of God’s choice to make Himself weak and take on the poverty of humanity is a profound mystery that I could never understand

but that I did apprehend in the heart more fully. The immensity of the love that is expressed in this act of humility became clearer.

I was confronted with the presence of fear in my life in a way that I could no longer push aside or ignore. Through the story of Mary and Joseph having to escape to Egypt I felt the presence of God in my fear, as I never had before. I came to understand; finally, that fear is not sin. Jesus had compassion on me and I felt invited to embrace my fear and even to learn how to have compassion on myself.

I felt able to let go of my false self more fully; the self that needed to fulfill my father's expectations to never be afraid and to always have common sense. I experienced movement toward embracing my true self, even the fearful, sinful, weak parts of me. In coming to know Jesus more, Jesus as human, I was also able to come to terms with being human.

One area of resistance and struggle in this part of the *Exercises* was centered on Jesus invitation to poverty. I had to face my attachment to security, particularly material security. I grew up in an upper middle-class family, I was a stereotypical youngest daughter and was more dependent on my parents than my other siblings in many ways. Although I had never made very much money, I had always relied on my parents for financial help when I needed it. I could not have purchased my vehicle without them and I was only able to be on the retreat because of a financial gift they had given from the estate of my grandmother. I was confronted with my attachment to money and to all the nice things money

provided as well as my inappropriate dependence on my parents. In giving up my work at King's Fold and moving into a time of uncertainty I was moving toward financial poverty and I was not comfortable with it. As I was able to be honest with Jesus about my attachment and my hesitance to embrace poverty I experienced His grace and His gentle acceptance of where I was. I also heard His invitation to trust Him more in this area of my life.

I experienced a strong desire for intimacy with Jesus. The words of Mohammad, the blind boy in the beautiful film *The Color of Paradise*, resonated with me when he said,

Our teacher says that God loves the blind more because they can't see, but I told him if it was so, He would not make us blind so that we can't see Him. He answered, 'God is not visible. He is everywhere, you can feel Him – you see Him through your fingertips.' Now I reach out everywhere for God 'til the day my hands touch Him, and tell Him everything, even all the secrets in my heart. (Majidi 1999)

I wanted to "tell Him everything, even all the secrets in my heart." I knew that He knows me and loves me beyond what I could comprehend. I longed to be as close to Jesus as I possibly could.

Week Three: The Passion

This longing to be intimate friends of Jesus is at the core of the third week of the *Exercises* where we seek and pray for the desire to be a friend to Jesus in His suffering. When I spent time with Jesus in the passion narratives the gift of these prayers was a sense of growing in my capacity to be with suffering. In many of the prayers I knew Jesus was telling me that I belonged with him. When Jesus

was being scourged in the courtyard I was not outside the gate, not denying him, not in the crowd, but with him, close to him. I received the grace to be present with Jesus through His passion. I was with Mary and the women when He was crucified and did not run away when the disciples deserted Jesus. There were times during the many hours of prayer when I was less present but the capacity to be with Jesus and the sense of belonging with Him was a gift from God. God was helping me overcome my natural tendency to turn away from pain and suffering.

A gift of the *Exercises* that I comprehended more fully during the third week was the sense of Jesus' choosing me to be with Him. Jesus chose me to be His friend. This is an amazing mystery that continues to be both incomprehensible and beautiful.

One of the deepest mysteries of faith for me is Jesus consistent choice of love over power. Jesus' invitation to me was (and is) to come close to him there in His suffering, to choose love instead of power, to embrace the humility of washing the disciples' feet, to love those who hate me. This is incomprehensible and impossible and yet it is the call of the gospel.

For this reason I kneel before the Father, from whom every family in heaven and on earth derives its name. I pray that out of his glorious riches he may strengthen you with power through his Spirit in your inner being, so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith. And I pray that you, being rooted and established in love, may have power, together with all the Lord's holy people, to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ, and to know this love that surpasses knowledge—that you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God.

Now to him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to his power that is at work within us, to him be

glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, for ever and ever! Amen. (Eph. 3:14-21)

The impossible somehow becomes possible when God's power is at work within us.

Week Four: The Joy of the Resurrection and the Love of God

Two themes emerged during the fourth week of the *Exercises*. One was the resurfacing of my fear. All through the *Exercises* fear had been something that Jesus had been helping me see and accept. In the last week of the retreat I felt it. One day I felt physically sick and through my prayer realized this was connected with my fear. Finally, Jesus was helping me not only see and accept fear in myself but also to feel it. At the time, this did not feel very good but it was the completion of the healing that He had been doing since the beginning of the retreat. I believe that this experience of feeling fear was a time of integrating what I knew and what I felt.

When you anticipate feeling the joy of the resurrection and feel fear instead it can be a bit unnerving but in reality there is a lot of fear in the resurrection narratives of the gospels. Again and again Jesus comforts the disciples in their fear, their grief, their failure, their doubt and their disappointment. The story of Thomas was very meaningful as I confronted my lack of trust in Jesus for what I could not see about my future. As I felt some fear and doubt about the security of my future I experienced Jesus' compassionate invitation to touch him and to trust him.

The second main theme was connected to the last part of the *Exercises*, which focuses on the “Contemplation on the Love of God” (see Appendix B for content) (Fleming 1996, 175-181). “The Contemplation” is a meditation written to help the retreatant reflect on all God’s gifts. This was a beautiful confirmation of all that I had received during the time of retreat. God gave me an image for how my apprehension of God’s love for me had grown. The retreat centre in Guelph is on a good- sized property that includes an organic farm. I felt God was showing me that when I arrived at the retreat I understood about that much of His love for me – 600 acres or so, but His love was more than anyone could ever comprehend. The next level of comprehension was as big as the city of Guelph and then the province of Ontario; my comprehension and apprehension of His love had grown to be about the size of Ontario, which is pretty big, especially when compared to 600 acres! However, beyond that there was Canada, North America, the world, the solar system, the universe and an ever-increasing love that encompasses all that is.

Appropriation Days

At the end of the *Exercises* we had five more days to come slowly out of the silence and to reflect on our experiences. We also had the opportunity to review our prayer and share some of our experiences in a small group. This was very helpful in preparing for the transition back to regular life.

We were released from the silence during this time and one day a fellow retreatant and I went for coffee and then to the bank, where I was anticipating

picking up a new debit card. I discovered that my card had been flagged and that all my money had been stolen out of my account. Here was an immediate invitation to trust Jesus in poverty. After some time, I was reimbursed fully by the bank but in that moment, I felt the irony of the situation and as if God was saying to me with a kind smile on His face, “So, do you mean it when you say you want to trust me, that you are willing to be poor?” Thankfully, by His grace, I was able to sincerely respond, “Yes, I mean it.”

Living into My Vocation

Two Giant Fat People

God
and I have become
like two giant fat people living
in a tiny
boat.

We keep bumping into
each other
and
laughing

– (Hafiz in Ladinsky 2002, 171)

The Vocation of Spiritual Direction

After I completed the *Spiritual Exercises* I moved to Calgary and began to build a spiritual direction practice. I felt very sure that this was the most important work for me to do. Spiritual direction had initiated the change in my circumstances and became the concern that my life began to be oriented and organized around. “The concern oriented life is ordered and organized from within. And we learn to say *No* as well as *Yes* by attending to the guidance of

inner responsibility” (Kelly 1992, 84). William Barry and William Connelly, in the classic book *The Practice of Spiritual Direction*, define spiritual direction “as help given by one Christian to another which enables that person to pay attention to God’s personal communication to him or her, to respond to this personally communicating God, to grow in intimacy with this God, and to live out the consequences of the relationship” (Barry and Connelly 1986, 8).

I know that God has made me to walk with others in their life with Him in this way and that Father Arseny’s words, “The most important thing ... is to help others, alleviate their sufferings, and pray for them” (Boeteneff 1998, 132) are fulfilled in a small way as I am faithful to this vocation. Sometimes the help that alleviates suffering is simply listening. I pray that others may feel some of the same benefit of being accompanied as those who came to Father Arseny. One of his spiritual children said, “I arrive with an empty soul, deeply tired. He meets with me, talks with me, hears my confession, removes the froth from my soul. I come to life and impatiently await my next visit with him” (Boeteneff 1998, 171). When those who come to me for spiritual direction experience that the “froth is removed from their soul” and they find life I am very grateful for how God meets them in our time together.

Barry and Connelly describe spiritual direction as “primarily concerned with helping individuals freely to place themselves before God who will communicate himself to them and make them more free” (Barry and Connelly 1986, 44). Helping individuals to move into honest dialogue with God and to

learn how to hear and discern His voice in their lives is a big part of how I see my role as I accompany people on their spiritual journey. Over the years of my spiritual direction practice I have seen many directees come to a greater freedom and capacity for intimacy with God. I know I cannot point to anything that I have accomplished in this ministry at the same time that I feel confident God is working through me as I am faithful to the vocation He has given.

The ongoing ministry of spiritual direction can only be maintained when one lives in a way that allows for continued growth in prayer and discernment. As Nouwen writes,

Discernment of spirits is a lifelong task, I can see no other path to discernment than to be committed to a life of unceasing prayer and contemplation, a life of deep communion with the Spirit of God. Such a life will slowly develop in us an inner sensitivity, enabling us to distinguish between the law of the flesh and the law of the Spirit. (Nouwen 2013, 24)

Discernment of spirits and the capacity to accompany those who suffer requires an ongoing dependence on God and both are necessary to practice the ministry of spiritual direction. My capacity for God and my capacity to endure suffering with grace are connected. I regularly feel that my capacity is small but thanks to God's grace it is expanding.

I have had the chance to direct people through *The Spiritual Exercises* in Daily Life (or the 19th Annotation) and also to provide direction at many silent retreats. These experiences always affirm to me the gifts of silence and *The Spiritual Exercises*. I feel privileged to have the opportunity to walk with those who desire to follow God.

Becoming a Pastor

The last twelve years I have also been a pastor at my church. My position began as Coordinator of Spiritual Formation but as the first year went by I realized that I was actually the Pastor of Spiritual Formation. I wrestled with this and felt resistant to being named a pastor. I was not sure what my hesitation was about initially but after some reflection I came to realize I was still being influenced by some of the voices of the past that said women could not be pastors. Another part of my reluctance was the sense of responsibility I felt was attached to the role of a pastor. I sat with these feelings for many weeks and in the end accepted that what I was doing was pastoral work and accepted the title of Pastor at my church. A couple of years passed before I considered getting ordained as this was a more formal recognition that I didn't feel was necessary in order to exercise my gifts. However, as my role in the church community grew I began to recognize the importance of having the community of faith affirm my calling and my gifts for pastoral ministry. It was important that our church participated in the forms and structures of affirmation, support and accountability provided by broader CRCNA community and I went through the process in the denomination. It was a positive experience and I was ordained as a Commissioned Pastor² in November 2011.

One of the things I have experienced in the years since leaving King's Fold is God's provision for my needs in every way. There has been a beautiful

² There are two kinds of ordination in the Christian Reformed Church, a Minister of the Word is ordained for life and is eligible to fill all pastoral positions, a Commissioned Pastor is ordained to a specific job in a specific local church.

ebb and flow of directees that the Spirit seems to manage for me. There have been seasons when pastoral and personal commitments have been more demanding and I have experienced lower energy. These are the times when fewer people come for direction. When my energy has been renewed and other responsibilities lighten new people come seemingly out of the blue. I have had a sense of God managing my workload over the years even as He continues to invite me to be attentive to the balance of work, rest and play in my life.

Sin and Humility

One of the ongoing gifts of *The Spiritual Exercises* has been an increase in my awareness of the struggle with sin and the deepening recognition of its impact in my life. One of the sins I have a tendency to is independence and losing sight of the continual need for repentance and forgiveness. The deep reality of the fall and its consequences is something God is helping me to accept and in this acceptance to trust in His grace and mercy. There have been two circumstances that have brought me to a deeper sense of this in the last few years.

One situation was connected with a friend whom I had journeyed with for many years. She was a person who lived deeply and desired to experience fully the gifts and wounds of life. Her desire for God and for healing was beautiful and exhausting. I felt at times over the years of journeying with her that I was in danger of being sucked into the vortex of her suffering and I began to resent and resist her. I was unable to acknowledge this to myself or to her and the feelings grew into anger. She was a very discerning and sensitive person and finally

confronted me with my anger and how it had wounded her. I was ashamed that she had to confront me, that I had been so out of touch with my feelings and had hurt her by living inauthentically in our relationship. I felt sorrowful and convicted of the sin of anger that I had felt so deeply and yet denied. I was reading the book, *The Jesus Prayer* by Frederica Mathewes-Green at the time and came across this timely word:

The dawning understanding of the extent of disease in the depths of the heart is a shocking realization, but ultimately liberating. The mind joined to the heart can uncover the deep roots of sinful compulsion. The *nous*'s ability to perceive and understand is becoming clearer, and you gain increased strength through these battles. If you are to be a help to others one day, you must have a thorough familiarity with what inner darkness is like, and you carry the textbook in your own heart. Only a thoroughly realistic humility can keep you safe through this turmoil. This humility is born of failure. Humility is true self-knowledge that is born in the bearing of sorrows amidst failures and powerlessness. That which has been called humility up to this point has been just a prototype of it, some kind of imitation that did not have relation to self-knowledge and was relatively useless. (Mathewes-Green 2010, 112)

I felt the sense of the sorrow and liberation that Mathewes-Green speaks of in coming to awareness of the power of anger and resentment in my life. I was very grateful to my friend for confronting me with the difficult truth of my sin. This movement in the direction of true humility has helped me to become more aware of when I start to hold onto anger and to become more honest with God and others in dealing with it in my life.

The second circumstance is one where I had to confront the reality that brokenness has ongoing effects in our relationships. Sometimes we cannot see a way forward that brings reconciliation and peace, we have to choose what will

hurt some for the good of a community. I was in a position of trust where I had to choose the good of the ministry I was responsible for at the cost of a personal relationship I valued. The situation involved confidentiality that cannot be breached but it was a time when I knew that all I could do was hold the brokenness of each party up to God and trust that somehow He would redeem the whole eventually. A passage of scripture that was meaningful to me during this time was the story of Jesus sleeping in the boat during the storm:

That day when evening came, he said to his disciples, "Let us go over to the other side." Leaving the crowd behind, they took him along, just as he was, in the boat. There were also other boats with him. A furious squall came up, and the waves broke over the boat, so that it was nearly swamped. Jesus was in the stern, sleeping on a cushion.

The disciples woke him and said to him, "Teacher, don't you care if we drown?"

He got up, rebuked the wind and said to the waves, "Quiet! Be still!" Then the wind died down and it was completely calm.

He said to his disciples, "Why are you so afraid? Do you still have no faith?"

They were terrified and asked each other, "Who is this? Even the wind and the waves obey him!" (Mark 4:35-41)

Rather than panicking with the disciples and asking Him to calm the storm I felt that Jesus was inviting me to come and sleep with Him. To just lie down in the midst of the storm and rest in the truth that eventually it would pass. The strange and beautiful thing about this experience was that even though I knew the storm would wreak havoc, Jesus' assurance was that He was present even there. In the destruction that sin and our broken and wounded humanity can cause He is present and His grace is sufficient. This is a mystery that I continue to hold and ponder.

The Future: Full of Hope

As the conclusion of this season of study has come and I look to the future I feel a continued call to be present in both spiritual direction and pastoral ministry. In addition to giving spiritual direction, I have loved being involved in the training of new spiritual directors and hope the opportunity to do so will continue. The DMin has given me the opportunity to develop the program for training directors and to test some of the assumptions around silence in connection to spiritual direction. The DMin has also helped me to grow as a mentor and leader in pastoral ministry. There have been delays and challenges through the program which have helped me to grow. I have learned how to ask for help when it is needed. I have also grown through the need to persevere in the midst of balancing changing ministry and personal obligations.

I continue to wait, to pray and to trust that God will give discernment as I seek Him, listen for His voice and trust in Him. I have a deep sense of confidence in God's desire and ability to continue leading me into the life and ministry He has prepared for me and to provide for my needs. God's faithfulness to me in the past is one of the reasons I feel peaceful about my future even when there is always a certain degree of uncertainty.

Some of the simplest and truest words I can think of to describe the trust I feel God continues to invite me to embrace come from one of my favorite literary characters. This trust is not based on knowledge of what the future holds but of confidence in the abiding love of God and His promise of presence.

“Supposing a tree fell down,
Pooh, when we were underneath it?”
“Supposing it didn’t.” said Pooh after careful thought.
Piglet was comforted by this.”
(Piglet to Winnie the Pooh)
(Milne 2018)

CHAPTER THREE:
A PROGRAM FOR THE FORMATION OF
SPIRITUAL DIRECTORS

This chapter proposes a comprehensive program for the formation of spiritual directors. The components included provide the opportunity for a person interested in the ministry of spiritual direction to develop his/her personal spiritual life and the gifts and skills needed to be a spiritually sensitive and effective director. Although significant content needs to be covered in a program like this, the learning is not intended to be content driven. Particular attention has been paid to the importance of developing the whole person and to the need for integration of learning.

The course has been and will be offered to Christians who are experienced in prayer, have an established relationship with Jesus, have a basic understanding of the ministry of spiritual direction, and who have gone through an application process describing their spiritual life and their ministry experience. The application process is structured to help the directors of the program discern if the applicants are ready to engage in the retreats and practices that are included in the program. It is being offered to an ecumenical audience but is intended to appeal to Christians from Reformed and Evangelical faith traditions. It requires openness to

contemplative ways of prayer and to the ministry of the Holy Spirit. Reformed and Ignatian spirituality are the main influences and traditions drawn on for the form and content of the program. The two program directors are Heather Cowie and Rev. Ron Klok. Heather and Ron share much of the teaching but where the expertise required is outside their areas of competency other facilitators have been invited to participate. Additional trained spiritual directors participate as retreat directors and supervisors. They have been oriented to the whole program but only participate in designated parts of it. The material delineated here is intended primarily for the use of the co-directors of this particular program in St. Albert, Alberta. Some of the content is transferable to other ministry situations but the necessity of the program directors and spiritual directors having personally experienced *The Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius* (either in a retreat or retreat in daily life format) limits the possibilities of the whole program being adopted in other contexts.

One of the unique means this program uses in the hope of facilitating spiritual growth and integration is the inclusion of several silent directed retreats. Some of the other ways include personal theological reflection processed in a group context; teaching and reflection on several of the main themes and topics related to our Christian spiritual journeys and personal wholeness; teaching on and experience of several ways of prayer; and finally teaching on and practice of the skills required for effective spiritual direction through a supervised practicum. Each participant is required to read *Sacred Companions* by David Benner (Benner

2002), *The Practice of Spiritual Direction* by Barry and Connelly (Barry and Connelly 1986), *Spiritual Direction: Beyond the Beginnings* by Janet Ruffing (Ruffing, *Spiritual Direction: Beyond the Beginnings* 2000), and one other book on spiritual direction from the list of suggested readings. In addition, each participant is required to read 500 pages in the areas of spirituality and prayer. They will be asked to submit their personal responses to these readings and present them to their peers. This is supplemented by the reading in the theological reflection component of the program and additional reading on the topics covered throughout the program. See Appendix A for the list of suggested readings.

There is a rhythm of retreat, reflection, teaching and practice throughout the two-year program. Tables 1 - 6 indicate how these elements are connected to one another thematically and practically with the retreats as the centerpiece. Each element will be described in the body of this chapter with the tables providing a picture of the flow of the entire program. Detailed lesson plans of the material to be taught by the author as well as handouts with instructions on how to practice the various ways of prayer have been included in the appendixes. The volume of material that would be required to include the lesson plans for each element is beyond the scope of this chapter, primarily because the teaching in certain areas will be shared by multiple qualified presenters.

Table 1. Retreat One: Themes and practices

Retreat One: We are Loved by God		
Prayer Pathways to Experience and Explore	Silence and Solitude	
	Praying with Creation	
	Lectio Divina	
	Praying through Creative Arts	
Theological Questions to Reflect On	Who is God?	
	Who is Jesus?	
	Who is the Holy Spirit?	
Foundational Themes and Topics	Knowing ourselves as Made and Loved by God	Image of God
		Image of Self
		Sexuality and Spirituality
	The Role of the Holy Spirit in Spiritual Direction	
	Trusting in God's Providence	
	The Story of your life with God	
Practice of Direction: Gifts and Skills	A brief history of Spiritual Direction	
	What is spiritual direction? What is it not? Why is it important in our time and culture?	
	The importance of listening Beginning the practice of listening through group sharing	
Reading: <i>Sacred Companions</i> by David Benner (Benner 2002)		

Table 2. Retreat Two: Themes and practices

Retreat Two: We are Loved Sinners		
Prayer Pathways to Experience and Explore	Silence and Solitude	
	Gospel Contemplation	
	Examen	
Theological Questions to Reflect On	What does it mean to be human?	
	What is the meaning of sin?	
Foundational Themes and Topics	Self-Awareness	Introduction to The Enneagram
		Learning about Spiritual Pathways
		Streams of Christian Spirituality: Reflecting on our own tradition
	Forgiveness	
Practice of Direction: Gifts and Skills	Listening in groups of two in response to The Enneagram	
	Real Plays in Small Groups with Student Director, Directee, Student Observer and Supervisor	
	Developing the Capacity to Listen: What is the directee saying? What is the Holy Spirit saying? What is the director's own interior responses?	
	Case Studies will be used throughout the program to help students reflect on situations that can arise in spiritual direction	
Reading: <i>The Practice of Spiritual Direction</i> by William Barry and William Connelly (Barry and Connelly 1986)		

Table 3. Retreat Three: Themes and practices

Retreat Three: Coming to Know, Love and Follow Jesus		
Prayer Pathways to Experience and Explore	Silence and Solitude	
	Gospel Contemplation	
	Breath Prayers and Prayer of the Heart	
	Praying through Creative Arts	
Theological Questions to Reflect On	What is conversion?	
	What is forgiveness?	
Foundational Themes and Topics	Discernment I: Ignatian Discernment	What is discernment?
		Interior Movements
		The Role of Desire
	Seasons and Stages of Faith	
Practice of Direction: Gifts and Skills	Real Plays in Small Groups with Student Director, Directee, Student Observer and Supervisor Continued	
	Real Plays: Supervisors Direct and Receive Direction with group observing: Opportunity for debriefing after	
	Developing the Capacity to Listen: What is the directee saying? What is the Holy Spirit saying? What is the director's own interior responses?	
Reading: <i>Spiritual Direction: Beyond the Beginnings</i> by Janet Ruffing (Ruffing 2000)		

Table 4. Retreat Four: Themes and practices

Retreat Four: The Passion, Suffering with Jesus		
Prayer Pathways to Experience and Explore	Silence and Solitude	
	Gospel Contemplation	
	Lament	
Theological Questions to Reflect On	What is the meaning of Christian suffering?	
Foundational Themes and Topics	The Place of Suffering in Our Christian Journey	Grief and Loss
		Anger and Fear
		Depression
	The Dark Night	Introduction to John of the Cross and the Dark Night
		The Dark Night, Desolation and Depression: Discerning the Difference
Practice of Direction: Gifts and Skills	Real Plays in Small Groups with Student Director, Directee, Student Observer and Supervisor Continued	
	Case Studies	
	Developing the Capacity to Listen: What is the directee saying? What is the Holy Spirit saying? What is the director's own interior responses?	
Reading: Sections of <i>Looking Into the Well: Supervision for Spiritual Directors</i> by Maureen Conroy (Conroy 1995)		

Table 5. Retreat Five: Themes and practices

Retreat Five: Experiencing the Joy of the Resurrection	
Prayer Pathways to Experience and Explore	Silence and Solitude
	Gospel Contemplation
	Contemplation on the Love of God
Theological Questions to Reflect On	What is your understanding of the Will of God?
Foundational Themes and Topics	Discernment II: Decision Making: Deeper into Ignatian Discernment
	Ethics
Practice of Direction: Gifts and Skills	Beginning of 12 month Practicum: Students direct each other on 2 day retreat and receive supervision
	Ongoing Direction – each student to direct 4 directees
	Reflection after each session offered in preparation for supervision
	Supervision every month for 12 months
Reading: One Ancient Spiritual Classic to be presented to peers; One book on Spiritual Direction – choice of student (See Appendix A)	

Table 6. Days of contemplation and Retreat Six: Themes and practices

Days of Contemplation and Final Retreat	
Prayer Pathways to Experience and Explore	Silence and Solitude
	Centering Prayer
	Welcoming Prayer
	Body Prayer
Theological Questions to Reflect On	What is the Role of Community in the Christian Life?
Foundational Themes and Topics	The Kingdom of God and Justice
	Vocation
Practice of Direction: Gifts and Skills	Continue Practicum until completion of required hours
	Real Plays in Small Groups with Student Director, Directee, Student Observer and Supervisor Continued
	Introduce Peer Supervision and Experience Real Play of Peer Supervision group
	Ethics and Practicalities
Reading: One Modern Spiritual Classic to be presented to peers (See Appendix A)	

Spiritual Direction: An Introduction

The history of spiritual direction is explored briefly to give participants an understanding of the role it has played in Christian spirituality. Some of the movements and people of interest include (but are not exclusive to) the desert fathers and mothers; Benedictine spirituality; Carmelite spirituality, particularly St. Teresa of Avila and St. John of the Cross; St. Ignatius and Ignatian spirituality; and the place of informal spiritual direction in the Evangelical and Reformed traditions.

A Description of Spiritual Direction

Christian spiritual direction is “help given by one Christian to another which enables that person to pay attention to God’s personal communication to him or her, to respond to God, and to live out the consequences of the relationship” (Barry and Connelly 1986, 8). Although there are different approaches to spiritual direction this definition is foundational. For the directee, spiritual direction is an opportunity to share one’s experience in a prayerful context. Spiritual direction focuses on how the individual’s life experience is connected (or not) with his/her experience of God.

The one receiving direction and the one providing direction are both in a listening stance. They listen for the presence and movement of the Holy Spirit in the midst of all of life. Thomas Green calls the director the co-discerner (Green, 1984, 71). Discernment is the process of differentiating between the voice of God and the other voices that speak in one’s life. Spiritual Direction is prayerful accompaniment. As Thomas Merton writes in *Spiritual Direction and Meditation*,

[The spiritual director] must teach others to ‘discern’ between good and evil tendencies, to distinguish the inspirations of the spirit of evil from those of the Holy Spirit. A spiritual director is, then, one who helps another to recognize and to follow the inspirations of grace in his/her life, in order to arrive at the end to which God is leading him/her. (Merton 1960, 17)

Spiritual direction focuses on the affective life in relation to faith.

A spiritual direction that stems from the heart of the Christian tradition . . . is primarily concerned with helping individuals freely to place themselves before God who will communicate himself to them and make them more free. The focus of direction is on the Lord and the way he seems to relate to each person, not on ideas (Barry and Connelly 1986, 44).

The focus on the directees relationship with God is key in spiritual direction; the conversation that occurs always centres on the questions of “where is God in this?” and/or “where am I in relation to God?”

What Spiritual Direction Is Not

Spiritual Direction is not counseling, pastoral care, mentoring or discipleship although it has some things in common with all of these types of helping relationships. Unlike mentoring or discipling it is not primarily about teaching or skill development; unlike counselling and pastoral care it is not primarily about healing, however appropriate these emphases are in other soul care relationships. In the context of spiritual direction there are times when teaching is appropriate and there are certainly times when healing occurs, but these are not the purpose or goal of the relationship. The central focus of spiritual direction is always our life with God, and the approach always one of contemplative listening.

Why Spiritual Direction is Important in Our Time and Culture

There is a need for discerning, compassionate, godly and trained spiritual directors. Many people live very lonely and isolated lives with deep personal relationships becoming more and more difficult to nurture. The companionship that spiritual direction provides is ideal for those who need safe spaces to speak about their life with God. For those who are members of faith communities, and those who are not, it is helpful to have a place to articulate longings, questions

and struggles. “In many cases the absence of direction may mean the difference between sanctity and mediocrity in the religious life” (Merton 1960, 27).

People who can benefit from spiritual direction also include those in spiritual leadership and care-giving roles. Morris Dirks, in his book *Forming the Leader’s Soul: An Invitation to Spiritual Direction*, says that all pastors and leaders can benefit from spiritual direction. He writes, “I don’t think spiritual direction is a specialized ministry for persons facing unique situations. I believe every leader needs a soul friend” (Dirks 2013, 5).

The value of receiving spiritual direction is clear and the need for spiritually mature, discerning and well-trained directors will continue to grow as the Evangelical and Reformed traditions become more familiar with this ancient way of accompanying souls.

Retreats

The format of this spiritual direction training course will include many experiences of silence and prayer in the context of retreats. There will be five silent directed retreats that will move the participants through the themes of *The Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius of Loyola*. *The Exercises* are essentially a series of notes for spiritual directors to use to guide retreatants through a period of praying with the Gospels. The “weeks” of the Spiritual Exercises are not literal seven-day weeks but sections of differing numbers of days. My own experience of *The Spiritual Exercises* is described in some detail in chapter two and was a transforming experience. The silence of the retreats will include refraining from

talking to others at all times. The silence is intended to help the retreatant to listen to God and to her/himself. The extended silence provided by the retreat allows for a deepening of the retreatants capacity to hear.

The importance of the spiritual director being a person with the ability to listen to God, to self and to others makes it imperative for the training of a director to include opportunities for growth in these capacities. “Spiritual direction is prayer because it is a conversation not just between two people but between two people and God. Attentiveness to God’s presence and to one’s experience of that presence are at the very core of spiritual direction” (Benner 2002, 105). The inclusion of several retreats is intended to give the trainee the opportunity to experience silence, solitude, spiritual direction, and many different ways of prayer. Silent retreat is a context that provides ample space for growth and a deepening intimacy with Jesus. The use of *The Spiritual Exercises* for the form and content of the retreats will be helpful in expanding the trainee’s capacity to attend to God’s voice, to notice interior movements, and to discern. Developing these capacities are not ends in themselves but are ultimately for the purpose of growing in freedom in order to become all God has created each participant to be so he/she may fulfill his/her vocation in the world.

In addition to the five silent retreats based on *The Spiritual Exercises* participants will experience two days of prayer focusing on themes around living out their faith, and a final two-day silent retreat. The final retreat will provide

opportunity to reflect on the whole experience of formation through the program and to focus on discerning God's call moving forward.

The retreats will be two full days and an evening in length. The first evening will consist of a gathering time, introduction of the theme of the retreat and an opening contemplative prayer experience. Each of the two full days will include a group morning prayer and a meeting with a retreat spiritual director. The first full day will have a group evening prayer and the retreat will end with processing and faith sharing on the last evening. The scriptures suggested and listed in Appendix B have been selected from *The Spiritual Exercises*, but do not comprise the full content of the *Exercises*.

Retreat One - Awareness of God's Love

What is known as The Principle and Foundation of *The Spiritual Exercises* is the focus of the first silent retreat. The foundation of knowing, with absolute certainty, one is loved by God is necessary before one is able to enter into the next part of the *Exercises*. The prayer of the retreat will be spent dwelling on and in the truth of God's unconditional and generous love. The first principle is that we are made for God and find our true purpose in surrendering our whole life to Him.

Many Scriptures speak of God's love and some have been selected as possible texts to meditate on in order to help the retreatant apprehend more fully the depth of God's love for them. The spiritual directors will guide each retreatant to the texts (two to four different ones) that they sense will be the most valuable for them. This will be the pattern for all the subsequent retreats as well. The

scripture texts suggested for each retreat can be found in Appendix B along with other resources from *The Spiritual Exercises*.

The principle and foundation of St. Ignatius will also provide content for prayer and reflection during the first retreat. The principle and foundation of the *Exercises* is, as it is titled, a foundation on which all the remainder of the *Exercises* rest. The following paraphrase is by David Fleming.

God who loves us creates us and wants to share life with us forever. Our love response takes shape in our praise and honor and service of the God of our life.

All the things in this world are created because of God's love and they become a context of gifts, presented to us so that we can know God more easily and make a return of love more readily.

As a result, we show reverence for all the gifts of creation and collaborate with God in using them so that by being good stewards we develop as loving persons in our care of God's world and its development. But if we abuse any of these gifts of creation or, on the contrary, take them as the center of our lives, we break our relationship with God and hinder our growth as loving persons.

In everyday life, then, we must hold ourselves in balance before all created gifts insofar as we have a choice and are not bound by some responsibility. We should not fix our desires on health or sickness, wealth or poverty, success or failure, a long life or a short one. For everything has the potential of calling forth in us a more loving response to our life forever with God.

Our only desire and our one choice should be this: I want and I choose what better leads to God's deepening his life in me. (Fleming 1996, 27)

If a person is not able to apprehend the truths contained herein; 1) that they are held in the love of God; 2) that God's gifts are given freely out of love and are to be received freely in love; 3) that they are invited to share in God's life through the use of these gifts; and 4) that the focus of their life is to grow in their relationship with God then they are not ready to proceed with the remaining

weeks of the *Exercises*. The application process of The Studion will mitigate against the possibility that participants will not be ready to proceed.

Retreat Two - Knowing Ourselves as Loved Sinners

The reality of each person's life with God is that it is diminished by the presence of sin: sin in the world and sin in each person. "We all, like sheep, have gone astray, each of us has turned to our own way" (Isa. 53:6). The second retreat and the first 'week' of the *Exercises* gives time to feel the pain of sin in the retreatant's own life in order that he/she recognizes his/her great need for the mercy and love of Jesus. As Tim Muldoon writes in *The Ignatian Workout*,

In the first workout [week], it is vitally important to acknowledge and name our sins. This is not simply a morbid exercise designed to make us feel bad about ourselves; it is rather, an honest attempt to identify those parts of our lives that need improvement. No one can grow in any way... unless he or she becomes aware of mistakes and wrongdoings. So the purpose here is to become more deeply aware of our guilt and the negative effect it has on our relationship to God and on our ability to become good people. . . . In short, we want to develop a repugnance for sin and a love for doing the will of God. (Muldoon 2004, 92)

The goal is that the retreatant is moved not to despair or self-condemnation but to a deeper appreciation of God's love and their need for Him.

Retreat Three - Coming to Know, Love and Follow Jesus more

The second week of the *Exercises*, in response to a deepening awareness of our need for God, invites the retreatant to spend time with Jesus and come to know Him more, to love Him more and to follow Him more closely through gospel contemplation. There is also opportunity to examine the heart to discern

how open one is to giving up attachments through the Ignatian meditation on “The Three Kinds of Humility.” See Appendix B for resources from *The Spiritual Exercises*. These times of self-examination provide the chance to invite Jesus into places of resistance.

Retreat Four - The Passion

The retreatant is asked in retreat four to continue to develop a deeper intimacy with Jesus through sharing in His suffering. He/she spends time with Jesus as a companion who wants to share not only in His life but also in His suffering and death. The focus is not on the sin of the retreatant as in the first week but on being as present to Jesus as he/she can. Although the retreatant will often confront his/her own sin during this period of the *Exercises* the goal is to try to accompany Jesus in His last days as one would try to be present to any friend in the midst of suffering.

Retreat Five - The Joy of the Resurrection and The Contemplation on Love of God

Just as the retreatant has accompanied Jesus in His suffering and death he/she also accompanies Him in the joy of His resurrection. Time in prayer is spent with the disciples and with Jesus as He encounters them in the reality of His risen life.

Time is also spent in the last part of the journey through the *Exercises* contemplating the love of God and learning how to see Him and seek Him in all things. This is done through the meditation written by St. Ignatius in *The Spiritual*

Exercises, “The Contemplation on the Love of God.” See Appendix B for the full meditation.

Theological Reflection

Theology is simply put the study of God. The goal of theological reflection in this program is increased awareness of what theology is held by the trainee and of how that theology influences his/her own life with God and his/her capacity to listen to others. Often in the Christian life one can profess sound doctrine and orthodox theology but one’s deeply felt beliefs are not consistent with what is professed. Theological reflection provides the opportunity to grow in awareness and integration. Participants will share their reflections in small groups, which will provide the opportunity to hear differing perspectives on the topics covered. The topics addressed are by no means exhaustive, however, the focus is on topics that have a direct relationship to the ministry of Christian spiritual direction.

The list of readings is intentionally focused on providing a reformed perspective. Participants will be encouraged to choose readings from other Christian faith traditions for additional reading in order to expand their understanding of the topics addressed.

See Appendix C for an outline of the process for the theological reflection. Following is a list of the topics and foundational readings.

Table 7. Theological reflection topics and readings

Topic	Readings
	<p>Read and reflect on the Scriptures: Genesis 1-2 Isaiah 44:24 Matthew 6:25-27</p> <p>Heidelberg Catechism: Q & A 26</p> <p>Belgic Confession: Article 1: The Only God Article 2: The Means by Which We Know God</p> <p>“The Three Personal God” in Mere Christianity by C.S. Lewis. (Lewis 2001)</p>
Topic	Readings
<p>Who is Jesus? What is the meaning of the Incarnation?</p>	<p>Read and reflect on the Scriptures: Matthew 10:37-42 Mark 10:28-31 Luke 2; 4:16-30 John 1:1- 18 Philippians 2:1-11</p> <p>Heidelberg Catechism: Q & A 29 Q & A 31 Q & A 33 Q & A 34</p> <p>Our World Belongs to God: 23-27: Christ</p> <p>Belgic Confession: Article 18: The Incarnation Article 19: The Two Natures of Christ</p>
Topic	Readings
<p>What is the role of the Holy Spirit?</p>	<p>Read and reflect on the Scriptures: Genesis 1:1-2 John 14: 15-18; 15:26-27 Acts 2:1-13</p>

	<p>Heidelberg Catechism: Q & A 53</p> <p>Our World Belongs to God: 28-30: The Spirit</p> <p>Belgic Confession: Article 11: The Deity of the Holy Spirit</p> <p>"Spirit, Holy" by Christopher Cocksworth in <i>The New Westminster Dictionary of Christian Spirituality</i>, edited by Philip Sheldrake, 594-596. (Cocksworth 2005)</p>
Topic	Readings
What does it mean to be human?	<p>Read and reflect on the Scriptures: Genesis 1-2 Psalm 8</p> <p>Our World Belongs to God: 10 - 12</p> <p>Belgic Confession: Article 14: The Creation and Fall of Humanity</p> <p>Read the section on Humanity (pp. 28-34) in the chapter on "Creation" in <i>Engaging God's World</i> by Cornelius Plantinga Jr. (Plantinga 2002)</p>
Topic	Readings
What is the meaning of sin?	<p>Read and reflect on the Scriptures: Genesis 3 Isaiah 53:6 Romans 5:12-13 Romans 7:7-25</p> <p>Our World Belongs to God: 13-17: Fall</p> <p>Belgic Confession: Article 15: The Doctrine of Original Sin</p> <p>Read the chapter on "The Fall" (pp. 45-68) in <i>Engaging God's World</i> by Cornelius Plantinga Jr. (Plantinga 2002)</p>
Topic	Readings

<p>What is the meaning of conversion?</p>	<p>Read and reflect on the Scriptures: John 1: 1- 18 Romans 8:1-17 Ephesians 2:8-10 Colossians 2:9-15</p> <p>Our World Belongs to God: 18-22: Redemption</p> <p>Belgic Confession: Article 22: The Righteousness of Faith Article 23: The Justification of Sinners Article 24: The Sanctification of Sinners</p> <p>Read the chapter “Movement 6: New” in <i>Velvet Elvis</i> by Rob Bell.</p> <p>Read the chapter on Redemption (pp. 69-100) in <i>Engaging God’s World</i> by Cornelius Plantinga Jr. (Plantinga 2002)</p>
<p>Topic</p>	<p>Readings</p>
<p>What is forgiveness?</p>	<p>Read and reflect on the Scriptures: Matthew 18:23-35 Matthew 6 – Lord’s Prayer 1 John 1:1-2:2</p> <p>Read the chapter “Confession and Communion” in <i>Life Together</i> by Dietrich Bonhoeffer. (Bonhoeffer 1954)</p> <p>"Forgiveness" by L. William Countryman in <i>The New Westminster Dictionary of Christian Spirituality</i>, edited by Philip Sheldrake, 308-309. (Countryman 2005)</p> <p>"Walking with the Wounded" by Mari West Zimmerman in <i>Presence: The Journal of Spiritual Directors International</i> 4, no. 1 (January 1998): 44-52. (Zimmerman 1998)</p>
<p>Topic</p>	<p>Readings</p>

What is the meaning of Christian suffering?	<p>Read and reflect on the Scriptures: Psalm 22, 73, 38, 40 Isaiah 53 Jeremiah 15:10-19 John 9:1-5; 39-41 Matthew 5:1-13</p> <p>"Suffering" by Gordon Mursell in <i>The New Westminster Dictionary of Christian Spirituality</i>, edited by Philip Sheldrake, 602-603. (Mursell 2005)</p>
Topic	Readings
What is your understanding of the will of God?	<p>Read and reflect on the Scriptures: Jeremiah 29:11-13 Matthew 6:25-34 Romans 8:28-39 Romans 12:1-2</p> <p>Heidelberg Catechism Q&A 27 Q&A 28</p> <p>"Seeking God's Will" by Charles Healey, SJ in <i>In The Christian Ministry of Spiritual Direction: The Best of Review - 3</i>, edited by David L. Fleming, SJ. 326-332. (Healey 1988)</p> <p>"Will of God" by David L. Rowe in <i>Dictionary of Christian Spirituality</i>, edited by Glen G. Scorgie, 839-840. (Rowe 2011)</p>
Topic	Readings
What is the role of community in the Christian life?	<p>Read and reflect on the Scriptures: 1 John 2-4 James 1:19-27 Ephesians 4:29-5:2</p> <p>"Communion/Koinonia" by Richard Gaillardetz in <i>The New Westminster Dictionary of Christian Spirituality</i>, 200-202. (Gaillardetz 2005)</p>

Foundational Themes and Topics

There are many themes and topics that are important to address in preparing to become a spiritual director. The way these will be approached will be varied including lecture and discussion, presentation through multi-media, personal reflection and journaling, hands – on learning and contemplative prayer experiences. The directors of the program will be attentive to the balance of pedagogical methods with attention to nurturing an interactive adult learning environment. Rev. Ron Klok, Heather Cowie and other facilitators will share the teaching and facilitating. The following provides a summary of the intended topics, however, the full content will be provided by facilitators with some expertise in the specific areas. Appendixes D-I provide more details on the content for teaching and the prayers that will be experienced where the author of this project will be teaching or facilitating.

Knowing God and Knowing Ourselves

The Christian journey is one that involves a deepening knowledge of God and of self. The teaching and reflection on this topic will help the trainee to become more aware of how their prayer and experience of God and self have been influenced by many factors in their life. The topics addressed are complex in nature and include spiritual, emotional, and psychological facets.

Image of God

One area to be attentive to is how our life with God has been shaped by both true and false images of God. Often what we think about God is shaped by

orthodox Christian theology while our image of God, what we know in our hearts, is distorted. For instance, a person may affirm that they believe in justification by faith alone but still be troubled by doubt and a feeling that they need to earn God's favour. Surfacing how one's image of God has been distorted and finding ways of prayer that help to correct those distortions is key to growth in intimacy with God and in personal wholeness. See Appendix D for a session outline which includes a prayer experience each participant will do on their own to help them explore their images of God.

Sexuality and Spirituality

Living as embodied persons means that our sexuality and spirituality are connected. It is an area where spiritual directors must learn to be self-aware and attentive. One's ability to offer hospitable space to those who come for direction and to be aware of how a directee's story has the potential to bring up his/her own issues is necessary to be an effective and hospitable listener. In the area of sexuality many have room for growth in self-awareness and movement toward wholeness. It is also an area where there is need for ongoing attentiveness. It is highly likely that the spiritual director will experience relationships with directees that will raise the need for processing how his/her own sexuality and perspectives on sexuality is affected by a directee. The director is also likely, at points in their ministry, to experience dynamics between himself/herself and a directee that will need some attention and processing. This is a place where frank discussion and the use of case studies will be helpful in the learning.

The Enneagram

Some tools for help in growth in self-awareness will be introduced including the Enneagram, which is an ancient way of understanding personality. The Enneagram describes nine types and looks at these types in a way that helps one understand one's personality more fully. The Enneagram is a complex way of looking at personality and the purpose of including it in this paper is to give a very brief summary of the nine types it identifies. One of the helpful aspects of the Enneagram that makes it an appropriate tool for self-discovery in the context of our spiritual life is that it holds the assumption that although our personalities are set they are not static. Through self-reflection, awareness and the active participation of God through the Holy Spirit, we have the capacity for transformation and growth. Because of its very complexity the treatment the Enneagram is given here is not intended to be exhaustive or comprehensive.

The descriptions in Table 8 are my own summary. They have been informed by *The Wisdom of the Enneagram* by Don Richard Riso and Russ Hudson (Riso and Hudson 1999) and *The Enneagram: A Journey of Self Discovery* by Maria Beesing, O.P., Robert J. Nogosek, C.S.C., and Patrick H. O'Leary, S.J. (Beesing, Nogosek and O'Leary 1984) as well as by oral presentations about the Enneagram.

For a person to benefit from looking at the Enneagram they need to be willing to look at their weakness and sin. Beesing, Nogosek and O'Leary start with these as a sure way for people to be able to identify their type. "Through the

Table 8. Enneagram type descriptions

Type	Description
Type One	Ones have a compulsion to be perfect and also tend to judge others for their imperfections. They are afraid to make mistakes and have a desire for justice and fairness. The message they most need to hear is that they are good.
Type Two	Twos need to be needed and often resort to manipulation to have their own needs met as they are unwilling to acknowledge they have needs. The message they most need to hear is that they are wanted.
Type Three	Threes have a need to avoid failure and may do so by living with an inflated sense of their own competence and success. They have a competitive and active nature. The message they most need to hear is that they are loved for themselves.
Type Four	Fours need to feel special and perceive themselves to be unique, particularly in the suffering they have experienced. The message they most need to hear is that they are seen for who they are.
Type Five	Fives have a sense of inner emptiness that they need to fill with knowledge. They can hoard the resource of their energy and time with a fear that others will take more from them than they have to give. The message they most need to hear is that their needs are not a problem.
Type Six	Sixes want to protect the status quo and fear change. They have a need to know what is right and wrong and do not function well with ambiguity. They have a high degree of respect for exterior authority and a need to follow the rules. The message they most need to hear is that they are safe.
Type Seven	Sevens need to avoid pain and can be shallow and irresponsible as their need for fun and change means they may have difficulty following through on tasks and commitments. The message they most need to hear is that they will be taken care of.
Type Eight	Eights need to be strong and can be aggressive and dominant in relationships. They avoid showing weakness themselves and can exploit the weaknesses of others. They feel they need to defend themselves and sometimes others as well. The message they most need to hear is that they will not be betrayed.
Type Nine	Nines are peacemakers and avoid conflict often at the cost of their own sense of self. They can compromise in inappropriate ways and they can be passive in their need to keep things on an even keel. The message they most need to hear is that their presence matters.

discovery of one's Enneagram type there can be awakened a whole new sense of self-criticism. It will give one always something to repent. . . . This self-criticism will in itself already be a basic step to that new freedom promised by the Enneagram" (Beesing, Nogosek and O'Leary 1984, 8). Confronting our sin can also lead us to become more aware of our need for salvation. "The discovery of one's type will also point out a lack of faith on a deep level" (Beesing, Nogosek and O'Leary 1984, 8). The goal is to open us up to conversion.

The way the Enneagram looks at disintegration and integration can be helpful for the ministry of spiritual direction. It provides an understanding of what attitudes and behaviors different types exhibit both when moving toward wholeness and freedom and when moving toward unhealthy and destructive ways of being.

The Directions of Integration and Disintegration help us recognize whether we are progressing or regressing in our development. Integration gives us objective markers of our growth. Disintegration shows us how we act out under stress, what our unconscious motivations and behaviors are, and, paradoxically, what qualities we most need to integrate. (Riso and Hudson 1999, 87)

This is helpful for the spiritual director's own journey to wholeness and is the primary purpose of looking at the Enneagram in this program. The Enneagram can also provide some insight for understanding how directee's movements toward disintegration and integration are experienced, however, in order for a spiritual director to gain adequate understanding of types beyond their own, they would need to pursue more exhaustive study than this program will provide.

Spiritual Pathways

Learning about spiritual temperaments through resources such as *Sacred Pathways: Discovering your Soul's Path to God* by Gary Thomas (Thomas 2010) and *What's Your God Language* by Myra Perrine (Perrine 2007) will help trainees in their own journey with God and will also help them to become aware of the range of ways that individuals connect with God. Part of a spiritual director's role is to help directees affirm their experience of prayer. Sometimes it is necessary to help directees uncover ways they pray that they have not been able to name as prayer. Understanding spiritual temperaments will assist with this. In learning about spiritual pathways and temperaments one must resist the urge to put people in boxes or categories that are too confining; our experience of God is not limited to one or even all of these pathways, but everyone is likely drawn to one or two more strongly than the others.

Table 9. Spiritual pathways (Perrine 2007,8)

Pathway	Description
The Activist	Loving God through confrontation with evil
The Ascetic	Loving God through solitude and simplicity
The Caregiver	Loving God through serving others
The Contemplative	Loving God through adoration
The Enthusiast	Loving God through mystery and celebration
The Intellectual	Loving God through the mind
The Naturalist	Loving God through experiencing Him outdoors
The Sensate	Loving God through the senses
The Traditionalist	Loving God through ritual and symbol

Perrine uses the same pathways that Gary Thomas describes in his book, *Sacred Pathways: Discovering your Soul's Path to God*, (Thomas 2010).

Streams of Christian Spirituality

Another way to gain understanding of our own and others' faith journeys is learning about different Christian traditions or streams of Christian spirituality. A person's faith tradition has an influence, both positive and negative on their understanding of prayer and spiritual formation. If a spiritual director is going to provide spiritual direction beyond the confines of their own spiritual tradition, they need to have a basic understanding of the different qualities and characteristics that are present in various parts of the Christian church. Richard Foster's *Streams of Living Water* has a fairly comprehensive general overview of Christian spiritual traditions, if not a highly nuanced one (Foster 1998).

Table 10. Streams of Christian spirituality

Stream	Description	Qualities
The Contemplative Tradition: Discovering the Prayer Filled Life	“The Contemplative Stream of Christian life and faith shows us the way into intimacy with God and addresses the reality of our longing for God’s presence” (Foster 1998, 25).	Fosters and produces love, peace, delight, emptiness, fire, wisdom, transformation (Foster 1998, 49-51).
The Holiness Tradition: Discovering the Virtuous Life	“The Holiness Stream of Christian life and faith focuses upon the inward re-formation of the heart and the development of ‘holy habits’” (Foster 1998, 61).	Sustains attention to the heart, affirms the goodness of everyday life, trains the body as well as the soul, strives to be open to God through discipline, allows for progress in true virtue, growth in unity with God (Foster 1998, 85-91).
The Charismatic Tradition: Discovering the Spirit-Empowered Life	“The Charismatic Stream of Christian life and faith focuses upon the empowering charisms or gifts of the	Emphasis on the gifts (charisms) of the Spirit, building love (I Cor. 13) by: accepting the responsibility to use the gifts we have been given; accepting our

	Spirit and the nurturing of the fruit of the Spirit” (Foster 1998, 99).	limitations; esteeming the gifts of others; building unity and accepting diversity (Foster 1998, 125-131).
Stream	Description	Qualities
The Evangelical Tradition: Discovering the Word-Centred Life	“The Evangelical Tradition of Christian life and faith focuses upon the proclamation of the evangel, the good news of the gospel” (Foster 1998, 187). This tradition focuses on Jesus, the Word and the word of Scripture.	Emphasizes the faithful proclamation of the gospel, holds the centrality of Scripture as the faithful repository of the gospel, holds the confessional witness of the early Christian community as a faithful interpretation of the gospel (Foster 1998, 219-228).
The Incarnational Tradition: Discovering the Sacramental Life	“The Incarnational Stream of Christian life and faith focuses upon making present and visible the realm of the invisible spirit” (Foster 1998, 237).	Concerned with the relationship between the spiritual and the material in two arenas, the religious (or liturgical) and the everyday. The liturgical is concerned with letting the reality of God shine through human or physical forms. The everyday acknowledges and looks for God present in all of our life; relationships, work, society. (Foster 1998, 260-267).

These streams offer descriptions of the qualities of different traditions with the recognition that different Christian faith communities will incorporate more than one stream and potentially many of the qualities of multiple streams. It is likely that within faith communities and particular denominations one or more streams have been neglected. Having the opportunity to reflect on the streams will equip training spiritual directors to not only identify where they personally may want to grow but also to be aware of how their directees have been formed and potentially malformed through their own traditions.

The Role of the Holy Spirit in Spiritual Direction

The ministry of spiritual direction is one that requires the ability to trust in the work of the Holy Spirit, both within the director and within the directee. The Holy Spirit is the true director and the human spiritual director is a listening and discerning presence. The image of the spiritual director as matchmaker is very apt – his/her role is to bring the directee and God face to face. In order to do so effectively he/she must be able to discern and trust in the leading of the Holy Spirit. There will be opportunity for reflection on the experience of hearing the Spirit both personally and in the experience of directing.

As Thomas Merton says, “His/her direction is, in reality, nothing more than a way of leading us to see and obey our real Director – the Holy Spirit, hidden in the depths of our soul” (Merton 1960, 39).

Faith and Trusting in God’s Providence

Two of the most important gifts and capacities a spiritual director should have are discernment and faith. In order to discern well there is a need to have confidence in God’s Providence. The director/discerner must believe that God does in fact want to reveal Himself and His will to individuals and communities. When the director invites a directee to listen to God he/she must have confidence that God will communicate with him/her. He/she must also have faith in the love of God (Green, SJ 1984, 58-68). Having assurance of God’s love and the ability to trust in that love are foundational to all the other spiritual qualities and gifts required for the ministry of spiritual direction, “it is this confidence in the ever-

present love of God that liberates the soul from anxiety” (Sweeney 1988, 355). It is this kind of trust that the director must have if he/she is going to have the ability to accompany others in their life with God.

The Story of Your Life with God: Graced and Sin History

Reflection on one’s own story is a valuable part of growing in one’s relationship with God. Each person’s story is filled with grace and with the effects of sin. Growth in the capacity to discern God’s presence and growth in gratitude for God’s grace in the midst of all of life is the goal of reflecting on the history of sin and grace in one’s own life story. Sin is not confined to the participant’s personal sin but also to the broader effects of sin on his/her life. This includes the sin of others and the overall effect of living in a fallen world. Participants will be asked to share some of the high and low points of their life story with one another at the beginning of the program. Reflection on our past, including how grace and sin have been present, is included in the prayer of the first and second retreats. There will also be many opportunities integrated into the topics addressed for the participants to prayerfully reflect on different aspects of their life with God.

Stages of Faith

Having a basic understanding of Stages of Faith development is helpful as one listens to the story of other’s lives with God. We will look briefly at the Classic Catholic stages of faith of Purgation, Illumination and Union. Purgation is the stage of the beginner, where one is starting an intentional life of prayer.

Illumination is the stage of the proficient, where one has acquired some experience in not only speaking to God but also in listening. The stage of Union is the final stage of contemplative prayer that goes beyond words and experiences to a state of constant presence. Although Justification and Glorification are more appropriately understood as states rather than stages the protestant parallels of Justification, Sanctification and Glorification will be introduced primarily through the theological reflection readings.

In addition, here is a brief summary of James Fowler's stages of faith from *Stages of Faith and Religious Development* (Fowler, Nipkow and Schweitzer 1991, 24-25). These stages are one way to view the development of faith and although there are age ranges suggested for each stage, individuals will move through them at different ages and may not progress through all of them. The final stage of Universalizing faith is not wholly congruent with a Christian spiritual understanding of maturing faith leading to a person reflecting more fully who they are as made in the image of Christ. As the apostle John describes in his first epistle, "Dear friends, now we are children of God, and what we will be has not yet been made known. But we know that when Christ appears, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is" (I John 3:2).

However, the descriptions provided by Fowler are useful for the spiritual director because often people seek spiritual direction during a time of transition between stages. In particular, the spiritual director will be called on to accompany others in the transitions from Synthetic-Conventional to Individuative-Reflective

Table 11. James Fowler's Stages of faith and religious development

Stage	Description
Primal Faith (Infancy)	A prelanguage disposition of trust forms in the mutuality of one's relationships with parents and others to offset the anxiety that results from separations which occur during infant development.
Intuitive-Projective Faith (Early Childhood)	Imagination, stimulated by stories, gestures, and symbols, and not yet controlled by logical thinking, combines with perception and feelings to create long-lasting images that represent both the protective and threatening powers surrounding one's life.
<i>Mythic-Literal Faith</i> (Childhood and beyond)	The developing ability to think logically helps one order the world with categories of causality, space, and time; to enter into the perspective of others; and to capture life meaning in stories.
Synthetic-Conventional Faith (Adolescence and beyond)	New cognitive abilities to make mutual perspective taking possible and require one to integrate diverse self-images into a coherent identity. A personal and largely unreflective synthesis of beliefs and values evolves to support identity and to unite one in emotional solidarity with others.
Individuative-Reflective Faith (Young Adulthood and beyond)	Critical reflection upon one's beliefs and values, utilizing third-person perspective taking; understanding of the self and others as part of a social system; the internalization of authority and the assumption of responsibility for making explicit choice of ideology and life-style; all open the way for critically self-aware commitments in relationships and vocation.
<i>Conjunctive Faith</i> (Mid-life and beyond)	The embrace of polarities in one's life, and alertness to paradox, and the need for multiple interpretations of reality mark this stage. Symbol and story, metaphor and myth (from one's own traditions and others') are newly appreciated (second, or willed naiveté) as vehicles for expressing truth.
<i>Universalizing Faith</i> (Mid-life and beyond)	Beyond paradox and polarities, persons in this stage are grounded in a oneness with the power of being. Their visions and commitments free them for a passionate yet detached spending of self in love, devoted to overcoming division, oppression, and violence, and in effective anticipatory response to an inbreaking commonwealth of love and justice.

and from Individuative- Reflective to Conjunctive Faith. A director may be called on to accompany others through the transition to Universalizing Faith even if their own understanding of Christian faith is not congruent with Fowler's description of "oneness with the power of being."

Forgiveness

How one perceives and lives into the forgiveness of God is one aspect of forgiveness that will be emphasized in the second retreat. There is also the need to understand forgiveness as it applies to interpersonal relationships. Lewis Smedes writes, "Forgiveness is God's invention for coming to terms with a world in which, despite their best intentions, people are unfair to each other and hurt each other deeply. He began by forgiving us. And He invites us all to forgive each other" (Smedes 1984, xi-xii). There is much misunderstanding in the church of what forgiveness is and entails and yet being free to forgive is key to growth in Christian maturity. The need for forgiveness, what it is and what it does in the life of the forgiver as well as the stages of forgiveness will be a part of the teaching, discussion and reflection on this topic. Smedes identifies four stages of forgiveness; hurt, hate, healing, and coming together again (Smedes 1984, 2). It is important to note that the first three stages are important for everyone to move through in time but "the last stage depends on the person you forgive as much as it depends on you; sometimes he/[she] doesn't come back and you have to be healed alone" (Smedes 1984, 4).

Discernment

Discernment is one of the most important gifts and skills to develop as a spiritual director. In this program, the emphasis will be on an Ignatian approach to discernment, including teaching and reflection on the concepts of attraction and aversion; consolation and desolation; the role of desire; attachments and indifference and the place of the prayer of *Examen*. Appendix E contains a teaching outline on Ignatian Discernment. Discernment in the Evangelical and Quaker traditions will also be covered but in a less exhaustive way.

The Place of Suffering in Our Christian Journey

The world is full of suffering and so is each person's life. This suffering may be relatively small but it is always present in some way and the Christian faith affirms there is meaning in it. Spiritual directors must be free to accompany others in their suffering and they cannot do so if they are unable to enter into the struggle of their own suffering.

Prayer is far from sweet and easy. Being the expression of our greatest love, it does not keep pain away from us. Instead, it makes us suffer more since our love for God is a love for a suffering God and our entering into God's intimacy is an entering in to the intimacy where all of human suffering is embraced in divine compassion. To the degree that our prayer has become the prayer of our heart we will love more and suffer more, we will see more light and more darkness, more grace and more sin, more of God and more of humanity. (Nouwen 1986, 150)

The topic of suffering will be addressed in multi-faceted ways through the course. Trainees will be doing theological reflection, they will be invited to suffer with Jesus and reflect on the meaning of suffering during the fourth retreat, they will

be introduced to lament as an important way of prayer and there will be teaching and discussion around the topic.

Suffering is often hidden and unacknowledged; this is as true in the church as in any other context. “Much Christian piety and spirituality is romantic and unreal in its positiveness. As children of the Enlightenment, we have censored and selected around the voice of darkness and disorientation, seeking to go from strength to strength, from victory to victory. But such a way ... is a lie in terms of our experience” (Brueggemann 2002, xii). The two elements of suffering which will be addressed specifically are dealing with the difficult and often unacceptable emotions of grief, fear, sorrow and anger and the disorientation one may experience because of suffering.

Grief, Fear, Sorrow, Anger

Grief, fear, sorrow and anger are emotions that are often rejected or denied in both faith communities and the broader culture of Canada. They are also universal and the spiritual director must have the capacity to be present to them in their own lives as well as in the lives of others. The director will be unable to help others to express and process their feelings of grief, fear, sorrow and anger if they are uncomfortable with them in their own life. Trainees will be invited to reflect on their own experiences of feeling and processing difficult emotions as well as on their capacity to be present to others who are in emotional and psychological pain.

Disorientation

Suffering often causes disorientation in the faith of a believer and this disorientation may be increased when there is no help to process it. Walter Brueggemann in *The Spirituality of the Psalms* (Brueggemann 2002) writes about the journey of orientation, disorientation and reorientation that is reflected in the Psalms and the Gospel. Orientation is the time when all is well in the world and a believer has a deep trust in God. Disorientation is inevitable and comes as a time of disruption, most often through some kind of suffering. Reorientation is a time of coming to a resolution; the sufferer experiences some sense of being held in God's grace in the midst of suffering and comes to a deeper apprehension of God's goodness. The spiritual director must be free to enter into all three movements, both personally and as one who accompanies others. If a spiritual director is prone to doubt God's presence or to panic when he/she encounters disorientation in his/her own journey he/she is not going to be able to provide a safe and hospitable place for directees to process their experiences.

Desolation, the Dark Night and Depression

Consolation and desolation will receive detailed attention in the section on discernment. There needs to be further exploration and discussion on the differences and similarities of desolation to the dark night of the soul (both the dark night of sense and spirit) of St. John of the Cross as well as to clinical depression. They have some similar qualities, but different root causes and they bear different fruit. As a spiritual director it is necessary to have an understanding

of the symptoms and causes of these distinct spiritual and psychological experiences and to develop discernment around them. Harm can be done if a spiritual director is not able to discern the presence of depression and the possibility that other types of helping relationships or treatments may be necessary for growth and healing. Harm can also be done when a director fails to recognize the signs of the dark night as they may not provide the encouragement and help needed in this difficult season of prayer. See Appendix F for an introduction to St. John of the Cross' dark night of the soul, the three primary signs of the dark night and some key points for discerning the difference between the dark night, spiritual desolation and depression.

The Kingdom of God and Justice

Justice is a concern that is close to God's heart and the coming of His Kingdom includes the restoration of justice and freedom for the oppressed, as is reflected in Jesus fulfilling the prophecy of Isaiah,

Here is my servant whom I have chosen,
the one I love, in whom I delight;
I will put my Spirit on him,
and he will proclaim justice to the nations.
He will not quarrel or cry out;
no one will hear his voice in the streets.
A bruised reed he will not break,
and a smoldering wick he will not snuff out,
till he has brought justice through to victory.
In his name the nations will put their hope. (Matt. 12:18-21)

Instead of separating what is done from a life of prayer, growing intimacy with God should lead to a desire for all of God's creation to be restored and recreated.

These are themes that are very present in both Reformed and Ignatian Spirituality and will be explored in two silent days of contemplation as well as through theological reflection and discussion.

Vocation

Discerning one's vocation as a spiritual director will be encouraged throughout the program. Particular attention will be paid to the question of how the training could be applied in each individual's unique life circumstances during a final retreat at the end of the program. The participants will be encouraged to reflect on their experiences during the training program and to prayerfully consider how they are being invited to live out the calling of spiritual direction, whether in informal or formal ways.

Prayer Pathways to Experience and Explore

Experiencing multiple approaches to prayer is enriching for spiritual directors but it is also helpful as they journey with directees. The more ways of prayer directors have exposure to, the more they have to draw on as they walk with others in their life with God. The prayer pathways addressed here are not exhaustive but they cover some core contemplative practices. Appendix H includes several prayer experiences from the following pathways that will be introduced and experienced individually and/or corporately. They are also integrated into the retreat experiences of the program (Tables 3:1-3:6)

Silence and Solitude

“Silence is the discipline by which the inner fire of God is tended and kept alive” (Nouwen 2003, 45). In the culture of Canada, one is almost always surrounded by sound. There are many noises both external and internal constantly calling for attention. When a person takes time to be quiet, to be silent, they are giving themselves the opportunity to listen to what they normally cannot hear; they are listening for their own inner voice and for God’s voice. Much of the time one’s inner voice is stifled by the multitude of other sounds that surround and inundate. Also, in prayer, one is often so busy talking to God that there is little opportunity for Him to speak. If a follower of God wants to grow in self-awareness and in awareness of God it is necessary to learn to be silent. Silence will be experienced extensively through the retreat component of the program. The first retreat will include an introduction to entering into silence that will emphasize the value of silence and suggest some ways for dealing with resistance and distractions. Each retreatant will also receive spiritual direction to assist in processing any struggle encountered in the prayer and silence during these retreats. As with all spiritual practices silence and solitude are the means not the goal. As Morton Kelsey writes, “the aim is freedom which will allow the individual to find new and richer attachments to the Holy and to other human beings” (Kelsey 1976, 126).

Praying with Creation

One of the ways that a person of faith may connect with God is through His creation. For many just being in nature is renewing but praying with creation also involves the intention of noticing God's presence and reflecting on what He may be saying through His creation. Being outdoors, taking time to notice God's creation, attending to what draws one's attention and reflecting on how it speaks of God is a very simple way to pray with creation.

Lectio Divina

Lectio divina is an ancient way of praying, usually with Scripture, which allows the pray-er to listen to the word of God with the "ears of the heart." The practice includes four ways of being with the word and with God, these are: Reading, Meditating, Praying and Contemplating. This way of reading and prayer can also be used with spiritual classics and other kinds of devotional writing. The movement of reading, meditation, prayer and contemplation allows the words to penetrate the reader's heart as expressed in Jer. 15:16, "When your words came, I ate them, they were my joy and my heart's delight." Appendix G is a teaching outline for an introduction to *lectio divina*.

Praying with/through the Creative Arts

People are made with different gifts, sensibilities, ways of learning, and perceiving the world around them. They have different ways of expressing themselves and different things that draw them into intimacy with God. Part of the learning of this program will be about how the visual and creative arts can help

people to pray. Prayer can be experienced through drawing, painting, music, sculpting, and other visual and tactile expressions of creativity. The teaching in this area will be experiential and integrated into the various prayer practices included in the teaching sessions, days of contemplation and retreats of the program.

Ignatian Gospel Contemplation

Ignatian gospel contemplation is similar to *lectio divina* in that it invites the one praying to listen with the heart. It is distinct because this way of prayer engages the imagination and invites the pray-er into an encounter with Jesus in the gospel narratives. Gospel contemplation helps the pray-er to be attentive to their relationship with Jesus and to listen for the ways He wants to address them personally. Much of the prayer during the five silent retreats will be Gospel Contemplation.

Examen

The *examen* is the regular practice of looking at one's life with the eyes of the Spirit to see where one has been open and responsive to God and to see where one has been inattentive or resisting God. The pray-er is moved to express gratitude for the first and to ask for forgiveness for the second. He/she also invites God into the areas where he/she needs His grace and help. It is commonly practiced at the end of the day but can also be practiced in the morning, weekly, monthly, and yearly. Another way to pray the *examen* is to practice it at the end of a retreat or any set period of time.

Breath Prayers and the Prayer of the Heart

Breath prayer is the practice of praying in rhythm with our breathing. The best-known breath prayer is the Jesus Prayer, “Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy on me, a sinner” which can be shortened to, “Lord Jesus, have mercy”. Orthodox spirituality and a look at the apophatic way of prayer will be introduced as the prayer of the heart is experienced and discussed. *The Way of the Pilgrim* (Savin 2001) and Henri Nouwen’s *The Way of the Heart* (Nouwen 2003) will be included in the reading list for further exploration for those particularly interested in it.

Lament

Lament is a much-neglected way of prayer and there is a need to rediscover the riches of biblical laments and to encourage followers of God to express their own laments. Two resources that address this helpfully are Walter Brueggemann’s *Spirituality of the Psalms* (Brueggemann 2002) and William Barry’s *Praying the Truth* (Barry 2012). Participants will be encouraged to reflect on their own practice of lament (or lack of it) in their personal faith journey as well as in their faith communities. They will also be given opportunity to lament through prayer practices.

Centering Prayer

Centering prayer includes the regular practice of silent prayer. Typically, it is practiced twice daily for a period of twenty to thirty minutes. “Centering prayer as a discipline is designed to withdraw our attention from the ordinary flow of our

thoughts... this prayer opens our awareness to the spiritual level of our being” (Keating 1992, 34). An apophatic approach to prayer, “apophatic contemplation is resting in God beyond the exercise of particular acts, except to maintain a general loving attention to the divine presence” (Keating 2009, 126), and to our life with God will be explored further as Centering Prayer is taught. “But in essence, contemplative prayer is simply a wordless, trusting opening of self to the divine presence. Far from being advanced, it is about the simplest form of prayer there is” (Bourgeault 2004, 5). This way of prayer may be simple but it is not easy and the challenges and gifts of practicing it will be discussed.

Welcoming Prayer

The simple practice of expressing hospitality toward oneself and experiencing the hospitality of God are what lie at the core of Welcoming Prayer. The practice invites the one praying to identify how he/she is feeling and to be with God in that space, without judgment. Whether he/she is feeling hopeful or full of despair, guilty or free, if he/she is in consolation or desolation, if he/she is experiencing sorrow, joy, anxiety or anger. All that one feels is welcomed by the one praying and by God. Cynthia Bourgeault describes the three-step process as follows,

1. Focus and Sink In
2. Welcome
3. Let God (Bourgeault 2004, 145)

The key is to feel and identify how we experience that feeling in our body, to welcome the feeling, and then to let go of the emotion without analyzing, solving or rushing the process.

This way of prayer is particularly helpful when the experience is of difficult emotions. It is also a healing way to pray if one's spiritual tradition has not provided safe places to express these emotions in the context of personal relationships and faith communities.

Body Prayers

There are many ways to engage the body in prayer, through simple breathing, walking, movement, dancing and other active ways of prayer. It is helpful to pray with the body to remember that we are embodied persons and to help us become integrated with our bodies. Praying body prayers helps the pray-er to live into the fullness of their humanity.

Visio Divina

Visio divina is similar to *lectio divina* but the focus is on an image, painting, or picture rather than a written text. Images have the power to move us in a way that words sometimes lack. Particularly for individuals who are less verbal and more artistic in their temperaments prayer with a visual element may be very rich and meaningful. One may pray with icons, religious pictures or paintings, photographs or abstract images. For those who feel uncomfortable with it, this way of prayer can also be grounded in a scripture passage or story such as

Van Gogh's painting, *The Good Samaritan, after Delacroix?* or Rembrandt's painting *The Storm on the Sea of Galilee*.

The Practice of Spiritual Direction

Developing the practical skills and competencies required for spiritual direction is a very important part of training to be a spiritual director. The means for growth will include lecture, reading and reflection, and practical skill development. Although intellectual learning and skill development is integral to the training program it will always be in the context of an integrated approach. Listening skills can be developed for this ministry only insofar as the capacity for compassion and prayerful presence are also developed. Therefore, the skills, knowledge and gifts required can never be separated from the qualities of the person. Acquiring competency as an end in itself will be actively discouraged through ongoing attention to the integrated growth of the participants.

Listening

One of the most important skills of the spiritual director is their ability to listen well. Listening with a heart of compassion is at the core of this gift but the skills of listening can also be developed. The teaching on listening will happen through a workshop style of presentation with opportunities for practice and reflection on the part of participants on their experience of listening and being listened to.

Listening is a multi-faceted activity with both nonverbal and verbal components on the part of the speaker and listener. Learning to pay attention to

these components both within oneself as a listener and in the directee can help one to grow in the capacity to listen well. Gerard Egan and Wilma Schroeder identify the following factors in nonverbal behaviour:

- bodily behaviour, such as posture, body movements, and gestures
- eye behaviour, such as eye contact, staring, eye movement
- facial expressions, such as smiles, frowns, raised eyebrows, and twisted lips
- voice-related behaviour, such as tone of voice, pitch, volume, intensity, inflection, spacing of words, emphases, pauses, silences, and fluency
- observable autonomic physiological responses, such as quickened breathing, blushing, paleness, and pupil dilation
- physical characteristics, such as fitness, height, weight, and complexion
- space, that is, how close or far a person chooses to be during a conversation
- general appearance, such as grooming and dress (Egan and Schroeder 2009, 96)

The use of active listening will be a part of the skill development. “Full listening means listening actively, listening accurately, and listening for meaning” (Egan and Schroeder 2009, 101). In the ministry of spiritual direction listening for the affective element of our life with God is the focus (Barry and Connelly 1986,

44). Responding to the directee in ways that help them articulate this aspect of their experience is a part of the listening process. Although the type of helping relationship discussed is the therapeutic relationship the summary provided by Egan and Schroder on communicating empathy is helpful,

Communicating empathic highlights and checking understanding are critical responding skills in the therapeutic dialogue. By accurately communicating empathic highlights, helpers demonstrate their understanding of the client and also create the opportunity to correct misunderstandings. Being understood is of prime importance to clients in all helping contexts, and clients who feel understood will trust their helper more and participate more effectively in the helping process. (Egan and Schroeder 2009, 147)

Particular emphasis will be placed on the use of open-ended questions and the necessity of being comfortable with silence. There will also be attention paid to the multiple levels of listening that spiritual direction requires including: What is the directee saying? Where is the Holy Spirit moving? What are the interior responses in the director?

Real plays

Real plays are differentiated from role-plays in that the one who takes the role of the directee brings a real situation for direction. It is not role-playing a potential situation but is real spiritual direction in an abbreviated form with observation and reflection. Real plays are experienced in groups with three participants and one supervisor. The participants alternate in the roles of director, directee and observer. The goal is to have each trainee have a minimum of three opportunities to serve in each of these roles. These real plays provide input and

feedback from peers and an experienced supervisor to each of the trainees before he/she begins to offer spiritual direction in the practicum and in an ongoing way in the second year of the program. The quality of listening and responding is the focus of the observation and feedback. This is an important preparation for the practicum.

Practicum

Direction of Peers on Silent Retreat

A full year practicum begins with each trainee directing another during the fifth silent retreat. Each trainee director meets with the retreatant twice and receives one-on-one supervision twice during the retreat.

Ongoing Practicum

The practicum continues after the retreat with each trainee director meeting with four directees for one year. If the trainee has opportunity and time to meet with more directees that is encouraged but not required. The training directors is required to journal about each experience of directing using the *Spiritual Direction Reflection for Supervision* found in Appendix I. They meet with an experienced supervisor once a month during this period and bring what they feel is most urgent from the reflections they have done. Each participant is required to direct for 40 sessions and receive 10 sessions of supervision before completion of the program. The approach to the practicum is not intended to fulfill the professional requirements for certification but to provide enough experience and supervision to help trainees grow in their listening capacities,

discernment and compassion. It also provides the opportunity for the trainees to discern their own fitness for the ministry of spiritual direction. When the practicalities of beginning a spiritual direction practice are addressed in the last module different perspectives on certification will be acknowledged and information about pursuing certification will be provided.

Peer Supervision

Toward the end of the program Peer Supervision is introduced. It is proposed as a way to continue growth as a spiritual director once the training program has been completed. The importance for the director to continue to attend to their life with God and their interior movements during direction in order to move to greater freedom and compassion is emphasized.

The importance of contemplative listening in peer supervision cannot be overemphasized. The following prayer by Maureen Conroy is expressive of the attitude each member of a peer group ideally holds.

God of Communion, thank you for bringing us together in your name to be Eucharist to one another. When one of us is in pain, help us be a compassionate presence. When one is in darkness, may we be a vehicle of your light. When one is in turmoil, may we be an instrument of your peace. When one is confused, help us be bearers of your wisdom and truth. Thank you, Companion God, for inviting us to be a support to one another in this sacred ministry. Help us to hold reverently what each person shares. Give us the gift of tender hands and warm hearts to hold one another's vulnerability and weakness. As we grow in trust of you, help us to grow in trust of one another, believing that all of our work is in your Holy Name. (Conroy 1995, 104-105)

Real plays are used to facilitate learning for how a peer supervision group can be effective in supporting and encouraging the spiritual director in an ongoing

way. The director being supervised brings a verbatim or a situation prepared beforehand to present to the group. Groups of five or six are ideal. Larger groups would need to rotate observers and supervisors for each session. There should be one facilitator; one director; two or three peer supervisors; the rest can be observers.

Conclusion

As mentioned earlier the components of this program are offered in close connection with each other. It is offered through the equivalent of eight five-day residencies. It is a cohort learning experience with each residency containing silent retreat or quiet days, theological reflection, teaching on the themes and topics identified, integrative prayer experiences, and the practice of skills. Other components of the program are reflective reading and journaling; the experience of being directed; and in the second year, practice of directing between residencies. This program offers a comprehensive and holistic approach to the personal growth and spiritual development needed to engage in the ministry of spiritual direction.

Implementing this program was an overwhelming and rewarding experience. The execution of the program has been faithful to the overall structure and content of the proposal detailed here and has been effective in developing contemplative and competent spiritual directors. Through the sharing during the last gathering of the cohort each of the participants articulated their growth in their relationship with Jesus and their understanding of prayer and the care of

souls. They each expressed the intention of pursuing spiritual direction as part of their ministry, whether in a formal or informal context. The integrative approach of learning, experience and reflection was appreciated and will continue to provide the core of the program

There are many areas that can be improved in the second offering, too numerous to name here however two rise to the surface immediately. One is to improve the balance and rhythm of topics and themes covered. There were some sections, particularly connected to the Retreat on Suffering with Jesus that were weighed down with emotionally difficult topics. The second is that learning about different perspectives on discernment would enrich the participants understanding and application of this gift. Including some Protestant input and also acknowledging the contribution that Quakers have made to this topic is planned in the second cohort.

CHAPTER FOUR:
THE VALUE OF THE PRACTICE OF
SILENCE IN PREPARATION FOR
SPIRITUAL DIRECTION

Field Research was conducted on the practice of silence in direct connection with the ministry of spiritual direction. It explores the effect that a regular practice of silence immediately before spiritual direction has on the experience of spiritual directors and on their capacity to maintain a contemplative posture. It was undertaken specifically to test the theory that practicing silence immediately before direction would help people who are training to become spiritual directors to develop their capacity to be present during direction sessions. The outcome shows that a regular practice of silence or an intentional period of preparation immediately before a spiritual direction session generally helps spiritual directors to be present during sessions.

Introduction

This introduction provides an explanation of the opportunity to encourage and develop contemplative presence through the innovation of the practice of silence in preparation for giving spiritual direction. Included in this section are

definitions of key terms and the supervision, permission and access required for this research.

Opportunity or Problem

For many, spiritual direction is a ministry that assumes a contemplative attitude to life and prayer. “The role of the director is to accompany others on this journey of spiritual awakening. . . . The primary resource directors bring to such a task is their own spiritual sensitivity to the Divine Mystery. . . . If they have listened deeply for God in their own experience, they will be better equipped to hear God in the lives of others” (Neafsey 2005, 22). The spiritual practice of silence is vital in a contemplative life as a way of opening to the presence of God and the Holy Spirit. Silence can be experienced and defined in different ways but here it is simply “the absence of noise or speech” (Oates 1996) in prayer. The pray-er moves toward interior quiet through the use of exterior quiet. The purpose is to grow a greater capacity to listen to God and to others. As noted in the introduction to this work, “Only silence will allow us life-transforming concentration upon God” (Willard 1988, 164). Silence is a means of being attentive to one’s own interior movements but the emphasis in this project is on the use of silence as a way to make space to attend to another person more fully. With the expansion of the ministry of spiritual direction to Christian traditions that have not historically emphasized silence and contemplative prayer I have noticed (through conversation and an informal survey) that silence is not being practiced regularly in preparation for spiritual direction by all trained and

practicing spiritual directors. This research has been helpful to demonstrate the value of the practice of silence immediately before the ministry of spiritual direction is undertaken.

Response or Innovation

This research evaluates the effects of practicing silence for a period of ten minutes before each spiritual direction session. There were four participants who had not previously practiced silence in this way or who only did so periodically. The length of time of the intervention was three months. The project focused on spiritual directors who had not experienced their personal Christian formation or their spiritual direction training in a traditionally contemplative faith tradition (Catholic, Anglican or Orthodox). I also renewed my commitment to the practice of silence before offering direction for the time period of the intervention.

Definitions of Key Terms

Christian spiritual direction: “help given by one Christian to another which enables that person to pay attention to God’s personal communication to him or her, to respond to God, and to live out the consequences of the relationship” (Barry and Connelly, 1986, 8).

Spiritual Accompaniment: another name for spiritual direction with an emphasis on the stance of the director being one of companionship rather than being a directive or authoritative presence. The emphasis in spiritual direction and spiritual accompaniment is on the Holy Spirit being the true director and the spiritual director being a co-discerner.

Discernment: the capacity to notice and distinguish between the voices or influences in our life in order to determine which are from God and lead to a free and full life in Him and which are not from God and need to be rejected as hindering freedom. Gordon Smith says,

To discern is to make a distinction between the voice of Jesus and those competing voices that invariably speak in our hearts and minds. Sometimes these voices are nothing more than our own inner emotional turmoil; sometimes the voices we hear are spoken and unspoken expectation of others; and there is no doubt that sometimes we come face to face with the subtleties of the evil one. (Smith 2003, 12-13)

Interior movements: movements in our soul either toward God or away from God. The task of discernment is to attend to these movements to know which way they are leading.

Consolation: movement toward God, an increase of faith, hope, and love, giving the person interior peace. Consolation is not necessarily experienced as happy feelings, but is a deeper sense of peace and goodness in the soul. The following is a description of consolation from *Choosing Christ in the World*, by Joseph Tetlow, a manual for spiritual directors to accompany people through *The Spiritual Exercises*.

I live strongly and contentedly within the chosen context of my life. Before all, I live in faith and in hope. . . . I see with the eyes of faith, hope, and love; and my Christian perspective makes sense to me. . . . Overall, I desire the good and the holy, and I want to love God in everything. (Tetlow 1999, 247)

Desolation: movement away from God, anxiety, confusion, fear, self-interest; the opposite of consolation. As Tetlow's describes it,

Desolation is everything the opposite [of consolation]. I get restive within my context. . . . I want things to be easy and pleasant. I want comfort. . . and God seems far away. Less good actions and things, even sinful actions and things, loom large in my perspective now. I find myself struggling to make good decisions and perhaps faltering in keeping up my good habits. (Tetlow 1999, 248)

Contemplative Prayer: abiding in God's presence. "Meditation and contemplative prayer, is not so much a way to find God as a way of resting in him whom we have found, who loves us, who is near to us, who comes to us to draw us to himself" (Merton 1996, 27). Essentially contemplative prayer is about *being* with God and attending to His presence rather than *speaking* with God.

Contemplative Posture: retaining the sense of resting in God in times outside of structured prayer. This includes being with another person with a quiet and listening heart and an inner confidence that God is holding all. "To make prayer . . . a pervasive influence, the director assumes a contemplative posture. This means that the director images the session as being in God and thus continually looks for the evidence of God's presence in the sharing of the directee" (Johnson 2004, 105). This posture is held within the direction session but also extends to all of life.

Silence: stilling the mind and quieting the heart. "[A] way of praying in which a person becomes silent and tries to listen instead of speaking Our effort is to be silent enough to hear, first, the deepest needs of our own hearts and, then, the prompting of the creative Spirit in whatever direction it may indicate" (Kelsey 1976, 120). In this project the purpose of the silence is to be free to attend to the promptings of the Spirit on behalf of another more than for our own deepest

need but the assumption, explored fully in the previous chapter on the formation for directors, is that spiritual directors are also practicing silence in order to hear the needs of their own hearts. The practice of silence does not mean that our minds will be free of distractions and the tendency to follow rabbit trails, however our task in silence is to continually return our attention to God when we notice that it has strayed and to quiet the inner noise as much as we are able to.

Supervision, Permission and Access

I have been accountable to three experienced spiritual directors. Doug Schroeder (MDiv) is a spiritual director trained through SoulStream, the Executive Director of SoulStream, and Co-director and facilitator of The Art of Spiritual Direction SoulStream Training. Pearl Nieuwenhuis (MASF) is a spiritual director trained through SoulStream, Co-director and facilitator of The Art of Spiritual Direction SoulStream Training and Chaplain at the University of Calgary Faith and Spirituality Centre. Rev. Ron Klok (MDiv) is a spiritual director trained through Providence Renewal Centre, and Co-director of The Studion School of Spiritual Direction.

The spiritual directors who participated in this research were approached in person and by phone to find participants. The participants were geographically dispersed, varied in age and gender and had received training through two different spiritual direction training programs. Issues of bias and risk are addressed in the Ethics in Research section of this paper on page 155.

Context

As mentioned in the introduction of this work, I reside in Calgary where I have been a spiritual director for fourteen years and a Pastor for twelve. In October 2016, I began co-directing a new spiritual direction training program in St. Albert, The Studion School of Spiritual Direction, where the desire is to draw participants from many Christian faith traditions. This program has come about in part as a result of the development of the model described in the previous chapter, the program for the formation of spiritual directors.

The experience and practice of silence has been extremely important in my own formation as a Christian, a spiritual director and a discerner. I believe and have experienced that silence is a practice that can have a significant and positive impact on the ministry of spiritual direction. My concern is that, at times, the richness of spiritual direction as prayerful accompaniment is being compromised because of a dearth of the actual practice of silence even when it is endorsed theoretically. Over the past ten years I have become acquainted with many spiritual directors who have received formal training. My observation and opinion, founded on an informal survey with twelve spiritual directors, is that whereas these spiritual directors affirmed the importance of silence (ten affirmed they think it is vital, two affirmed they think it is very important) in eleven cases they either did not practice it regularly in direct connection with direction or they expressed a desire to do so with more consistency. Only one of the twelve spiritual directors surveyed practiced silence regularly immediately before

offering direction. Although this survey was taken from a limited pool of directors and is not a representative sample, alongside my observations and experience as a spiritual director and supervisor, it does give insight into the current practice in my own region and community of directors.

Saint John of the Cross gives some very direct and wise words about the qualities a spiritual director should possess in *The Living Flame of Love* (John of the Cross 1991). He expresses strongly the need for a director to be an experienced pray-er who is familiar with the path of solitude and silence. The director also needs to be attentive to and reliant on the Holy Spirit. He speaks strongly to the fact that the director is at the service of the directee and their role is to encourage and aid them in following the path that God is leading them on.

Thus the whole concern of directors should not be to accommodate souls to their own method and condition, but they should observe the road along which God is leading one; if they do not recognize it, they should leave the soul alone and not bother it. And in harmony with the path and spirit along which God leads a soul, the spiritual director should strive to conduct it into greater solitude, tranquility and freedom of spirit. (Flame 3:46) (John of the Cross 1991, 691)

A spiritual director cannot recognize the work of the Spirit without the capacity to listen and discern. The capacity of the spiritual director to “lead the soul into greater solitude, tranquility and freedom” comes when they themselves have experienced, at least to some degree, this same “solitude, tranquility and freedom.”

The research project was conducted with spiritual directors who practice direction in Canada but are geographically dispersed. The scope of the project

was limited to English speaking directors (although one director has English as her second language, she is very proficient in English) who came from a variety of denominations and church contexts. They received their training through two different programs and had a range of experience as directors. Those who were approached to participate were mature and faithful followers of Jesus and experienced pray-ers with some exposure to the spiritual discipline of silence. They had received formal spiritual direction training, were seeing a spiritual director themselves, and had a minimum of two regular directees. Although my hope was that each one would also be receiving supervision, only two of the four were receiving ongoing supervision. One director was in a peer supervision group and one saw a supervisor one-on-one periodically. Two directors had recently relocated to new cities and had not yet established a regular experience of supervision in their new locations.

All four directors were known to the researcher but none were in relationships where there was the potential for a close personal relationship or a power dynamic to distort the freedom to share their story and tell about their experience with honesty. There was an intentional decision to have directors who had experienced their training in different programs. There was also a desire to have some diversity of gender and age in the directors who participated.

Models and Other Resources

The Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius has been a very influential experience that has shaped the program for the formation of spiritual directors and

this chapter on the role of silence. They have been supplemented by many resources and models on prayer, spiritual formation and spiritual direction. These resources have been encountered and integrated through personal spiritual formation as well as academic and non-academic studies. Many are detailed in my spiritual autobiography as well as the program for the formation of spiritual directors above.

Background from Autobiography and Model of Spiritual Formation

This project is directly connected to the story of my spiritual growth and the process of discerning my vocation as a spiritual director as explored in my spiritual autobiography in chapter two. It is also directly related to my model of formation, the program for the formation of spiritual directors in chapter three. My spiritual journey, from a conversion experience in an Evangelical and activist tradition to joining a church community in the word-centered tradition of the CRCNA, and then doing spiritual direction training in a contemplative and Catholic tradition, has had considerable influence on this project. (See Chapter 2, *Streams of Christian Spirituality*).

Spiritual direction has been practiced in many ways, formal and informal, structured and unstructured, throughout the history of the Christian Church. Currently the value of formal spiritual direction is being discovered within the Evangelical and Reformed traditions. This growing interest has resulted in the need for more trained spiritual directors. As a person situated within the CRCNA

and connected to many evangelical Christians in Alberta I have seen that there is room for a Christ-centered and theologically orthodox program (as expressed by the Apostles and Nicene Creeds) in this province. It is my conviction that alongside the need for an emphasis on theological orthodoxy it is vital to retain the best of contemplative practice from the breadth of the Christian tradition, including silence.

One of the primary gifts and skills required for the ministry of spiritual direction is the capacity to listen well. There are several places in scripture that encourage the people of God to develop their capacity to listen, one of the first and central ones being The Shema of Israel. “Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one. Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength” (Deut. 6:4,5). This call to listen and hear is imperative. In Psalm 46:10a [God] says, “Be still, and know that I am God.” Jesus took time to be quiet in the desert, “But Jesus often withdrew to lonely places and prayed” (Luke 5:16). Martin Laird in the book, *A Sunlit Absence* writes that “silence is not simply about the absence of sound waves. It is concerned with attention and awareness. Silence and awareness are in fact one thing” (Laird 2011, 44). Silence is about paying attention to what is beyond or beneath the physical and mental noise that assails us. It helps us to notice what is going on in our interior life and allows us to grow our capacity for attention to God, ourselves and other people. This has been explored to some extent in Chapter 3 in the sections on retreats and silence and solitude. The importance of silence in our spiritual life and in the

practice of spiritual direction is key for hearing: for listening to God. Discernment as the capacity to notice and distinguish between the voices or influences in our life and to determine which are from God and lead to a free and full life in Him is another necessary gift in the ministry of spiritual direction.

Silence is a practice that historically has been foundational for those who have practiced spiritual direction, starting in the desert tradition and continuing in Benedictine, Ignatian and Carmelite traditions. In contrast to this historical context of spiritual direction in contemplative traditions, silence as a spiritual practice and discipline is not as familiar to many people from Evangelical and Reformed traditions. There was a lack of exposure to and understanding of a contemplative way of prayer in my early formation and there is still a great deal of unfamiliarity with it in the broader community of which I am a part. In chapter two, the spiritual autobiography, I have told how entering into a contemplative way of prayer has been and continues to be transforming for me personally. I would like to see more awareness of the value and importance of the practice of contemplative prayer and silence in the initial and ongoing formation of all spiritual directors.

This project is designed to explore the role that silence has in a spiritual director's capacity to listen well and thus to discern well. As the new training program, The Studion School of Spiritual Direction has started with its first cohort the question of how the practice of silence immediately before direction affects the directors experience is urgent. It has been helpful to show the value of

the practice of silence before direction in order to encourage the practice among training directors.

Other Resources

The following literature on spiritual direction, silence and research methods provide a foundation for the topic of this project. The common experience of storytelling in spiritual direction and narrative research as well as the importance of contemplative and evocative presence in direction are the main emphases of these resources.

A classic work on the ministry of Spiritual Direction, Barry and Connelly's (1986) *The Practice of Spiritual Direction* has become a foundational text in all the Spiritual Direction Training programs I am familiar with (SoulStream, Providence Renewal Centre, FCJ Centre, Anam Chara, The Studion School of Spiritual Direction). It emphasizes spiritual direction as a ministry that is concerned with a person's experience of their relationship with God and the capacity to listen to "a self-communicating God" (Barry and Connelly 1986, 7). Although I have become familiar with many resources on spiritual direction over the last fifteen years, this was one of the first and most formative books I read on the topic. It provides a very comprehensive and readable overview of all the necessary elements of direction including purpose, approach, necessary gifts and skills, and some of the challenges of providing spiritual direction.

A comprehensive book on the supervision of spiritual directors, Maureen Conroy's (1995) *Looking into the Well: Supervision of Spiritual Directors*

addresses the purposes, content, process and skills of supervision in spiritual direction. Although this project does not address the practice of supervision the intention of supervision is connected to the goal of the intervention. Part I:3, "A Contemplative Presence and an Evocative Approach: The Process of Supervision" was particularly relevant. The goal of practicing silence before direction was to increase the spiritual director's contemplative presence and Conroy gives a sound description of what that means. "A contemplative presence refers to a reverent attentiveness to the spiritual director's experiences and God's presence" (Conroy 1995, 40). The prompts for the journal entries were provided by Conroy from Part II:2, "Discernment in the Spiritual Director" and were chosen because they provided help for the director to reflect on their experience of directing.

Janet Ruffing's (2011) book, *To Tell the Sacred Tale* was very helpful in two areas. She briefly outlines the history of spiritual direction in the Catholic context from the desert tradition to the contemporary model. In the contemporary model she describes the approach to spiritual direction as follows, "God's action is primary and necessary. Spiritual directors describe themselves as co-discerners, listeners, companions, midwives, soul-friends, and spiritual companions. We acknowledge that God, or the Holy Spirit, is the guide or director for each person" (Ruffing 2011, 17). Ruffing also emphasizes the centrality of narrative and stories in spiritual direction and explores the natural connections that spiritual direction has with Narrative Inquiry (NI).

Narrative Research in Ministry: A Postmodern Research Approach for Faith Communities by Carl Savage and William Presnell (2008) provided a foundation for the use of story as a legitimate means of research. It describes briefly why narrative research is an appropriate method for ministry research and highlighted for me why it is particularly fitting for use in a project where the ministry is oriented around listening to sacred stories. However, it did not provide very much practical help in planning and executing the research. Tim Sensing's (2011) *Qualitative Research: A Multi-Methods Approach to Projects for Doctor of Ministry Theses* provided a good overview of the process of qualitative research. Chapters 4-6 were helpful in planning for data collection and analysis of the journal entries. McCormack's (2000a and b) two articles "From Interview Transcript to Interpretive Story: Part 1- Viewing the Transcript through Multiple Lenses" and "From Interview Transcript to Interpretive Story: Part 2 - Developing an Interpretive Story" were of invaluable assistance in finding a way to listen to the material collected through the interviews and analyze the data without losing the integrity of the narratives. The material on the multiple lenses is expanded in the Methods section of this chapter.

Project, Methodology, and Methods

This section delineates the field and scope, methodology and methods used in this research. It shows the limits of the research, includes the timetable and gives more information about how ethics were addressed.

Field

The project took place in three cities in Canada. The spiritual directors were from Calgary, Edmonton, and a city in southern Ontario. It occurred over the course of four months; November 2016 – February 2017 and included four spiritual directors. They each saw a minimum of two directees during the project, and some were able to see more. For each director to have more than one directee was ideal, as each direction relationship has its unique qualities. To have some diversity of experience for each director was intended to show that silence was helpful (or not) for the director in a general way. The scope of this project in terms of the time frame and the number of directors was limited so in order to have some diversity it was decided to expand the range of experience to a small degree with different directees. The plan was to have each director journal after a total of eight or nine sessions. This was only possible for one of the directors, who journaled after ten sessions. One spiritual director journaled after five sessions, one journaled after four, and one journaled after three. The timing of the project over the Christmas season as well as one of the spiritual director's relocating in the middle of the project account for the difference between the goal and the reality.

The data was collected from participant spiritual directors, mature Christians with whom I had some personal acquaintance who range in age from early thirties to early seventies, male and female. They represented two different

training programs for spiritual direction and had a range of experience as spiritual directors from two to fifteen years.

The interviews were conducted in face-to-face meetings, either in person or through electronic media, specifically Facetime and Skype. The anonymized journal entries were collected in person or emailed at the end of the study.

Scope

The project focused on whether the practice of silence for a period of ten minutes immediately before the direction session had any discernable effect on the experience of the spiritual director. The time frame of ten minutes allowed for entry into a quiet space without becoming impractical in terms of time commitment. This time frame was determined by my own practice and the guidelines given in the formation program at Providence Renewal Centre. The spiritual directors who participated were given some flexibility in how they practiced the silence but were encouraged to use the silence to become centered and focused before they began the session. The project did not explore the effect of the practice of silence in a more general way, for example, a set period of silence every morning or evening. This was because the question of the project was to ask how directly an immediate period of silence influenced the experience of direction. The project did not explore the effect silence had on the experience of the directee, as this would have had a negative effect on the confidentiality of the spiritual direction relationship. It would also have expanded the scope of the research beyond the capacity of the researcher. The sample size of the research

was too small for broad application but was adequate for the purpose of applying the learning to The Studion School of Spiritual Directions practicum plan.

Methodology

The approach for this project was action research with interviews and journal logs as the two means of collecting data. Narrative Inquiry (NI) was the main methodology used and was particularly appropriate in a study about spiritual direction as both are concerned with telling our stories. As Janet Ruffing writes, “Although spiritual direction has been described in many ways, from my perspective, telling the unique story of God and self – telling one’s sacred tale – is the central activity that occurs in spiritual direction” (Ruffing 2011, 2). Bruce also identifies the method of NI as a very appropriate one for research in a spiritual context. “I have also found that narrative inquiry is a spiritual research practice because in its method it deeply values and affirms the power of life experiences to offer us meaning” (Bruce 2008, 324).

Methods

The interviews were open-ended to semi-structured to allow for the unfolding of the story of the participant’s spiritual life (Sensing 2011, 107; Osmer 2008, 51). In the first interview the spiritual directors were asked to begin by briefly sharing the story of their spiritual journey including a high point and a low point. Then they were asked to share how silence had impacted their spiritual life and how they became spiritual directors. This provided the context and

framework for asking the participants to practice the intervention of silence before spiritual direction. See Appendix L for interview questions and prompts.

Participants were also interviewed specifically about their experience of offering spiritual direction at the beginning of the research project and at the end. Three questions were repeated in both interviews and one additional question was added to the second interview that more directly addressed the practice of silence. The interviews moved from grand tour questions through typical and specific questions (Stringer 2014, 107). The primary interview questions were asked with the subsequent prompts used only when the interviewee needed encouragement to expand their answer. The interviews were recorded and anonymized, then transcribed and analyzed.

The data was collected through two interviews with each participant. These interviews took place in person and using Skype and Facetime. The first interview with Mary (all names of participants are pseudonyms) took place via Facetime on October 20, 2016, with Joshua in person on November 3, 2016, with Miriam in person on November 13, 2016 and with Sarah in person on November 24, 2016. The second interview with Mary took place on Facetime on July 11, 2017. This was much later than planned but the journal entries had been returned at an earlier date. The second interview with Joshua took place by Skype on March 22, 2017, with Miriam by Facetime on March 23, 2017 and with Sarah in person on March 16, 2017. All interviews were recorded and later transcribed by me during the months of May and July 2017.

Initially, in attempting to analyze the interviews I followed Stringers suggestion of breaking down the data into units of meaning and then categorizing, coding and identifying themes (Stringer 2014, 141-145). In the end, this proved to be a very frustrating process and did not fit well with the narrative methodology I had used in the interviews. After doing more research on NI, I consulted with my professor. He pointed out some helpful resources for further exploration. Ann Thakkar, who had completed a DMin project using NI for Carey Theological Seminary, was also a helpful resource at that time (Thakkar 2017). I chose to analyze the narratives from the interviews using Coralie McCormack's multiple lenses.

Analyzing the interviews involved using the multiple lenses identified by Coralie McCormack in the article, *From Interview Transcript to Interpretive Story: Part I - Viewing the Transcript through Multiple Lenses*, "active listening, narrative processes, language, context, and moments" (McCormack 2000a, 282). Active listening involved listening to the narrative multiple times. It asked the questions 'who are the characters? what are the main events?' (McCormack 2000a, 288). Narrative processes looked at how the storyteller told the story. Language was one of the lenses that yielded rich analysis, focusing on frequently used words, words that assume common understanding and noticing how participants talked about their relationship with God, silence and spiritual direction. The context, which typically includes autobiographical and interactional components, was quite narrow in this research because the narratives solicited

were focused on particular parts of the life story of participants. Moments, “recalling significant epiphanies or turning points” (McCormack 2000a, 287) was also an appropriate lens in this research as the questions asked the participants specifically about some of the significant moments in their life with God and their experience of silence and spiritual direction.

After reading through the multiple lenses of McCormack and considering the limitations of the scope of this project, I decided not to include in the findings the stories from the final question of both interview one and two. The final question asked the participants to describe the last spiritual direction session they had offered. These stories were interesting but much of the pertinent data was repeated as the participants had journaled about the same session they described in the second interview. In addition there was the added complication of including the story of the directee which was not intended to be part of the research. Although I felt hesitant to exclude this material I experienced the truth that narrative inquiry’s purpose does shift as it progresses. “Narrative inquiry always has purpose, though purpose may shift, and always has focus, though focus may blur and move. Narrative inquiry boundaries expand and contract, and wherever they are at any point in time, they are permeable” (Clandinin and Connelly 2000, 115). In excluding this material, I have attempted to retain the focus on the central research question by contracting the boundary of the data.

Each participant was also asked to journal about their experience of directing following each spiritual direction session. Prompts for journaling were

provided (see Appendix M) and the expectation was two to three paragraphs (½ page) of journaling for each direction session. The journaling focused on the spiritual director's experience of the session although some entries included information about what happened in the session, that is, what the directee talked about.

The journals were collected at the end of the project and contained a fair degree of variety in format, length of entries and the degree to which each person followed the journal prompts. After reading each journal entry several times and formatting them consistently I followed the suggestion of Stringer to unitize the data. In the case of the journals, in contrast to the narrative interviews, this was a helpful part of the process to identify key words and ideas. I had anticipated the possibility that the journal entries would show some progression over the three months of the research, but in the initial analysis realized this was not the case, as a result I came to the conclusion that the data would be more useful grouped together. As a result, I grouped all the journal entries together after the initial analysis, rather than differentiating by question, time or participant. Once key words were drawn from the units of meaning they were grouped into sub-themes and themes.

Phases and Timetable

Table 12. Timetable for project

When	What	Who	How
Aug 30, 2016	Submitted Proposal to REB	Heather	
Aug 2016	Accountability to Peer Spiritual Directors	Heather – 3 spiritual directors	Approached peer directors to act as supervisors with proposal and copies of consent forms for participants and received agreement from all
Sept 3, 2016	Proposal Approval from Instructor	Dr. Mark Chapman	
Sept 30, 2016	Approval from REB received		
Oct 15- Nov 15, 2016	Approached potential participants in person and by phone	Heather	Gave each potential participant summary of proposal, expectations of participation and consent form and received consent
Oct 20- Nov 30, 2016	Interview One: Gathered narrative accounts about each participants life with God, their experience of silence, their experience of becoming a spiritual direction, and of offering spiritual direction	Heather	Completed in person conversations for Calgary directors, Facetime conversations for non-local directors. Interviews moved from general and grand tour questions to typical and specific questions.
Oct 20, 2016 - Nov 30, 2016	Journal prompt questions given to participants at the time of the first interview	Heather	
Oct 20, 2016 – Feb 25, 2017	Participants practiced silence before each spiritual direction session they offered	Participants	

When	What	Who	How
	and journaled on prompt questions afterwards		
When	What	Who	How
Feb 15, 2017	Completed First Draft of Report	Heather	
Feb 17-28, 2017	Peer Review	Daniel Cho, Paddy Wong	
Feb 26-Mar 26, 2017 Jul 11, 2017	Interview Two: Gathered narrative accounts with some of the same questions as first interview plus one additional question	Heather	Interviews moved from Grand Tour questions to typical and specific In person conversations for Calgary directors Facetime conversations for non-local directors.
Feb 26-May 1, 2017	Collection of Journals	Heather	Journals that were written were scanned by participants and emailed. Journals that had been kept in electronic form were emailed.
May 1 – Jul 15, 2017	Transcribed Interviews	Heather	All interviews were listened to and transcribed, then listened to along with written text of interviews again to confirm the accuracy of transcription
May 1 – Jul 15, 2017	Transferred journal entries	Heather	Entries put into a consistent format and broken down into units of meaning
Jul 30-Sept 17, 2017	Analyzed Data from Interviews	Heather	Interviews were read multiple times with NI processes in mind. They were highlighted with different colour highlight and comments with matching pen colours to notice active listening, narrative processes, language, moments and context of the transcribed interviews
Jul 15-Au 18, 2017	Analyzed Data from Journals	Heather	Journals entry units of meaning were read multiple

When	What	Who	How
			times and coded to identify key words and themes.
Sept 17- Nov 20, 2017	Wrote Final Report	Heather	

Ethics in Ministry-Based Research

Confidentiality was secured by changing names on all written records of interviews and journals. Records of names and pseudonyms of participant spiritual directors along with their signed consent forms have been kept in a secure location separate from notes and interviews. Personal information (age and location) that could be used to identify participants has been obscured to retain anonymity.

All references to directees in journals and interviews retained confidentiality and anonymity for directees through pseudonyms or the use of initials only. Although the inclusion of information about directees is minimal their anonymity has been ensured through this practice.

The spiritual directors approached were peers known to the researcher with freedom to decline to participate. There was no presence of a power relationship to be concerned about in this project because there was no authority over one another or leadership responsibility in this situation. I articulated to participants the hope that the project would be a mutual learning experience. It was also communicated to potential participants that although the researcher

would not include her own experience in the findings she would participate in the same practice of silence as the study participants.

The risk for harm was minimal to non-existent as some practice of silence was already familiar to all participants.

REB approval was granted on September 30, 2016. See Appendix J for the research study permission letter and Appendix K for the research study consent form.

Findings, Interpretation and Outcomes

The outcome of this project is an affirmation that an intentional period of preparation before spiritual direction sessions increases the capacity of spiritual directors to discern the movement of God. It is also a qualified affirmation that silence is a helpful way to prepare. For the most part, the spiritual directors became more grounded in contemplative presence during the direction session through the addition of a period of silence before spiritual direction.

Findings

There were three sources of data for the research project. They are two interviews with each participant and journal entries for each as well. The number of journal entries for each participant varied with the total being 22. Joshua journaled after ten sessions. Sarah journaled after five sessions, Mary journaled after four, and Miriam journaled after three.

Table 13. Sources of data

Sources of Data	Number	Date Range
Interview One	4 Interviews	October 20, 2016-November 30, 2016
Journal Entries	22 Entries	December 2016 - March 2017
Interview Two	4 Interviews	February 26, 2017 – July 11, 2017

Interviews

The first interview asked the participants to share about their life with God, their experience of silence and what drew them to become spiritual directors. They were then asked to tell about what they thought the main purpose of spiritual direction was and how that purpose influenced their approach to direction and to describe a typical session. These stories served as the context into which the practice of silence before direction fit. As Katherine Wells says, “Narrative analysis takes stories as its primary source of data and examines the content, structure, performance, or context of such narratives considered as a whole” (Wells 2011, 7). I have included each participant’s story based on their answers. The stories have been written by me but retain the language and as much as possible the actual words of each participant. I have attempted to deal with the narratives as a whole. The lenses of “language, context, and moments” (McCormack 2000a, 282), were used to determine which parts of the stories would be summarized by me and where it was appropriate to retain the language of the storyteller.

The second interview repeated the questions about the main purpose of spiritual direction and how that affected the approach of the director. It also

repeated the question about how a typical session unfolded. I compared the responses of the two interviews and when there were significant differences between the first and second interviews I have highlighted them in the interpretation section.

The first and second interviews also asked the participants to describe the last session they had given. As I explained more fully in the Methods section, I have not included these stories as they did not provide data specific to the main question of this research and the amount of data was already far more than I had anticipated. When planning the project my intention in asking the spiritual directors to describe a session was to move from generalities to specifics about the experience of directing, however the question I asked was not narrow enough to provide useful data for this project.

The last question of the second interview specifically asked about the value of the practice and whether the participant planned on continuing it. The answers to this question were directly related to the outcome of the research.

Mary's Story

Mary is a pastor and spiritual director. She lives in Ontario and has several directee's who see her regularly.

Life with God

Mary came to faith when she was an adult through a longing to know love more fully. This desire for love was awakened in her through meeting her husband and realizing there was something greater.

I came to the Lord as an adult, I was almost 30. I would say I came out of a strong desire-driven salvation. I wasn't saved out of fear, I wasn't convinced intellectually. I came out of a very deep sense that there is something greater in this world and it has to be God, and how do I connect to this greater thing? And in fact, the way I say in my testimony I wanted to find God and say okay, here I am, you can have me. What is it you want, whatever you want to do with me is fine. I think it was essentially a desire for love, not just to be loved but to also love someone back.

After some years of experiencing a "honeymoon phase of love" Mary began to be very dutiful. She is a person with many gifts and she entered into active ministry where she says,

I think duty and work became primary. I would never say I didn't love God or I lost my connection with the Lord but I would say I probably wasn't growing in that love relationship. Listening prayer became kind of less and less and it was more of a works, like a task oriented prayer. . . . More and more the work of serving God took over the time with God and I think that there was kind of a breaking point for me when I was just disenchanted, I was just ready to quit because I felt this is just like a mill. Like output sermons week after week after week, this treadmill. It was terrible.

Then she tells the story of being saved from this terrible situation through a back injury. She was immobile for weeks and could do nothing. "I was completely levelled." During this time of convalescence, she found a pace of life that allowed her to reconnect with God in a way that was beyond tasks and words, "the other thing that happened during that time is that all I was doing, I was relating to Jesus but almost nonverbally, it was very like an emotional relating, a devotional relating. Like wordless being with Jesus, which I hadn't done for a very, very long time before that." At the end of this time of recovery Mary realized that she didn't want to go back to her old way of functioning, that there

was another pace and way of being. She began to see a spiritual director and to experience new ways of prayer, “contemplative prayer and centering prayer and gospel imagination. All the practices that weren’t familiar to me before.” She was on the point of pursuing intense academic studies when she realized that it was not really in line with her passions. At the suggestion of a mentor she decided to consider spiritual direction training with a sense of caution.

I wasn’t going to commit to anything. And it was on the second day at prayer, Lord if this is something you want me to pursue I need you to tell me very clearly. And it was during a *lectio* exercise the next morning that, it was the woman with bleeding, with blood in the crowd and at the same time . . . Jairus I guess, is trying to make his way to Jesus to have his daughter healed. And what the Lord said to me, “Spiritual direction is like pushing the crowd away and making [a] way for people to Jesus, where they find healing.” Right. It was very powerful. . . . and I said back to the Lord, “well, there is no better vocation in life.”

At this point, Mary decided to do spiritual direction training in order to become a director and when that was complete to continue to focus her learning in the area of spiritual formation.

Silence

When asked about her experience of silence Mary recalled how resistant she was at first,

I would say that maybe, what am I thinking, maybe 5 years, 6 years ago my spiritual director asked me to practice centring prayer for 10 minutes a day and I was very resistant, I saw no point to it whatsoever and I came at it with a very negative attitude I thought ‘that’s fine, I’ll just waste 10 minutes, no big deal’ but I found over just really a week or so, it wasn’t a long period of time, that I was more centred in the whole day, my whole day felt more centred, I was centred. . . . So for me to balance my personality even and to operate out of that space is critical.

In fact, now Mary includes silence as a regular practice in many forms: centering prayer five times a week, two forty-eight hour silent retreats every year, as well as a period of silence during a weekly Sabbath.

Spiritual Direction

When Mary told me more about how she became a spiritual director she shared how she felt she moved into a different stage of her spiritual life through the experience of her back injury. She referred to the book, *“The Critical Journey”* and the 6 stages of spiritual growth described in it. (Hagberg and Guelich 1989)

I think you’re moving out of the pragmatic and into the spirit led far more. Just really opening up and just hearing from God constantly. So that experience led me to actually take spiritual direction, to seek out a spiritual director. I would say it was probably three years of getting spiritual direction and getting into the habit of it that I considered, it was really my mentor’s suggestion who said, “you should really consider training in spiritual direction.” It fits with all the ways I ministered.

Mary told of how her calling to become a spiritual director unfolded and she was led to it very naturally, “I just feel that I walked through this door that opened and I walked through that door and I left that possibility open and I would say the Lord really led me to become a spiritual director.” In fact, she says her primary ministry is spiritual direction, even as a pastor, “to this day, I would say I am primarily a spiritual director. So, the pastoring that I do, I do from the spiritual direction angle.”

She has several directees who come regularly and when asked how she sees her ministry she responded,

You know to me, it is a huge mystery. I feel myself to be a very unlikely type of person to be a spiritual director. Like, I don't feel myself at all qualified. What, what I see happening consistently though, is I just give myself over to the Lord and I listen to the person and I listen to the Holy Spirit with the other ear and every single time God shows up. So, I trust the process, I love the process. . . . I continue to be astounded. . . . I just think that if I am faithful to the process God shows up for the sake of the other person and for my sake because I always meet with God when I am in sessions.

She talked about the story of healing the woman and Jairus from the gospel of Luke and how clearing the way for people to meet Jesus is the primary purpose of spiritual direction, "It's pointing out the clutter and it's pointing out the path, the signs, the direction signs. Like, this way to Jesus. The closer people move to Jesus the more healing there is." Her awareness of the need to depend on the Holy Spirit is primary in the stance she takes toward her practice. "It is a huge reliance on the Holy Spirit. Not offering, you know, my logical ways of solving whatever their questions are. . . . my spiritual direction sessions are tons of listening. I try to speak very little, I ask a lot of questions, guiding questions. . . . So, it's allowing really for me to be a facilitator in the process between the person and the Holy Spirit."

Mary always begins her session with a centering exercise that may last five to ten minutes. It is always unique and allows for the directee to listen. "So, the centering exercise will have some questions or some, you know, something comes out of that. And that is usually the beginning of the conversation. And then we just talk, or mostly the directee talks." Mary takes brief notes during the session for her to keep track of what to go back to. "So, as the person is speaking I

am noticing what stands out and then I go back to it and there's always, God always speaks in some way and some things are significant. We usually end with a sort of a take-away. . . . so, they take notes of suggestions on how to pray or activities or whatever. At the end, I pray for them.”

Mary sees her role primarily as facilitating an encounter between the directee and God. She spoke frequently about the importance of relying on the Holy Spirit and of also of the centrality of listening, both to the directee and to the Spirit.

Joshua's Story

Joshua is a spiritual director in Calgary. He is a retired pastor and missionary.

Life with God

Joshua was raised in a Christian home where personal faith was encouraged and he came to believe in Jesus at a young age, “it was when I was 6 years old when I really came to the first awareness that I was a sinner and I did wrong things and I needed Jesus.” He told how this encounter with Jesus was the beginning of new life. His journey with God continued with a deeper experience of surrender to Jesus just before his teen years, “I remember going to a camp meeting when I was 12 and an invitation was given to give our whole lives to God with no holds barred and that really appealed to me. I wanted to do that.” After this experience of surrender, his family moved and he became involved in a youth

group where he experienced a deepening of faith through Bible study and community.

His desire to learn about the Bible started through these early studies and he decided to go to Bible College for one year which subsequently turned into four years. Joshua met his wife, Joan, at college and together they discerned that they were being called to the mission field. In speaking about this time in his life Joshua has a clear sense of calling and of God leading he and his wife into ministry.

But while we were [at Bible College] the Lord spoke to us and we already knew that we were going to be married at some point soon and He called us into missions and I remember thinking this is a wonderful thing to be called to follow God to I don't know where, where that will be. So, the call to Christian ministry really started with a call to missions in some foreign context somewhere.

Joshua and his wife spent two terms overseas. One experience of desolation that he shared was about the impact of sending their children away to school. "The desolation part of being overseas was sending our kids to school. That was real desolation and still is desolation because two of our three sons were really affected by that to this day. . . . So that has been a tough point for us these days."

On the other hand, Joshua told the story of a time of consolation when they returned to Canada between their two terms so he could complete his Master of Divinity.

[W]hen I was getting my MDiv... we had wanted to get a scholarship from our mission... and they didn't have any money left over for me so we didn't get it. . . . during that time we just had a sense that God wanted

us to go into this, into the MDiv program, and how He supplied. Joan didn't work and we had a sense she shouldn't. We had three sons and our youngest was still very small so we thought that she needed to be at home. And I just did jobs in the summer and preaching at churches when that came up, helping in our local church. But everything, there are so many incidents that happened and God sort of gave us the assurance ahead of time that He was going to take care of us. It was so unusual because we never really had that happen to us before and when we shared that with some missionaries ... before we came back home they said, "You're crazy, you can't go to school." A couple of different people said, "that's not going to happen" and I think they thought we were a little naïve. God met all of our needs during those three years and we got to graduation time and all our debts were paid and we had \$200 in the bank and I was thirty-four years old, three sons and \$200 in the bank.

After coming back to North America again for more studies Joshua and Joan returned overseas to a new country and ministry. There were challenges in his ministry with a feeling that they were encountering a spiritual battle. There was also a sense that the work Joshua was doing, teaching in Seminary, may not have been fully aligned with his sense of vocation and gifting.

I got to realize, I am not an academic, I'm a practitioner. I don't even know if I should be teaching here but I know one thing I should be doing is practicing what I teach. So, we... got a bible study going and saw a few people come to Christ. . . . But I remember the spiritual battle we went through during that time and how our life saver was Brian Doekson and his group from Langley when they came over and worshipped. . . . and we still listen to those songs today because they were so meaningful to us as we drew closer to Christ in the midst of the battle, of souls there, the Catholicism and the darkness, the spiritual darkness, the desolation we saw was just so evident there.

When Joshua and Joan returned to North America they were involved in ministry in two different urban centers in Canada until his recent retirement. In the last few years he has also been a spiritual director and feels that spiritual direction is his primary calling for this season of his life. "God led me into

spiritual direction and as I look back at this now I realize that spiritual direction is really my sweet spot. It is really now where I feel called at this age ... you know I can do this up into my eighties. . . . this is a call at this stage in my life.”

Silence

When asked about his experience of silence Joshua was frank and admits that although he has come to value it in the latter part of his life, he still finds it difficult. “Silence has been important to me, silence is important to me. It’s something I am learning to do in the latter half of my life. . . . I’ve learned, I’ve learned to value silence but it’s been a hard thing for me to do. . . . But there’s always thoughts, there’s always something happening. . . . It gives space for God.”

Spiritual Direction

Moving on to talk about spiritual direction Joshua told how he was drawn to it through a course and retreat. He received some credit from past studies toward the completion of a training program. “I decided to go into taking some courses and into the practicum. . . . And as I started into it, God just kept affirming, this is my sweet spot, this is where, this is what I love doing. . . . God assured me in an inward manner that this is the place for me.”

Joshua tells how the opportunity to listen to stories, to encourage, to listen for where God is at work is what keeps him offering direction.

You know what I love, I love listening to men’s stories. . . . I love to hear their stories. I love to interact with them and ask some probing questions and explore the areas that they bring up in our conversation together....

I've always liked to encourage people and I think the opportunity to somehow be a bit of an encouragement. . . . just listening to somebody is encouraging, just being fully engaged in listening to somebody and I know how I feel when somebody really listens to me. People don't do that very well actually. . . . So, I think that draws me, the opportunity to maybe discern together where God is moving in their lives.

He sees the main purpose of spiritual direction to be helping the directee to become more Christ like. "I understand it to be anything that will help to, will help this person, the directee, to move this person towards becoming more like Jesus Christ. . . . Of course, in that process there are other things that sometimes come up and bubble up in our conversations, that we need to talk about." When Joshua was asked to expand on how the goal of helping someone become more Christ like impacts how he offers direction he responded, "Well, I need to be Christ like. The way I offer myself to this person, I need to be understanding, kind, gracious, honest and open. . . . in my spirit, I want to be gracious and hospitable so that the person would feel, 'Yah, when I am with Joshua, I really feel relaxed, I feel like I can open up and share with him'." Joshua spoke quite a bit about having a welcoming spirit and developing a relationship where the directee feels safe enough to be very honest.

When describing a typical session Joshua shared that there is more of a rhythm or order rather than specific items that he incorporates.

I have sort of got into this rhythm. . . . we greet each other, and then almost immediately I would say, "I would like to share a scripture I was reading this morning, or last week. . . . and then let's take a couple of minutes of silence just to reflect on it." And that's what I usually do, I read it slowly, and then we have some silence and then after a couple of minutes I'll pray. . . . So then, I will just say "this is your agenda, I'm ready to hear whatever you want to share with me today about your

life. . . . And then they'll start to talk and it goes from there. And while they are talking I will ask questions. . . .

I like to keep it to an hour, but sometimes it goes five minutes over. So, I'll just bring it to an end. . . . and then I'll have a prayer. . . .

Miriam's Story

Miriam is a spiritual director in Edmonton. She moved from Calgary to Edmonton in the middle of this project. When the project began she had two or three directees that came to see her regularly in Calgary.

Life with God

Miriam was raised in a Christian church in the US and came to faith at a young age. When she was eight she was baptized and she remembers "knowing it was a lifetime decision and that it was a commitment." She studied Bible in college, and leadership in seminary recognizing "that ministry and leadership was always really important to me and I felt really alive in the midst of that, but the background I went to ordains women for college stuff or to be professors or missionaries but doesn't ordain women for [church] ministry." She describes how this impacted her spiritual journey profoundly and how it led to both a low and high point in her faith.

I kept thinking that would change, so about 6 years ago my husband and I actually left the Christian church that I grew up in, the movement And that was a real low piece for me but also in weird way it has been a high piece for me because in the midst of that kind of unravelling of my early faith tradition I also found a more expansive notion of God and a bigger understanding of what it looks like to love myself and to start to work out what it looks like to be me and my gifts.

This change came in the midst of a challenging time in ministry when the retreat centre she and her husband were working at was in a time of upheaval,

So it was a pretty hard time in a lot of ways for us. And I think it changed my experience of God, because my notions of God, I guess I would say I don't know if I still follow the God that I was raised with. . . . that God really had to die for me and in a lot of ways that felt like a physical death. It changed my notions because that God had a lot to do with judgement and a lot to do with damnation and a lot to do with shame and my notion and understanding of God has a lot more to do with love and is much more connected to the earth and connected to recognizing that we see a picture of God in all things and all people and its shifted in that big time for me.

Silence

Silence is a practice that Miriam has always valued although it was not encouraged in her faith tradition.

Growing up it didn't play as, I guess as, big of a piece. It was always there. I would go out really commonly, I grew up in the country, and I would go out and watch the stars and the fireflies and listen to the bullfrogs and I really always heard God there. That was big, looking back on it I really connected to silence in that way. As soon as I could drive I would also go to church by myself just to sit in the sanctuary. So, there were always pieces of connecting to silence but I didn't really, I wouldn't have ever said that growing up. The church I went to was very much a Protestant work ethic, do, do, do, program driven church and that extended well into my twenties and early thirties.

While Miriam and her husband were part of the staff at a retreat centre in the country she began to see silence as a positive thing and to practice it more intentionally. She shared that "silence has played a really big role in my spiritual development. When we moved back into the city that's when I started going to a director in earnest and silence just became something I craved because I think I had gotten used to the rhythms of it having it at [the retreat centre] in spite of the chaotic nature of our first time there." She goes on to say silence "has just really played a large role in helping me to sit with myself and to listen to who I am, both the baggage as well as the gifts but also to hear God in the midst of that too. And I

think again it's always been there but I didn't know, I didn't realize it until I went to [the retreat centre] the first time."

Spiritual Direction

Miriam's decision to become a spiritual director emerged out of her experience of receiving direction. When she left the ministry situation that was so difficult she was encouraged to see a spiritual director. Miriam tells how spiritual direction became a safe place to process her questions.

[Spiritual direction] was really helpful because I had had two really big losses around God and around faith. One, having left the church that I grew up in and went to college in and the other being at [the retreat centre]. I felt like everything I believed about God was pretty well shattered when we left and I wasn't sure at all that I believed anymore. So direction was a place for me that was safe to still explore Christianity from within and there weren't any other spaces that felt safe to do that at that time.

So, it became a really big safe space for me and a place where I could put everything on the table and not have to worry about any wrong questions or any push back when it came to any of my questions. It would be a place to explore instead of a space where it would be "No, this is wrong." So umm, that was a real gift for me and Jane [her spiritual director] was a real gift for me. . . . And because I wasn't sure what I thought about God and was equal parts, kind of I guess angry at God but also disillusioned by, but also felt close too, and she could hold those contradictions and help me explore them without them having to be contradictions in some ways.

It was Miriam's spiritual director who encouraged her to take training to become a director. At first, she entered the training program more because she was longing for a community than feeling like she wanted to become a spiritual director. Although she did recognize that she was "really passionate about extending safe space to people and giving people opportunities to ask questions

and sit with the questions and to really listen to their own journey and to listen to God in the midst of that.” She said of her experience in the training program,

And probably the first year of my direction course, ah, I was still like, this is really good for me to be exploring some of this but I don’t know if I’ll ever practice direction or be a director. And then somewhere in the midst of that, I think when we really got into practising with the other students in the course, it really started to shift for me because I got to be present to other’s stories and to offer space for them to be present to their own stories and that really shifted the whole thing for me.

The practice of doing spiritual direction was very instrumental in affirming the sense that spiritual direction was a good fit for her desire to extend safe space. She also realized that she had a particular gift in being able to offer that hospitable space to people who had left the church or their faith tradition.

I think one of the things I recognized in direction, both in the course and in directing others is that my role as director is a little different than a lot of directors I know in that most of the people I see or who come to see me are post-Christian. They are wrestling through, they want to have some sort of faith life but there is so much baggage around faith and around Christianity for them they are uncertain how to untangle that. They have walked away from it but not dealt with it and now they want to deal with it or they have been really struggling with how to listen and the shame around that.

When asked about the purpose of spiritual direction Miriam responded, “I guess succinctly I would say providing a safe space to listen to the voice of God. And to discover who you are, what that relationship is between you and God or the divine or however people describe that.” She also talked about how there are not very many spaces for people to do that in a way that really listens to questions without attempting to provide the ‘right’ answers. “I really think that there aren’t very many spaces that allow people of faith or people who are post-faith to really

ask questions about who God is... and I think that's really valuable to have a space that is a safe space to ask questions, to learn how to discern for yourself, and to learn how to listen yourself."

When Miriam spoke about how that purpose impacts how she engages in direction she emphasized again the importance of safe space, "I am not directing so much, it's being present to someone's journey, and it's providing them space to be present to their own journey and to be present to God in that journey." She also talked about the challenge of listening to people who have different ideas and experiences of God "but because I'm really committed to providing safe space and committed to helping people explore their own notions of God, their notions don't have to be mine. I can just hold that space for them and ask questions around that and trust that God's in the midst of it and listen for that as well."

Although Miriam said that she didn't have a typical session, that there was variation depending on the directee, she did identify a movement of four parts. She typically starts with an opening time of silence, which is followed by a poem or prayer. Then the conversation begins with the focus on listening to the directee and exploration of what they bring "usually [sessions] are very question oriented and it's providing space for people to explore their own journey verbally." Then she ends the time with silence.

Sarah's story

Sarah is a spiritual director in Calgary and the director of a community organization. She meets with her directees in the prayer room at her place of work.

Life with God

Sarah was in junior high when a classmate introduced her to Jesus. She was attending a Christian school in Hong Kong but her mother was very opposed to her interest in Christianity. She recalls that “when my mother heard about my interest in Christianity she persecuted me and throughout the persecution I saw how God protected me even I had not committed to Him. So, in fact after the one week of persecution I accepted Christ as my saviour not knowing really much about who he is, although I had been in Christian school since grade one.” She continued to follow Jesus through her school years although she felt she did not grow that much because she was not allowed to attend church.

When Sarah was in University she started to attend church and her mother came to her baptism which happened when she was twenty-one. She described herself as ‘a good Christian’ during her young adult years because she went to church and taught Sunday school, however she realized she did not have a deep or “real relationship” with God. When she started dating her husband she felt that she was sinning and prayed a lot but she still felt she was doing the right things, “But I was still a good Christian, I was truly good, as measured by going to worship service and knowing that I needed to read the bible and then I came to

Canada. . . . and my marriage was kind of tense in that time... during that one year of study I saw how bad I was as a wife, so I saw how inadequate my love was as a wife.” Then Sarah discovered that her husband was having an affair. She describes how she encountered God the same day.

I went to my bedroom and I was worrying about [my daughter], she was 3 at that time, and I heard a voice saying, “She will be okay”. . . . It was the first time that I recognized that God was real. Regarding the voice and eventually what happened that morning. . . . So that was the first time in my whole life that I knew that God was real although I accepted Jesus when I was in junior high. So I became more serious.

Sarah and her husband reconciled and she continued to grow in her faith through bible study, translating the Pastor’s messages and experiencing God’s reality through praying with scripture and receiving dreams. “And then I went to Spiritual Direction course. That was a miracle and how God deepened my understanding, not deepened, widened and deepened my understanding about Him through the course, through the retreats, through the learning.” However, there continued to be struggles in her marriage which ultimately led to divorce.

At that time we were separated. Oh, that was the time when I recognized the real story of my ex-husband, what he had actually done throughout the years and then I became disoriented even towards God. . . . Because I was really angry at God and I tried to walk away from Him, and I asked Him to prove Himself to me that He was real rather than me trying to hold onto Him. It was not a long period of time, maybe just two months, wondering whether even what I believed in God was true. And the end was He proved me true, He proved to me that He was true and He still loves me.

Silence

Sarah’s experience of silence began during the time when she was doing lots of Bible study. She would take twenty to thirty minutes each day to read the

bible while waiting for her daughter to finish swimming lessons, “that was still my deliberate intention to take myself away from busyness and dwell in His word. . . . And that was really good because it helped me to understand His word and there were lots of personal application questions so lots of self-reflection.” Then she was sick for five years and entered into a long period of solitude. “That was a long period of silence . . . but to me that was, I don’t know, the wilderness experience. So, a lot of conversations with God, lots of listening to the wind, looking at the flowers and being encouraged.” She found that season of her life to be one where silence came quite naturally and easily but now that she is working she finds it difficult to have internal silence. She takes time each day at the beginning of work to have quiet with her co-workers at the Christian organization she directs. She also takes time each week for Sabbath and times of retreat for longer periods of silence. Sharing about her last retreat Sarah says, “I went to the silent retreat and I felt that Jesus was asking, that He was telling He wanted to move in and He proposed to me.”

Spiritual Direction

When Sarah was introduced to the idea of taking some training to become a spiritual director, she resisted it. Initially she was introduced to a program at a Catholic retreat centre which she did not want to enter but the idea stayed with her and when she heard about a Protestant training program she felt more comfortable with it. She still felt very cautious though,

I proceeded with the application but even when ... the program director was interviewing me I was checking her out too. And I even check out my spiritual director. So, the first one or two months in the program was really uncomfortable. I was a reluctant but obedient follower of Christ. That made me enter into the spiritual direction program and then gradually I enjoyed it, it became kind of my life saver because I was, I separated [from my husband]... when I was doing the program for 2 years. Yah, it gave me life. And then I started to feel that, yah, and then God actively broke down the walls that I put God in, and those experiences were very powerful, that made me think, hmm, this program is good.

Her gifts were affirmed during the practicum part of the program,

When we were in the practicum then my peers and the group supervisor they gave me good feedback. . . . So that was good. And then I went to work and God gave me the courage to start spiritual direction and so I started doing it and I see a lot of good Christian sisters really struggling with God, with their faith, because they have, just like me before, put God in a box. And so I keep doing it because I think God is much bigger and very loving. . . . I want more of my sisters in Christ to enjoy God because God is big, God is love. Yah, and to enjoy everything I have enjoyed in God. So, that is why I keep doing it.

Sarah expressed how she sees the purpose of direction very simply and directly. “The end is um, they won’t give up on God, they will keep holding onto Him.” She spoke about some of the process of listening and asking questions but comes back to “the end result is they hold on to God in their difficulties. And to know a big God, a loving God.” This end influences how she offers direction because as she says, “So I truly, truly... I feel that the director is a reflection of God. God’s attributes maybe, yah, so ... when I am doing direction I am very aware of that and I try to respond in a way that I think would reflect God’s grace and mercy and trust and faith in that person.”

Sarah identified a clear rhythm of a typical session “We start with prayer, so the directee close the prayers after silence and then we talk. Usually the

directee does lots of talking, I am listening and I ask questions here and there. At times, I will slow them down, ask them to visualize or draw something or pray. . . . And then we wrap up with prayers.”

Journals

A total of 22 journal entries were collected, these were analyzed by dividing the content into units of meaning. Out of the units of meaning, key words or short phrases were identified. These key words were analyzed to see their relationship to each other, then categorised into 74 sub-themes. This was done by returning to the unit of meaning to ensure words were not removed from their original context For instance, words like “open to God” and “desire for God” were grouped together under the sub-theme “desire for God”. The 74 sub-themes were grouped into eight main themes which were derived from the journal prompts. The first prompt “what was the strongest movement?” is reflected in the three themes: Godward, Away from God and Godward and Not. The journal prompt “describe God’s felt presence or presence” is reflected in the themes Absence of God and Presence of God. The journal prompt “reflect on your own presence during the session” is expressed in the themes Present to Directee and Not present to Directee”. The final theme is discernment, this connects to all three prompts but did not fit exclusively in any one of them. The total occurrences of the main themes are represented in Figure 3. In the following description, the themes follow the number of occurrences, smallest to largest.

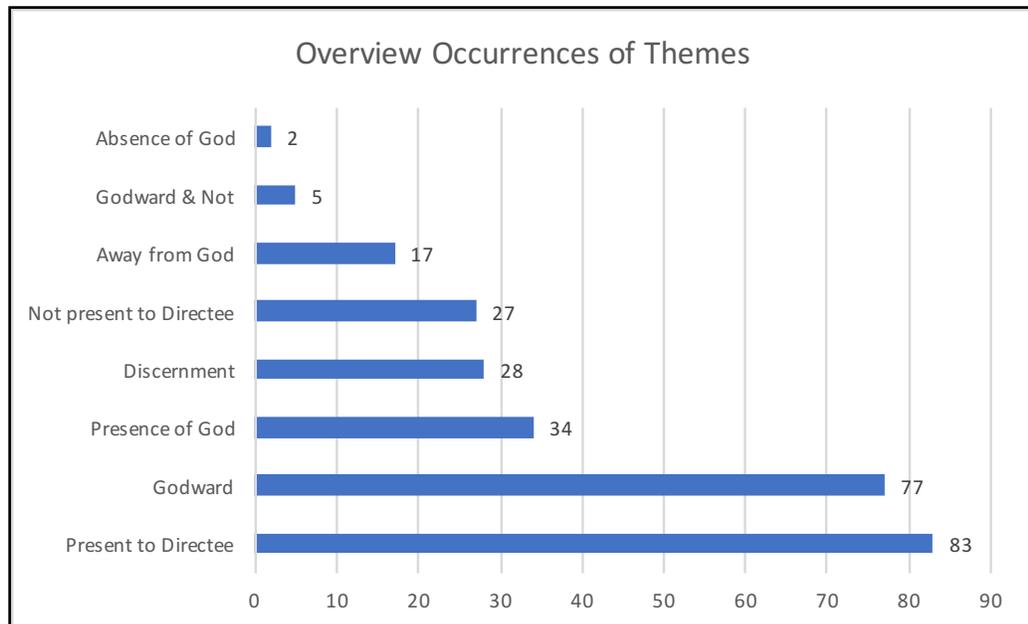


Figure 1. Overview occurrences of themes

The eight main themes are:

- Absence of God: times in the journal reflection of the session when the director sensed a lack of God’s presence in themselves or the session.
- Godward and not: times in the journal reflection of the session where there was a significant sense of both movement away and toward God occurred. This theme is distinct from Away from God and Godward because it notes the occurrences when both were present in the same journal entry where the other themes denote when only one or the other is present.
- Away from God: times in the journal reflection of the session when the director sensed the movement in the session was away from God.
- Not present to Directee: times in the journal reflection of the session where the director noticed they were unable to be fully present to the directee.

- Discernment: times in the journal reflection of the session where the director was aware of discernment going on in themselves or the directee. This theme overlaps with both the Godward and the Presence of God themes but it was distinct enough to require its own category. It indicated specifically that the director was aware of discernment rather than a general sense of movement in the session.
- Presence of God: times in the journal reflection of the session where the director was aware of the sense of God being present to them.
- Godward: times in the journal reflection of the session when the director sensed the movement in the session was toward God.
- Present to Directee: times in the journal reflection of the session where the director was able to be very present to the directee.

The theme Absence of God only occurred 2 times and has no subthemes.

The theme Godward and Not occurred 5 times either indicating there was no movement toward God or away from God or that there was a mix of both. This is represented in Figure 4.2: Godward and Not

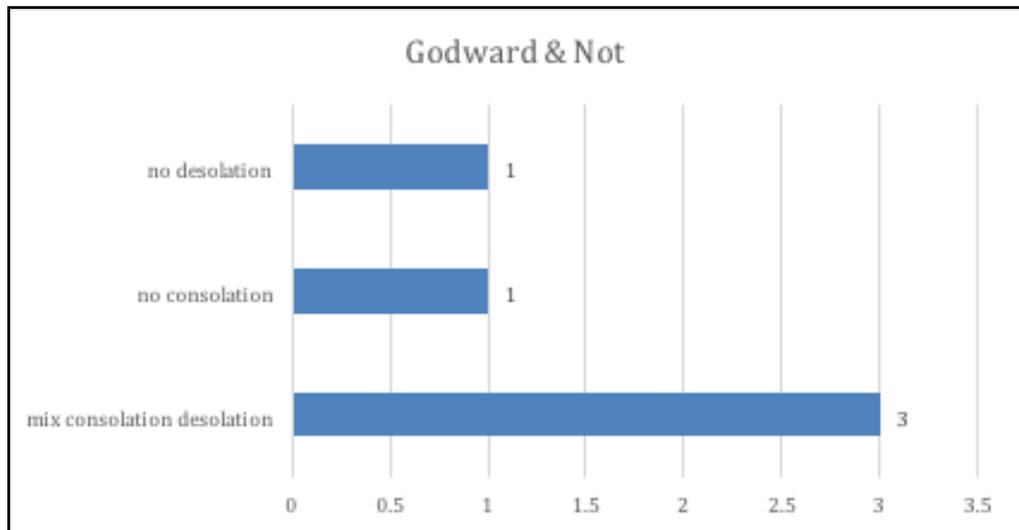


Figure 2. Godward and not

When the movement was away from God the two most common sub-themes were anxiety and desolation. There was also a sense of impatience and a tendency to give advice.

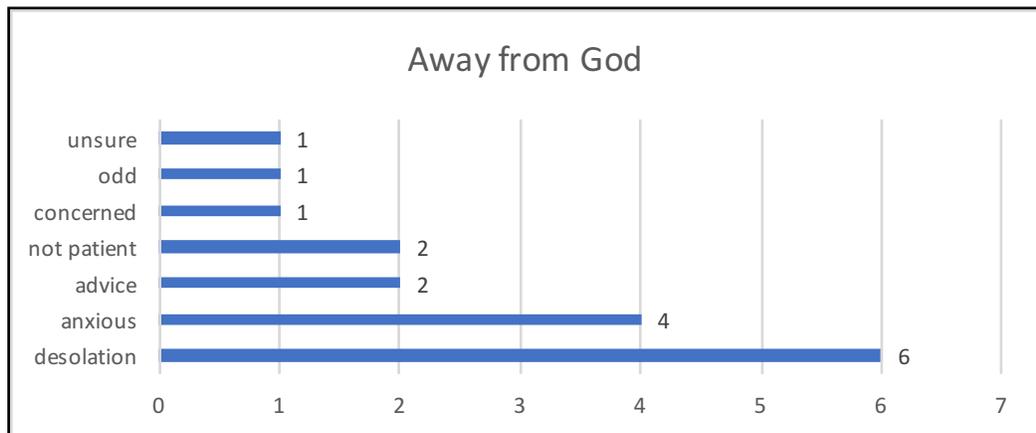


Figure 3. Away from God

The main sub-themes for Not Present to Directee, occurring 4 times each, were experienced as being unsettled, talkative, and fragmented. The sub-themes that occurred less frequently show a tendency of the attention of the director being

either on self or generally distracted rather than focusing on the directee's experience.

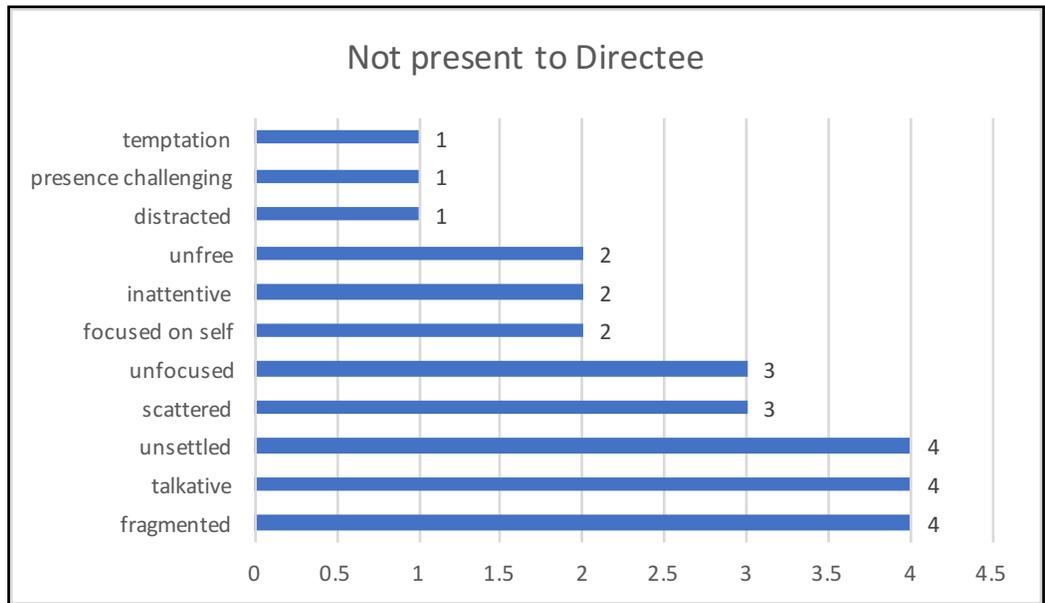


Figure 4. Not Present to directee

The presence of discernment was clear in occurrence of words expressing that the director felt the session was directed by God and the use of the word discernment specifically. There was also an expression of awareness and deeper movement.

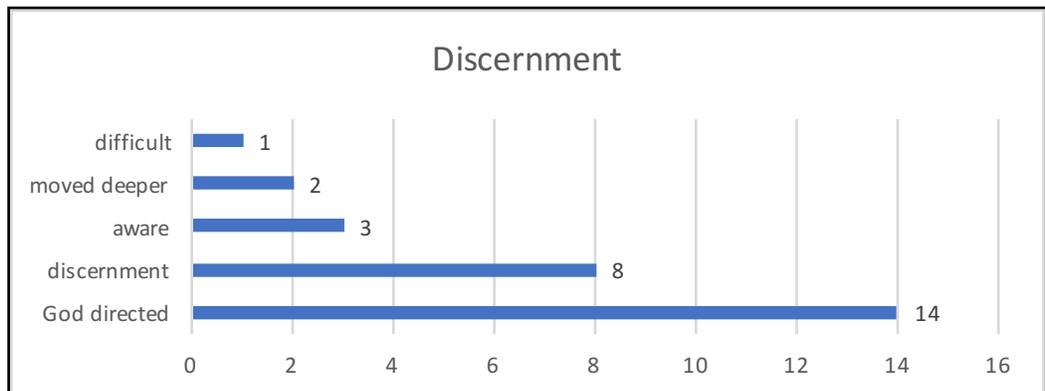


Figure 5. Discernment

The presence of God was described by a few sub-themes which occurred only infrequently, including slowing down, praying, and God centred, but the particular expression of God being present was common, occurring 25 times.

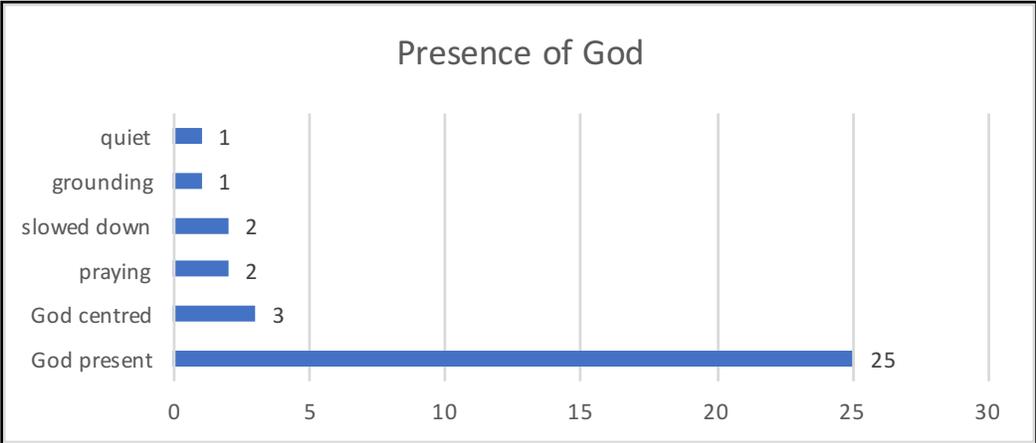


Figure 6. Presence of God

The movement of the session being toward God was described by a total of 77 occurrences in 20 sub-themes. Those occurring 5 or more times are love, joy, trust, consolation and peace.

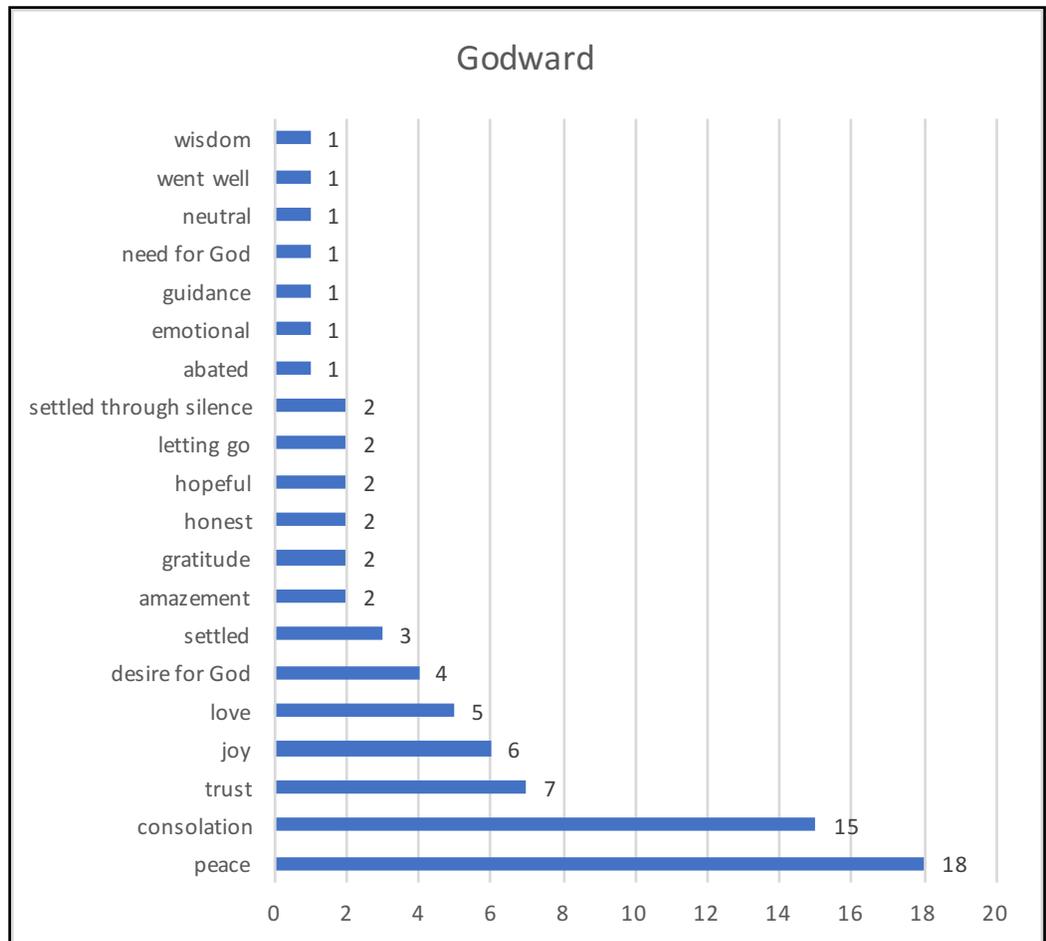


Figure 7. Godward

The last main theme with the most occurrences, 83 in total, with 21 sub-themes, is the directors' indication that they were present to the directee. The sub-themes occurring 5 or more times are no advice, companioning, caring, focused, patient and listening.

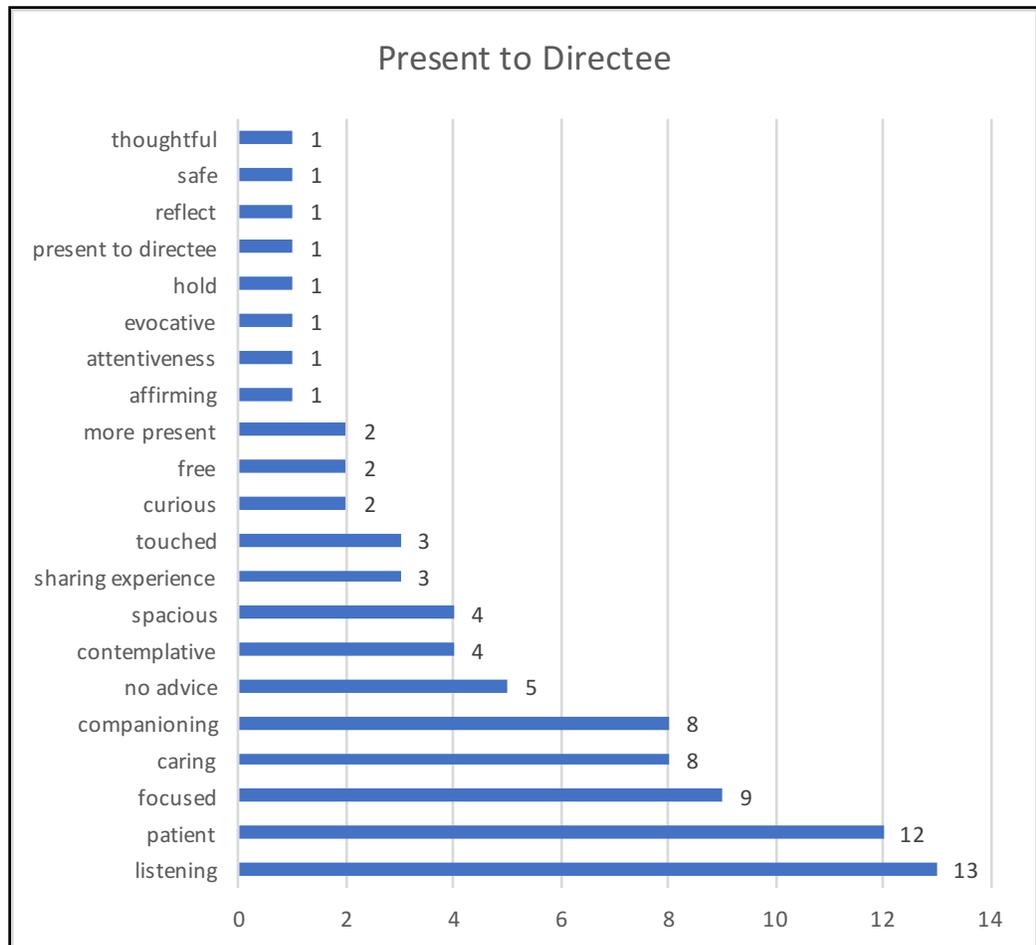


Figure 8. Present to directee

Interpretations

The question of this research is “does the practice of silence in preparation for spiritual direction contribute to maintaining a contemplative stance?” For the purpose of interpreting the data that was collected I would also like to address the question, “did the practice of silence enable or help the director to fulfill the main purpose of direction and be true to the approach they take to direction that they identified in the stories they told?”

The two interviews that took place before the practice of silence and after were compared to see if there were any significant changes in the director’s

understanding of the purpose after the practice of silence. The similarities and differences in response to the question about the purpose of direction will be addressed first.

The experience of silence will also be explored as it relates to the questions in Interview 2, “Do you feel that the silence made a difference over the course of the time that you practiced it? Do you anticipate continuing the practice in a regular way?” and as it relates to the purpose of direction as articulated by each director.

The contribution of the journal entries will then be discussed.

Interviews

The interviews were helpful in assessing the effectiveness of practicing silence. There were both unsolicited and solicited comments on the effect the silence had on the experience of the spiritual director.

First, I would like to look at how the content of the two interviews were similar and different with respect to the purpose of direction that each participant identified and then look at whether the practice of silence before the direction session facilitated that purpose.

Purpose and Approach to Direction Interview One and Two Compared

Generally, there was consistency, although not uniformity, between the answers in the first interview and the second interviews from all the participants. Here I will highlight some of the differences that did occur in the two questions

about the purpose of spiritual direction and the description of a typical session (questions 4 and 5 in interview one and questions 1 and 2 in interview 2). Because there had already been significant conversation about the participant's experience of spiritual direction in the first three questions in interview one how they approached spiritual direction had been addressed to some degree through the responses to these questions. I have accounted for this and have highlighted here the differences in the director's whole response rather than comparing each question only with the corresponding question in the two interviews.

Mary

There was a great deal of consistency in the responses Mary gave in both interviews. The purpose of direction is summed up by her in interview two as "facilitating an encounter between the directee and God. . . . creating space where the directee can just experience God and experience God's leading." Although the language she used in the first interview in response to the same question is focused on healing rather than facilitating, in both interviews her responses around the process and how she offers direction is very consistent. There is an emphasis on the role of listening, asking questions and trusting in the Holy Spirit. In interview one she says, "I just give myself over the Lord and I listen to the person and I listen to the Holy Spirit with the other ear and every single time God shows up." Also in interview one, "It is a huge reliance on the Holy Spirit. . . . So, my spiritual direction sessions are tons of listening... I ask a lot of questions. So, it is allowing really for me to be a facilitator in the process between the person

and the Holy Spirit.” And in interview two, “I see myself as a facilitator between the person and the Holy Spirit, um, so my posture is very much of listening.”

Joshua

As with Mary, Joshua showed a considerable amount of consistency in his responses around the purpose of spiritual direction and the way he approaches it, with some variation in language. In interview one when asked what keeps him engaged in doing direction he responded, “I love listening to men’s stories. . . . I think that draws me, the opportunity to maybe discern together where God is moving in their lives. . . . how to move forward, how to become more like Jesus.” In interview two he said his understanding of the main purpose of direction is “to listen to their stories. . . . seeking to discern God’s presence in their lives. . . . So, I think spiritual direction is really a matter of co-discerning together where God’s presence is and what are the next steps.”

Miriam

For Miriam, the main purpose of spiritual direction was connected very strongly with providing space for people to learn how to discern and for people to explore their relationship with God without judgement. In the second interview Miriam said, “when we really learn how to still ourselves and listen really well and when we do that in a process of discernment with other people who are helping us also listen well, then we are able to, we are able to connect on a deeper level to ourselves but also to God.” In interview one she spoke about the experience of finding safe space in receiving direction being part of the reason she

considered becoming a director herself, “I tend to be a person that asks a lot of questions and that was not ever really affirmed or celebrated for me [in my faith tradition]. But because of that I am really passionate about extending safe space to people and giving people opportunities to ask questions and sit with questions and to really listen of their own journey and to listen to God.”

Sarah

Sarah expressed the most variation of language between the two interviews of all the participants. She articulated very succinctly in interview two that the main purpose was to “accompany people... to walk towards God... to deepen their relationship with God, to help them to discern in the process and reflect God’s character.” In interview one she said “The end is um, they won’t give up on God, they will keep holding onto Him... sometimes it is to help go deeper... the end result is they hold onto God in their difficulties. And uh, to know a big God, a loving God.” The ideas of walking towards God and holding onto God are distinct in the two interviews but held together by the common theme of going deeper into relationship with God.

For all four spiritual directors, the differences which occurred between the two interviews were primarily a matter of specific words or images used rather than a substantial change in meaning. As mentioned, this may be partly because in the first interview there was significantly more conversation about the participant’s experience of spiritual direction, both receiving and giving it, then in the second interview. There was no discernable change in any of the directors

foundational understanding of the purpose of spiritual direction, their personal approach to it, or their description of a typical session.

The Practice of Silence in Relationship to the Purpose of Direction

As I read and reread the interviews a question that surfaced for me beyond the main question of the research, “does silence make a difference in the director’s ability to be present?” was “how does the practice of silence connect to the purpose of spiritual direction?” Or in other words, does the practice of silence help the director ‘achieve’ the goal of direction?

Mary

For Mary, the main purpose of spiritual direction is facilitating an encounter between the directee and God. In her answer to the final question of interview two, “Do you feel that the silence made a difference over the course of the time that you practiced it?” she responded as follows:

So, first of all I would say, um, it, that it, I am thinking in every instance it increased my love for the directee, I just cared a lot more, I was really looking forward to seeing them and I sensed the love that God has for them. And then it was very easy to convey that in the session. . . . And I call it like a silent centre, um there’s a place of stillness that is kind of in the middle of me, um, and it gets bigger or smaller depending on how un-centered I am. Um, and uh, this place of stillness was very prominent, dominant in those sessions. . . . Whereas before, without that I do feel more harried in sessions and I have to use that centering time to center myself, that centering exercise with the directee to center myself whereas I didn’t have to do that when I did the 10 minutes of silence before.

In Mary’s case the practice of silence clearly helped her maintain a contemplative stance and helped her to facilitate the encounter between the directee and God.

Joshua

Joshua articulated the main purpose of spiritual direction to be listening, discerning and helping the directee to move forward in their life with God and Jesus. He also felt that the way he is able to offer hospitable space to his directees allows for that purpose to be fulfilled. In response to the last question in interview two Joshua responded:

I think it was good, it was usually about 10 minutes before that I would be here. . . . Often though I found in the silence I would be looking at my notes from the previous session and kind of preparing myself, 'is there anything I want to refer to, back to the last session?' And maybe that's okay in the silence. Trying to give the session to the Lord. I thought it was good to stop and be quiet for a few minutes before the session actually began rather than rushing into it. So, in that sense it certainly was helpful, quieting my own soul and preparing my own heart in that sense for this time.

Joshua's sense of the value is not quite as clearly tied to the purpose and way of direction that he has articulated but he still affirms that it has been a valuable practice to quiet his soul and prepare his heart to listen.

Miriam

Miriam emphasized the importance of providing safe space and a place to explore relationship with God and notions of God as she spoke about the purpose and the way she offers direction. She said that she did feel more focused and present to the directee when she was able to practice the silence before the session. "I did notice, like whenever I was able to do silence beforehand I felt a bit more focused and more present and even when I wasn't able to do silence

beforehand like, I found that I would often, like, try to squeeze in a couple of minutes beforehand just to make sure I had some time to focus.”

Sarah

Sarah expressed the main purpose of direction as helping the directee move deeper in their relationship with God, in being able to be honest with God and to hold onto Him no matter what the experience of the directee is. Sarah was the only participant who spontaneously told how she prepared for direction before she was asked to participate in the study, “So...before the session I deliberately spend... a few minutes setting up the room. . . . I make sure the flowers are there properly and then the picture and then I light up the candle.” She was also the only one who did not find the practice of taking ten minutes of silence before direction helpful. She said, “I noticed that in the setting of the centre and 10 minutes before the scheduled time somehow doesn’t make me relaxed.” Her experience was that the silence increased her anxiety rather than helped her to be more present and contemplative. Sarah met with her directees in the prayer room at the office where she directs a ministry and she found that at times it was difficult to get away from her work the 10 minutes before. On the other hand, if she was able to and the directee was late she would feel uncertain about whether she should go back to work or continue in silence until the directee arrived. She said, “So my assumption is the 10 minutes is to help me to quiet down and to have an open space, so my thinking is now the client is late, if I go back to work than I disturb the silence then I need to have another 10 minutes but I don’t know when

the client will show up so what should I do now?” The uncertainty and pressure created by the circumstances increased her anxiety rather than helped her to feel calm. It felt like her previous practice of preparing the room beforehand was more conducive to quiet down and open up space.

Three of the four spiritual directors expressed that they found the practice of silence helpful in preparing for meeting with directees. They had a clear sense that the silence enabled them to be more present to the session and more focused in their listening. For the fourth director the silence was not helpful and in fact seemed to create more anxiety as they waited for directees to arrive. They did however express that the practice reminded them of the need for some kind of preparation for spiritual direction.

Journals

In the journals, there is evidence that the times when the directors felt movement toward God, when they experienced God’s presence, were present to their directees, and when they experienced the presence of discernment taking place far outnumber the times when the directors felt the movement was away from God or mixed, when they felt the absence of God or the sense of their own lack of presence to the directee. However, what is not clear, except in a few instances, is the role the practice of silence had in contributing to these experiences.

My hope was that the journals would reflect some progression in the director’s capacity to be present to God and their directee in relation to the

practice of silence but this was not the case. Although the journal entries did not express a progression, some entries did express the value the director derived from the silence. One of Miriam's journal entries described the change she experienced during the practice of silence, "Before [the session] I felt a bit of nervous energy, that abated as I spent time in silence. . . . It took me a little while to settle into silence, I was in my head a bit about the upcoming direction. . . . As I settled into the silence, I began to feel more comfortable about the upcoming session" (Miriam).

Mary's journal was the exception in that she journaled specifically about how she felt the silence impacted her during the session. She expressed twice that she felt God helped her anticipate how the directee was feeling when they came for direction. The second time she identified this experience she wrote, "As is the Jan - 09 case, I believe God was giving me a sense of what my directee was feeling and would bring into the session. I was prepared for it and did not experience anxiety during the session, rather interacted out of a very strong, silent center" (Mary).

Outcomes

The result of the research is that some kind of quieting practice does contribute to maintaining a contemplative stance. The qualification is that the practice may not be a period of ten minutes of silence. The journal entries were intended to be a key factor in evaluating the experience of the directors and the hope was that there would be a noticeable progression over the course of the three

months. This was not the case. The journals were helpful in providing the directors with the opportunity for reflection on a case by case basis, but no progression was discernable. There were comments in some journal entries that indicated the silence was helpful, but these were not present in the majority of the entries.

While analyzing the data from the journals, I realized that the instructions given to the directors and the journal prompts given were not specific enough to be of help in identifying the connection between the director's experience of directing and the practice of silence. If I were able to do it over again I would take into account the different ways people journal and ask for a more consistent format. This would not eliminate differences, but it might mitigate against having such a wide variety that the entries were difficult to compare to one another. In another iteration of this study the practice could be prolonged to see if there would be a sense of progression and a question should be added specifically about how they felt the silence impacted their experience of directing to gain more consistently meaningful data. I did not have a question like this because I thought it could be too leading, however it would have been very helpful to have a more direct account of the director's perception of how the silence influenced their direction sessions.

The fact that three of the four directors experienced a benefit from the practice and expressed explicitly in the interviews that they valued it and would continue it is encouraging. The fourth director said, "[the practice of silence

before direction] reminds me that I need to be quiet enough inside to be a good host. . . . I think I want to do it in a way that I feel relaxed” (Sarah). She was the only participant who did not find the practice helpful. Her recognition that having a regular centring and quieting practice, even if it was not silence, was also helpful for planning the practicum for student directors. Not every practice is a good fit for every director, every situation direction happens in, or every season and part of growing in discernment is connected to hearing how God is inviting each one of us to pray.

I would echo the words of Miriam about the experience, “I think it underscored for me that it is a really good practice to get into and a good habit to get into particularly before you are doing direction because, and at the beginning of direction, because it really allows things to come to the surface and [allows] you to really focus . . . and to really connect” (Miriam).

Conclusion and Implications

I had anticipated that the scope of the research, including the limited number of participants and the short time frame, would be too small for conclusive evidence of the benefit of the particular practice of silence for broad application. I was therefore quite surprised and gratified by the tangible effect that three of four spiritual directors reported. Although the scope was too small to make broad applications it affirmed the value of taking some time to intentionally prepare immediately before spiritual direction. I would like to note that although some contexts where direction is offered or some spiritual directors may not find

a 10 minute period of silence helpful, all the directors in this study expressed the value of some kind of centering practice that helps them move into a deeper listening stance.

The research was adequate to determine that silence before direction will be encouraged as a regular practice in the practicum of The Studion spiritual direction training program. As the trainees gain experience in offering direction they will be encouraged at the conclusion of their practicum to decide on what kind of centering practice will be the most helpful to them personally.

One unexpected and beautiful fruit of this study was the increase in love. “I am thinking in every instance it increased my love for the directee, I just cared a lot more, I was really looking forward to seeing them and I sensed the love that God has for them” (Mary, Interview 2). This was a tangible outcome of the practice for one of the participants and was an encouraging one for me.

In my own practice of silence before direction, I was reminded of the help taking time before a session is to my ability to set aside my own concerns, my own agenda for the directee and my own sense of what ‘should’ happen in a session. The silence before direction has enabled me to be more present to the directee and more receptive to the leading of the Holy Spirit. When I started out as a spiritual director I was much more intentional about taking a time of silence before every session than I have been in the last three to four years. This project reminded me personally of the value of silence before direction and I have

returned to this practice with a great deal of consistency although it is not possible to do it before every direction session.

Although the findings about silence before offering direction are tentative the fact that three of the four directors intend to continue the practice indicates it was helpful in their situations. In light of this, the research may benefit spiritual direction peer supervision groups and may be used in spiritual direction workshops to encourage faithfulness in a regular and consistent practice of intentional preparation before offering spiritual direction.

The interviews produced a large amount of data that could be used to initiate new questions to explore. Some areas of interest for me are: the call to the ministry of spiritual direction and exploration of vocation; the purpose and way of practicing direction; practices that have helped to equip trained directors. These are a few that spring to mind but there could be many more questions to research to provide an increasing understanding of how to build an effective training program.

In future, the scope of the project could also be expanded to see what practices besides silence might be helpful for spiritual directors to practice in direct connection to direction to grow their capacity for contemplative presence. It would also be interesting to study the effect of practicing silence in multiple contexts of ministry and leadership. One area I would like to explore in my church community is the effect of a regular practice of communal silence at the beginning of church meetings.

CHAPTER FIVE:

CONCLUSION

One of my favourite authors, Simon Tugwell, writes,

In our relationship with God, one of the main problems is that half the time we just forget about it. . . . Somehow we must find a way of remembering God that does not work in fits and starts, but that will actually last through the day; a kind of fundamental remembrance of God that will affect our heart, and allow our most unpremeditated and spontaneous behaviour to be transformed, as it were, at the root. (Tugwell 1978, 3-4)

Finding ways that help us gain this kind of fundamental remembrance is the task of spiritual formation. This portfolio touches on many aspects of formation but highlights two; spiritual direction and silence. These practices can never be isolated from other influences in formation, either in our real lives or in a portfolio that addresses them as spiritual direction is connected to our whole life with God and silence is not practiced in isolation but in conjunction with other disciplines.

Morris Dirks, writing to spiritual leaders, primarily in the Evangelical tradition, tells about his discovery of spiritual direction during a crisis in his ministry in the book *Forming the Leaders Soul: An Invitation to Spiritual Direction*. He says, “When my boat landed on the rocks, I discovered that I was blind to a lot of things. Despite my ‘success’ in ministry, I was out of touch with

myself and, though I had sincerely wanted to grow spiritually (and believed I loved God deeply), I was out of touch with God in those unopened areas of my life” (Dirks 2013, 7).

The necessity of looking at the unopened areas of our life is paramount for Christian leaders and ministers and spiritual direction is an ideal place to do so. There is a high risk of harm to ourselves and the communities we lead if we are out of touch with our own interior life and with God. The importance of integration in our life is a theme that is present in this portfolio, integration being that process of being made whole and undivided as persons.

The desire for practices to be integrative and transformational is at the core of all aspects of this work, whether implicit or explicit. The practices emphasized have been transformational for me, and my desire is to see them used in a way that produces mature disciples of Jesus who know him, love him and follow him closely. Barry and Connelly describe spiritual direction as

help given by one Christian to another which enables that person to pay attention to God’s personal communication to him or her, to respond to this personally communicating God, to grow in intimacy with this God, and to live out the consequences of the relationship. The focus of this type of spiritual direction is on experience, not ideas, and specifically on religious experience... of the mysterious Other whom we call God. (Barry and Connelly 1986, 8).

The holistic nature of this ministry is also expressed by Fleming,

The focus of spiritual direction is as wide as a person’s whole life. No activity, no suffering, no relationship, no good action or bad action is exempt from being looked at in spiritual direction. . . . The ministry of spiritual direction is that attempt to help translate our religious experience into a language that we can more readily understand and so more fully respond to. (Fleming 1988, 7)

I want to reiterate at this point the role of spiritual direction in helping us live out the consequences of our relationship with God. Spiritual direction should never be about introspection and a self-absorbed focus on our spiritual life. When practiced well, it helps us live into the fullness of who we are created to be; to be formed into the image of Christ and to live out our vocations in the world in ways that build His kingdom of love and justice.

The story of how spiritual direction and silence have shaped my own life and vocation has been told in the spiritual autobiography. The story of my life with God is much more complex than these two themes encompass but it has led to the place of discovering my vocation as a spiritual director. The autobiography describes how silence and the experience of *The Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius* have contributed to my own formation and healing. It also expresses the role of community, touches on the reality of suffering and acknowledges the all-encompassing love of God as key elements in formation.

The place of desire and indifference is very present in my autobiography. Learning about discernment is part of the formation of any mature spiritual director and one cannot discern well without being aware of these two things. In my early formation desire was suspect, I gained the impression that if I wanted something it was probably not what God wanted for me. Through growing in my understanding of the Ignatian approach to discernment I have come to appreciate the important role of desire in the Christian life. We are made to desire. We are made to want God, relationship, life, joy, peace, purpose to name a few things, but

we also live with the reality of the Reformed theology of total depravity. What was made as originally good has been corrupted and this is true of our desire. This does not mean that we should disown, shut down and shun desire but that we need to be aware of its (often unacknowledged) power in our lives. The concept of Ignatian indifference is that we are freed from our inordinate attachments through the careful examination of the root of our desire and the willingness to give ourselves wholly to God and to follow His will, even if it means moving against what we might want on a more surface level. However, when we are truly longing for God and His way our desire is often aligned with God's desire for us.

My desire to help form mature, faithful and competent spiritual directors is expressed through the program for the formation of spiritual directors. The program includes several periods of silence as a practice that opens space for God to work. "Without silence the word of God cannot bear fruit. . . . As Ambrose of Milan says, 'By silence have I seen many saved, by words none'" (Nouwen 2010, xxv). Silence is one of the many practices that are taught and experienced in the program. It also emphasizes the importance of engaging with scripture and theological themes in ways that are designed to encourage integration through experience and reflection. For example, during the two day retreats the participants spend the whole time in silence, with the exception of group gatherings for prayer and one on one sessions of spiritual direction. They are encouraged to pray with scripture (through the use of *lectio divina* and gospel contemplation) and the meeting with a spiritual director each day is intended to

help them process their prayer. The spiritual direction grounds the experiences of silence and prayer in community; the retreatant is not entirely alone in their experience even in the silence.

The program addresses the skills needed to be an effective spiritual director, in particular active listening skills and the need to be attentive to the multiple levels of listening required in a spiritual direction context – listening to the directee, to the Holy Spirit and to one’s own inner responses. Discernment and the need to develop this gift through reflection on one’s own experience is emphasized. Experience and reflection are repeated refrains in the program – for every spiritual practice and skill, every topic and theme covered there is experience (doing the practice, prayer, skill) and reflection (journaling, group sharing and discussion, spiritual direction, supervision) included in the format. The reason for this is that as the program for formation covers all these areas the overarching goal is growth in wholeness and in the capacity to be present to God, self and the other.

The content of the fourth chapter, the research on the effects of the regular practice of silence before spiritual direction, connects the practice of spiritual direction and the practice of silence more closely together than in the two previous chapters. The stories of the spiritual directors who participated in the research have affirmed the value of the practice of silence in order to prepare for spiritual direction. This affirmation does have a caveat; although 10 minutes of silence may not fit for all contexts or spiritual directors, an intentional period of

preparation before direction is a valuable practice for all directors. The goal of encouraging a regular practice of preparation is that the director can be centred and free to attend fully to the directee during the session, to be free to listen well. Each spiritual director must find their own way to do this but the practice of silence before direction is a good place to begin for all spiritual directors and is being encouraged as trainee spiritual directors begin their practicum in The Studion School for Spiritual Direction.

The method of Narrative Inquiry was a good fit for this kind of project but the limited understanding I had of qualitative research in general and Narrative Inquiry in particular resulted in limitations in the effectiveness of the data collection and analysis. The use of more clearly defined questions in both the interviews and journals would have helped to refine the data collected which would in turn have facilitated data analysis. The limits of time and capacity required that one question asked was not able to be addressed in the findings, interpretation and outcomes. However, the process has been one of learning and growth. In spiritual direction the more open the question, the better but I have learned that in qualitative research, and in NI particularly, the questions need to be narrower in scope and more direct. The fear of leading the participants too much by asking direct questions hindered the collection of really useful data in the journals. I am interested in NI as a way to evaluate ministry effectiveness in my roles as pastor and spiritual director but I need continue to learn more about it in order to prepare adequately at the front end of shaping the research.

There are many more ways that silence in the context of formation can be examined and its value assessed, both for spiritual directors and other ministers. One question that could be explored is connected to the silent retreats in the structure of the program for the formation of spiritual directors. What is the effect of the silence for those who participate in the retreats? This question would need to be broad enough to include the content of the prayer as the silence and prayer cannot be separated. Another area that could be explored in the program is the effectiveness of the strategy of having an integrative approach, where learning and skill development are grounded in experience and reflection on that experience. How is the teaching – experience - reflection cycle conducive to transformation?

The role of telling our stories and having them heard has been another theme that has been present in this portfolio. There are few places in our culture where it is safe to tell our stories and the same may be true in our faith communities. Spiritual direction claims to be such a place and it is therefore of paramount importance that spiritual directors are well equipped to listen. Part of this equipping is learning to tell our own story and to come to a deep awareness of how our stories are held in God's story. Those who come for direction may also need assistance, at the beginning, to tell their stories. They may need to learn how to value their own story and appreciate its sacredness. I believe the role of silence in building our capacity to listen is vital and the practice of silence in some form a necessity for all spiritual directors. When a spiritual director has the discipline and

capacity to be quiet, space is made for another person to find their voice and to articulate the narratives that are meaningful for them. The presence of people who have learned to both tell their stories and listen to them in faith communities then also has the potential to increase the capacity of the community to tell and hear. This is an area where more intentional work can be done in my own ministry as a pastor; how am I facilitating story-telling and story-listening in a congregational context? This is a question that needs more exploration.

One of the primary things I believe a contemplative approach to prayer and spiritual direction offers the Reformed and Evangelical church is a more robust and well-rounded spirituality. The focus on the affective and emotional aspect of our relationship with God is a needed counterpoint to the rational strength and Biblical grounding of these traditions. The emphasis on scripture and the importance of community in the Reformed and Evangelical traditions can be used as the ground from which to build. Contemplative prayer that begins with scripture is a lovely way to move from a head-oriented knowledge of the Bible to learning how to listen with our heart. In light of the skepticism regarding a person's purity of heart and their capacity to hear God clearly it is important to affirm the value of community and introduce the practice of discernment. The use of spiritual direction or another form of one-on-one relationship with a mature Christian can be introduced as a way to explore the awareness and the insights we come to in personal prayer, affirming the experience of the prayer without denying the importance of accountability and the role of the community of faith.

The aim of all spiritual directors should be to keep growing in our capacity to listen well. That means to listen with empathy, to listen with space for the story of another, to listen for God's presence and to listen with increasing freedom from our own attachments. Through the study, prayer, and work of the DMin. program I have become more aware of my own limitations and attachments. Through this awareness and wrestling with myself and God I have also grown in my dependence on the mercy of God. The process of beginning a school to train spiritual directors and working on a DMin has stretched me to the point where I have often wondered at the wisdom of undertaking both at the same time. However, the opportunity to be involved in training spiritual directors had been a longing for many years and the DMin prepared me for this new venture in ways that could not have happened without it. The time, study, prayer, and thought that went into developing the summary of the program in chapter three, which has contributed significantly to content for The Studion, would not have been possible without the discipline and accountability of the academic context of the DMin. In addition, the opportunity to be in the actual experience of training directors and not just thinking about it has helped considerably in grounding this portfolio in real life. The second cohort for Studion will begin with an appreciable amount of wisdom gained, both through the formal studies of the DMin and the practical experience of the first cohort.

APPENDICES

**Appendix A:
A Beginning Reading List**

On Spirituality and Spiritual Practices

- Bass, Dorothy and Susan Briehl, ed. 2010. *On Our Way*. Nashville, TN: Upper Room Books.
- Benner, David G. 2011. *Soulful Spirituality*. Grand Rapids, MI: Brazos Press.
- Foster, Richard. 2007. *Streams of Living Water*. London, UK: HarperCollins Publishers.
- Jones, Tony. 2005. *The Sacred Way*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan.
- May, Gerald. 1991. *The Awakened Heart*. San Francisco, CA: HarperCollins.
- McColman, Carl. 2010. *The Big Book of Christian Mysticism*. San Francisco, CA: Hampton Roads Publishing Company, Inc.
- Mulholland, Jr., M. Robert. 2006. *The Deeper Journey*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press.
- Rohr, Richard. 2003. *Everything Belongs*. Spring Valley, NY: Crossroad Publishing Company.
- Thompson, Marjorie. 1995. *Soul Feast: An Invitation to the Spiritual Life*. Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press.
- Barton, Ruth Haley. 2006. *Sacred Rhythms*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press.

On Prayer

- Barry, William A. 2012. *Praying the Truth*. Chicago, IL: Loyola Press.
- Bloom, Anthony. 1970. *Beginning to Pray*. Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press.
- . 1999. *Living Prayer*. London, UK: Darton, Longman and Todd Ltd.
- Bourgeault, Cynthia. 2004. *Centering Prayer and Inner Awakening*. Lanham, MD: Cowley Publications.
- Chittister, Joan. 1990. *Wisdom Distilled from the Daily*. San Francisco, CA: Harper & Row.

- Foster, Richard. 1992. *Prayer: Finding the Heart's True Home*. San Francisco, CA: HarperSanFrancisco.
- . 2011. *Sanctuary of the Soul: Journey Into Meditative Prayer*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press.
- Kelly, Thomas. 1992. *A Testament of Devotion*. New York, NY: HarperCollins Publishers.
- Kelsey, Morton. 1976. *The Other Side of Silence: Meditation for the Twenty-First Century*
- Laird, Martin. 2006. *Into the Silent Land: A Guide to the Christian Practice of Contemplation*. New York, NY: Oxford University Press.
- Mathewes-Green, Frederica. 2010. *The Jesus Prayer: The Ancient Desert Prayer That Tunes the Heart to God*. London: Darton Longman and Todd.
- Merton, Thomas. 1996. *Contemplative Prayer*. New York, NY: Image Books.
- Nouwen, Henri. 2003. *The Way of the Heart*. New York, NY: Random House Publishing Group.
- Tugwell, Simon. 1978. *Prayer: Living with God*. Springfield, IL: Templeton Publishers.
- Wilhoit, James C., and Evan B. Howard. 2012. *Discovering Lectio Divina: Bringing Scripture into Ordinary Life*. Downers Grove, IL: IVP Books.

On Discernment

- Gallagher, OMV, Timothy M. 2005. *The Discernment of Spirits: An Ignatian Guide for Everyday Living*. New York, NY: Crossroad Publishing Company.
- Nouwen, Henri. 2013. *Discernment: Reading the Signs of Daily Life*. New York, NY: HarperOne.
- Palmer, Parker. 2000. *Let Your Life Speak*. San Francisco, CA: John Wiley & Sons.
- Silf, Margaret. 1999. *Inner Compass: An Invitation to Ignatian Spirituality*. Chicago, IL: Loyola Press.
- Smith, Gordon T. 2003. *The Voice of Jesus: Discernment, Prayer and the Witness of the Spirit*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press.

On Spiritual Direction

- Barry, William A., and William J. Connelly. 1986. *The Practice of Spiritual Direction*. New York, NY: HarperSanFrancisco.
- Barry, William A. 1992. *Spiritual Direction & The Encounter with God: A Theological Inquiry*. Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press.
- Benner, David. 2002. *Sacred Companions*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press.
- Conroy, Maureen. 1995. *Looking into the Well*. Chicago, IL: Loyola Press.
- Dougherty, Rose Mary. 1995. *Group Spiritual Direction: Community for Discernment*. Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press.
- Edwards, Tilden. 1980. *Spiritual Friend*. New York, NY: Paulist Press.
- Guenther, Margaret. 1992. *Holy Listening*. Boston, MA: Cowley Publications.
- Leech, Kenneth. 1980. *Soul Friend*. New York, NY: HarperCollins Publishers.
- Merton, Thomas. 1960. *Spiritual Direction and Meditation*. Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press.
- Nemeck, Francis Kelly, and Marie Theresa Coombs. 1985. *The Way of Spiritual Direction*. Wilmington, DE: Michael Glazier, Inc.
- Pickering, Sue. 2008. *Spiritual Direction: A Practical Introduction*. London, UK: Canterbury Press.
- Ruffing, Janet K. RSM. 2000. *Spiritual Direction: Beyond the Beginnings*. Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press.
- . 2011. *To Tell the Sacred Tale; Spiritual Direction and Narrative*. Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press.

Spiritual Classics

- Thomas A' Kempis. 1989. *The Imitation of Christ*. Edited by William C. Creasy. Notre Dame, IN: Ave Maria Press.
- Brother Lawrence. 1977. *The Practice of the Presence of God*. Translated by John J. Delaney. New York, NY: Doubleday.

Julian of Norwich. 1998. *Revelations of Divine Love*. Translated by Elizabeth Spearing. London: Penguin Classics.

Savin, Olga. 200. *The Way of a Pilgrim ; And, A Pilgrim Continues His Way*. Boston: Shambhala Classics.

Teresa of Avila. 1961. *The Interior Castle*. Translated and edited by E. Allison Peers. New York, NY: Doubleday.

Walsh, James, ed. 1981. *The Cloud of Unknowing*. The Classics of Western Spirituality. New York, NY: Paulist Press.

**Appendix B:
Retreat and Prayer Resources from The Spiritual
Exercises**

The scripture texts suggested for each retreat and the content of the meditations The Three Kinds of Humility and The Contemplation on the Love of God from the Exercises are included in this appendix.

Scripture Texts for Mediation and Prayer

Table 14. Retreat One: Scripture texts

Scriptures	Theme of Scripture
Psalm 139	The nearness of God
Psalm 103	How good God is to humankind
Psalm 104	God the Creator of all things
Psalm 105	The faithful God of our life
Genesis 1-2:4	Creation of man and woman.... very good.
Isaiah 43:1-10	Fear not, you are mine. I love you.
Isaiah 45:7-13	The Potter and Clay
Genesis 22:1-8	Freedom to respond to God's love
Matthew 6:28-34	Do not worry about your life
Luke 15:11-32	The Prodigal

Table 15. Retreat Two: Scripture texts

Scriptures	Theme of Scripture
Genesis 3:1-19	First human sin. . . . and its effects
Psalm 106	The history of sin
2 Samuel 12:1-15	Recognition of sin (David's experience)
Psalm 51	Acknowledging my sin and seeking God's grace
Ezekiel 18:1-32	Personal responsibility for sin
I John 1:5 – 2:17	I am a sinner and saved
Matthew 18:21-35	God's forgiveness
Luke 15	Parables of mercy

Table 16. Retreat Three: Scripture texts

Scriptures	Theme of Scripture
Luke 1:26-28	Annunciation of the Lord to Mary
Luke 2:1-14	Birth of Christ our Lord
Matthew 1:13-18	Flight into Egypt
Luke 2:51-52	The hidden life of Christ from age 12-30
Luke 4:1-13 or Matthew 4:1-11	The temptation of Christ
John 1:35-51 or Luke 5:1-11 or Mark 1:16-20	The call of the Apostles
Matthew 8:23-27	Christ calms the storm
Matthew 14:22-33	Christ walks on water
Matthew 14:13-21	Christ feeds the five thousand
John 11:1-45	The raising of Lazarus

Table 17. Retreat Four: Scripture texts

Scriptures	Theme of Scripture
Matthew 26:20-30	The Last Supper
John 13:1-20	Jesus washes the feet of his disciples
Matthew 26:30-46	From the Supper to the Agony in the Garden
Matthew 26:47–27 or Luke 22:7-23:49	The Passion

Table 18. Retreat Five: Scripture texts

Scriptures	Theme of Scripture
Matthew 28:1-10 or Mark 16	Jesus has risen and appears to the women
Luke 24:13-35	The Road to Emmaus
Luke 24:36-49	Jesus appears to the disciples
John 20:1-10	The empty tomb
John 20: 11-18	Jesus appears to Mary Magdalene
John 20:24-31	Jesus talks with Thomas
John 21:1-19	Jesus appears to Peter and the disciples

Table 19. Focus and Fruit of Prayer The Spiritual Exercises

	Principle and Foundation	Week 1	Week 2	Week 3	Week 4
Focus of the Prayer	Experiencing that we are loved deeply by God and being able to sit in His loving gaze	Knowing ourselves as “Loved Sinners” We feel the brokenness of humanity and sorrow for our sin. We apprehend that in spite of our sin we are held in God’s love eternally.	The gospel stories from the birth of Jesus to his active ministry. We grow in intimate knowledge of Jesus; knowing, loving and following Jesus more. We reflect on our desire – how seriously do we want to follow Jesus?	Experiencing the Passion of Jesus; we try to be present to Jesus in his suffering.	Experiencing the Joy of the Resurrection; we move toward active service in the world motivated by love and the discovery of our calling.
Fruit of the Prayer	An increasing ability to rest in God’s love for us. We also recognize God’s ongoing activity as Creator and our call to participate with Him as co-creators	Recognition of sin leading to sorrow and repentance. Gratitude for the grace of God and a deepening trust in Jesus as our Redeemer.	We come to terms with the cost of following Jesus and with our attachments and limitations. We trust in Jesus’ grace to continue to work in us to bring greater freedom.	We feel the pain involved in love. We experience how sin, our own and others, has resulted in Jesus’ suffering.	WE move toward freedom, growing in the capacity to embrace suffering. We experience gratitude for the cross and resurrection. We grow in our capacity to “find God in all things”

Three Kinds of Humility (Fleming 1996, 129, 131)

Humility lies in the acceptance of Jesus Christ as the fullness of what it means to be human. To be humble is to live as close to the truth as possible: that I am created in the likeness of Jesus, that I am meant to live according to the pattern of his paschal mystery, and that my whole fulfillment is found in being as near to Jesus as he draws me to himself. The following descriptions try to sum up three different general areas on the spectrum of humility as it is actually lived by men and women.

[165] 1. *The First Kind of Humility*. This is living out the truth that is necessary for salvation, and so it describes one extreme on the spectrum. I would want to do nothing that would cut me off from God – not even were I put in charge of all creation or even were I given more years of living here on earth. I know that grave sin in this sense is to miss the whole meaning of living as a human being – one who is created and redeemed to live forever in love with God my Creator and Lord.

[166] 2. *The Second Kind of Humility*. This kind is more perfect than the first, and so we find ourselves somewhere along the middle of the spectrum. My life is firmly grounded in the fact that the reality of being a person is seen fully in Jesus Christ. Just as “I have come to do your will, O God” is the motivating force of his life, so the only real principle of choice in my life is to seek out and to do the will of God my Father. With this habitual attitude, I find that I can maintain a certain balance in my inclinations to have riches rather than poverty, honor rather than dishonor, or to desire a long life rather than a short life. I would not turn away from God, even in small ways, because my whole desire is to respond ever more faithfully to God’s calls and invitations.

[167] 3. *The Third Kind of Humility*. This is close to the other end of the spectrum, since it demands the understanding and action coming from a greater grace-gift. It consists in this: I so much want the truth of Jesus’s life to be fully the truth of my own that I find myself, moved by grace, with a love and desire for poverty in order to be with the poor Christ, a love and desire for insults, in order to be closer to Christ in his own rejection by people, a love and desire to be considered worthless and a fool for Christ, rather than to be esteemed as wise and prudent according to the standards of this world. By grace, I find myself so moved to follow Jesus Christ in the most intimate union possible, that his experiences are reflected in my own. In that, I find my delight.

Contemplation on Love of God (Fleming 1996, 175-180)

The following is excerpted directly from the contemporary reading of *The Spiritual Exercises* contained in *Draw Me Into Your Friendship*, by David L. Fleming pp. 175-180.

Preliminary Note: Before this exercise is presented two observations should be made:

(1) The first is that love ought to show itself in deeds over and above words.

[231] (2) The second is that love consists in a mutual sharing of goods. For example, as a lover one gives and shares with the beloved something of one's own personal gifts or some possession which one has or is able to give; so too, the beloved shares in a similar way with the lover. In this way, one who has knowledge shares it with the one who does not; and this is true for honors, riches and so on. In love, one always wants to give to the other.

Preparation: I take the usual time to place myself reverently in the presence of my Lord and my God, begging that everything in my day is directed more and more to God's service and praise.

[232] At this time, I may find it especially helpful as I enter into this prayer period to imagine myself standing before God and all the saints who are praying for me.

[233] *Grace:* I beg for the gift of an intimate knowledge of all the goods which God lovingly shares with me. Filled with gratitude, I want to be empowered to respond just as totally in my love and service.

The Setting: There are four different focal points which provide the subject for my prayer.

[234] *1. God's Gifts to me.* God creates me out of love and desires nothing more than a return of love on my part. So much does God love me that even though I turn away and make little response, this Giver of all good gifts continues to be my Savior and Redeemer.

All my natural abilities and gifts, along with the gifts of Baptism and Eucharist and the special graces lavished upon me, are only so many

signs of how much God our Lord shares divine life with me and wants to share every more. My consolation: who I am by the grace of God!

If I were to respond as a reasonable person, what should I give in return to such a Lover? Moved by love, I may want to express my own love-response in the following words:

Take, Lord, and Receive

Take, Lord, and receive all my liberty, my memory, my understanding, and my entire will, all that I have and call my own. You have given it all to me. To you, Lord, I return it. Everything is yours, do with it what you will. Give me only your love and your grace. That is enough for me.

[235] 2. *God's self-giving to me.* God not only give gifts to me, but literally gifts me with the fullness of divine life in Jesus. God's only Son is not only the Word in whom all things are created, but also the Word who becomes flesh and dwells with us. Jesus gives himself to me so that his body and blood become the food and drink of my life. Jesus pours out upon me his Spirit so that I can cry out "Abba, Father." God loves me so much that I become a dwelling-place or a temple of God – growing in an ever-deepening realization of the image and likeness of God which is the glory shining out of human creation.

If I were to make only a reasonable response, what could I do? Moved by love, I may find that I can respond best in the words like the *Take and Receive*.

[236] 3. *God's labors for me.* God loves me so much, even entering into the very struggle of life. Like a potter with clay, like a mother in childbirth, or like a mighty force blowing life into dead bones, God labors to share divine life and love. God's labors are writ large in Jesus's passion and death on a cross in order to bring forth the life of the Resurrection.

Once more I question myself how I can make a response. Let me look again to the expression of the Take and Receive.

[237] 4. *God's unceasing giving and gifting.* God's love shines down upon me like the light rays from the sun, or God's love is poured forth lavishly like a fountain spilling forth its waters into an unending stream. Just as I see the sun in its rays and the fountain in its waters, so God pours forth a sharing in divine life in all the gifts showered upon me. God's delight and joy is to be with the ones called God's children – to be with me. God cannot do enough to speak out and show love for me – ever calling and inviting me to a fuller and better life, a sharing in divine life.

What can I respond to such a generous Giver? Let me once again consider the expression of the *Take and Receive*.

I close the prayer with an *Our Father*

Appendix C: Process for Theological Reflection

The purpose of these papers is for you to gather your thoughts and experiences and integrate them into the work of spiritual direction. Each paper will follow the same simple three-part format, as follows:

Part One: Write about, describe, and/or wrestle with your personal experience of the topic: beliefs, values, difficulties and formative experiences. What has been my experience and growth in relation to this subject, and what is my current understanding?

Part Two: Interact with your own theological tradition, with scripture, and/or the suggested readings. What has been particularly helpful to you from your own tradition, from scripture, from the readings?

Part Three: Address the question: How does all of this bear upon the concrete work of spiritual direction? How might this matter when I am sitting with someone who has come to me for spiritual direction? How will my ministry of spiritual direction be influenced by my beliefs?

The parts may be integrated but please address all three.

Each paper is to 3-5 pages long with double spaced lines, and 12-point font. Do not write more than five pages. The brevity of these papers will force us to focus our thoughts on what we need to write, and what is important.

Include a separate title page and a page for bibliography. Please include on your Title Page: Your Name, Date, Topic or Title of Paper, The Studion name. For the purposes of these papers, when you borrow ideas and make direct quotes from other sources you can simply put the author's name and page number in brackets in the text. Some formatting examples have been provided at the end of this document. If you are familiar with another referencing system, please use it.

Papers are due 1 week prior because we would like to distribute and read them. If you can't meet the deadline, please let us know.

The Studion School of Spiritual Direction @2016
Used with Permission

Appendix D: Image of God

Questions for Discussion:

What are some false (or distorted) images of God that are prevalent even (or maybe especially) in the church?

What are some true images of God that we can focus on?

In the Prophets:

Isaiah 49:14-16

Isaiah 54:10

Jeremiah 31:3

Hosea 2:19-20

Through Jesus:

John 14:15-17

John 15:9

I John 3:1

I John 1:16

Divide into pairs and read the following verses to each other. Share briefly what draws your attention.

We need to be attentive to the 'hidden' images that impact how we pray. We may have all the right theological thoughts about God but what we need to discover and uncover is what we really believe about God in our heart. Our attitude will influence all our experience of prayer.

Take some time for personal prayer.

Begin by asking God to show you how you really see Him at this time in your life. If the following questions are helpful use them.

Do we trust that God will hear us? That He will speak to us?

Are we afraid of what prayer will reveal about us and of how God will respond to us?

Are we certain that God will receive us with mercy and extend grace to us in our weakness and need?

What is the feeling we have when we think about the reality that God is present with us in this moment?

Do we feel afraid, comforted, anxious, peaceful, cautious, joyful?
Do we feel that we have to get things in order before we can 'let God in'?
Do we feel ashamed or embraced, forgiven or condemned?

We are created by, in and for love – God is our loving parent waiting for the return of His child who has strayed from home.

“Every person on this earth yearns to love, to be loved, to know love. Our true identity, our reason for being, is to be found in this desire” (May, *The Awakened Heart* 1991, 1).

Healing our false images of God

Meditate on the biblical passages provided above which focus on the loving faithfulness of God, Jesus, the Spirit.

Ask for the grace that God reveal His true self in prayer.

In prayer, let go of old images and open yourself up to new ones.

Image of God and Spiritual Direction

Is our way of being reinforcing a negative image or is it helping directees to come to a positive image?

Language about God can be limiting or open possibilities.

We can help people shed false images and affirm true images. When we recognize the false image it begins to lose power; this can be experienced as an ongoing journey or in a moment of grace.

Appendix E: Discernment I: Ignatian Discernment

Part 1: What is discernment?

To discern is to make a distinction between the voice of Jesus and those competing voices that invariably speak in our hearts and minds. Sometimes these voices are nothing more than our own inner emotional turmoil; sometimes the voices we hear are spoken and unspoken expectation of others; and there is no doubt that sometimes we come face to face with the subtleties of the evil one. (Smith 2003, 12-13)

Why is discernment important?

In the end, only you can discern what God is saying to you.

This is why discernment is such a vital skill in the Christian life. We can discern only for ourselves. Further, we mature in the Christian faith only when we learn to discern for ourselves and thus develop the capacity, and hopefully the courage, to listen and to act in a manner congruent with the voice of Jesus. (Smith 2003, 24)

What is the foundation for discernment?

We can only learn to discern well when we have confidence in the love of God for us.

This is the foundation from which we need to begin and from which the whole ministry of the Spirit proceeds. It is imperative, then, that we attend to this ministry and respond favorably to the prompting of the Spirit of God. We cannot walk in the Spirit unless we accept the love of God poured into our hearts by the Spirit. When we resist this, we resist the Spirit. (Smith 2003, 81)

Growing in our comprehension of God's love

We can all articulate clearly a theology that supports the idea that God loves us but we need to ask God to help us become aware of the places where our theology and our experience are not integrated. In prayer and in life:

- asking God to help us receive His love
- sitting in God's loving gaze
- meditating on Scriptures that assure us of God's love (Is. 43:1-7; Song of Songs 2:10-14; Psalm 103; Romans 5:8; 8:35-39; Ephesians 3:14-21)
- remembering the people in our life who love us
- rejecting self-pity and pride
- embracing suffering
- focusing on all that we are grateful for

Part 2: Interior movements

Interior Movements: movements in our soul either toward God or away from God. The task of discernment is to attend to these movements in order to know which way they are leading.

Attraction and Aversion – it is also important to pay attention to what draws us and what repels us in prayer and in life because this can speak to us about our heart and our relationship with God.

What is our central orientation?

The assumption when we talk about discernment and even spiritual direction is that our core orientation is toward God. If this is not so, we cannot even begin to talk about discernment in a meaningful way.

What is the place of emotion in discernment?

Many of us have been taught to distrust our feelings. Or on the opposite end of the spectrum there are those who have been taught to live by their feelings alone. We each have our own preferences and tendencies when it comes to dealing with feelings.

Gordon Smith writes of how St. Ignatius, John Wesley, Jonathan Edwards all agree that to follow God our affect and our minds both have to be engaged (Smith 2003, 56-57).

Reflection on our feelings requires honesty and experience. It will take some practice to become aware of our feelings if we have learned to devalue them. To deny our feelings leads to inauthenticity and decreased capacity to discern.

Consolation and Desolation

Consolation: movement toward God, an increase of faith, hope, and love, giving the person interior peace. Not necessarily ‘happy’ feelings, but a deeper sense of peace and ‘goodness’ in the soul.

I live strongly and contentedly within the chosen context of my life. Before all, I live in faith and in hope. . . . I see with the eyes of faith, hope, and love; and my Christian perspective makes sense to me. I can readily perceive God’s glory in the world, and God’s working in my own self. . . . Overall, I desire the good and the holy, and I want to love God in everything....

This is ‘consolation’. With it, ordinarily, comes a great sense of well-being. We feel good when we are in consolation, for the most part. But the feeling is not the consolation and ought not be trusted entirely. (Tetlow 1999, 247)

Desolation: movement away from God, anxiety, confusion, fear, self-interest; the opposite of consolation. Sometimes we experience this because of our own lack of discipline or sin, but sometimes without any clear reason.

Desolation is everything the opposite [of consolation]. I get restive within my context. . . . I find myself thinking Christlife somehow illusory, or at least my living in Christ somehow an illusion... I want to see results, and I want things to be easy and pleasant. I want comfort. I find my perspective dramatically shifting, and God seems far away. Less good actions and things, even sinful actions and things, loom large in my perspective now. I find myself struggling to make good decisions and perhaps faltering in keeping up my good habits. This is 'desolation'. All the while, I may feel perfectly fine, perhaps even very good. But generally, when I get into a desolation, I feel downcast and discouraged and even depressed. Here, too the feeling is not the desolation. (Tetlow 1999, 248)

How to Recognize Them – Main symptoms and blessings (Silf 1999, 53-54)

Desolation

- Turns us in on ourselves
- Drives us down the spiral ever deeper into our own negative feelings
- Cuts us off from community
- Makes us want to give up on the things that used to be important to us
- Takes over our whole consciousness and crowds out our distant vision
- Covers up all our landmarks [places we have experienced grace]
- Drains us of energy

Consolation

- Directs our focus outside and beyond ourselves
- Lifts our hearts so that we can see the joys and sorrows of other people
- Bonds us more closely to our human community
- Generates new inspiration and ideas
- Restores balance and refreshes our inner vision
- Shows us where God is active in our lives and where He is leading us
- Releases new energy in us

They are both part of the rhythm of our spiritual life – we should not expect to always be experiencing consolation. In fact, times of desolation, if we truly desire God and our core orientation is toward Him, can lead into times of deeper consolation than we have known before.

Examen

One of the ways that we can pay attention to our interior movements is by using a prayer of reflection at the end of the day or at a set interval of time. It is a prayer that helps us review our day, or a set period of time, to see where grace has been active and we have been open to God, and where we resist God (actively or passively) and need grace. As we practice the examen consistently over a period of time we can notice patterns of where we are open to grace and where we resist it.

A Simple Prayer of Examen

How do I find myself today?

Where am I with God? With Others?

What am I grateful for today? I give thanks for this, recognizing that God is the giver of all that is good.

What am I sorry for today? I ask for forgiveness, knowing that my loving God receives me in my weakness.

Part 3: The Role of Desire

Ordered Desire

Desires that are good – they come from being connected with the truth of our being made in the image of God as uniquely gifted persons and from having our central orientation toward God.

“Our desires, like our moods, have deep, hidden roots, and if we follow these roots to their first origins (given that our directedness is toward God), will we not discover that all our deeply felt desires, at their true source, will be connected with our desire for God himself and our desire to become the person he is dreaming into being.” (Silf 1999, 76)

Ultimately, what makes beauty and love and God fulfill us is that God is our Source as well as our End. The Alpha as well as the Omega. The reason I desire anything at all is that I am made in the image and likeness of a God who is unimaginably passionate desiring. The reason why I yearn for beauty and order – to be and to have them – lies in God who is beauty and order. The reason I want to love anyone at all is that I am made in the image and likeness of the Son of God, who loves with unimaginable completeness. . . . Deep in the core of myself is the creating God who has “come and taken up dwelling” in me to share the mind and heart of love incarnated in Jesus of Nazareth and living now and forever in the Christ.

All of our instincts, all of our desires, finally begin in God’s. Somehow, back down the line somewhere, all our desiring rises out of God’s passionate desiring. . . . We are made for God and for the good, which

participates in the divinity, and therefore we tend toward God and the good. The object of our desiring, then, is the good and the infinite Good.

We can now look at it from the front end, from within ourselves. From this subjective viewpoint, we note first what we actually desire: beauty, order, love, and God. Then we ponder that we desire this way because all of our desiring itself rises out of the all-good God's desiring. (Tetlow 1999, 231)

Two directions of our desire

Inward or Root desires are "desires that delve deep down, seeking hold and nourishment and security" (Silf 1999, 73). Ultimately, they express our desire for union with God.

Outward or Branch desires are "desires that urge me to express myself, to spread out my arms and my heart to the world around me and to my friends and loved ones" (Silf 1999, 73). Ultimately they express our desire to live out our unique 'calling' in this world.

Disordered Desire - Attachments: where we are not free

Attachments can be to things, people, habits, etc. In the extreme they become addictions.

There are potentially many areas where we lack freedom but there are three identified by Ignatius that require particular attention; most of our attachments are covered by these if we look deeply enough.

Reputation – our desire to be respected, acknowledged, 'seen' by others

Wealth – our desire for security, comfort, luxury and pleasure

Power – our desire for influence and control

We may think that we are free from these particular attachments but if we look more deeply they have a strong influence on the choices we make. We need to cultivate the habit of noticing. This is another place where the *examen* can be helpful. We may notice after practicing the *examen* for a period of time patterns in our sin. The places where we notice we are sorry can reveal attachments that may not be 'visible' on the surface.

Example: I may think I am free from an attachment to wealth if I have chosen my career with no expectation of becoming rich. However, if I find myself continually wishing for more financial freedom or regretting what I cannot do or have because of my financial limitations, or if I am constantly worrying about money, I am not actually free of this attachment.

Resistance

Resistance is hesitance, which can be addressed by honesty and trust in the Spirit's movement and our deep desire for God. It may be a No, but a No that is open to more dialogue. Recognizing and dealing with resistance is a necessary part of moving forward into more inner freedom. "It can be a sign that our relationship with God is broadening and deepening" (Barry and Connelly 1986, 89).

When we experience resistance we need to be honest with God and allow him to be present to us in it; to help us understand what is at the root of it and to help us move toward freedom.

Resistance is usually an inner response to something going on within myself and/or in my relationship with God.

Example 1: I may feel that God is inviting me to do something that I don't want to do, or feel unable to do. (Moses; Exodus 3-4)

Example 2: God may be asking me to give up a pattern of thinking, habit or relationship that is distracting me from my relationship with Him. I may truly want to be more faithful in my relationship with God but feel unable to give up that pattern, habit or relationship.

Aversion is usually an inner response to something outside of myself. It is the opposite of being drawn or attracted.

Example 1: When I meet someone for the first time I may feel an inexplicable sense of being repelled by them. I need to be aware that something in me is reacting to them and look at what that might be. I ask for the capacity to open myself to God giving me a more compassionate heart.

Example 2: A particular way of prayer may cause me to react very negatively and I feel repelled by it. Examining this in prayer may bring insight and more openness.

Fear

We all know what fear is, but can we be honest about how fear restricts our freedom?

We must learn to attend to interior movements in ourselves before we can expect to help others in the context of Spiritual direction. This doesn't mean we will be perfect in our discernment but we should be intentional about developing the habits and the capacity to notice.

Indifference or Detachment

Not the kind of indifference that we see and experience so much in our culture. Not the 'I don't care' of apathy. An openness of spirit to what is best, even if it means giving up what *I think I want* or what *I do want*.

Sometimes when we have an attachment, when we become aware of it and can be honest with God about the power it has over us, God can give us the capacity to choose 'against' the attachment. Sometimes, we just have to confess that we are not free and ask God to bring us to freedom in His time and way.

Pathways to Detachment (Silf 1999, 114-115)

The ascetic way

- I am becoming aware that I have these particular dependencies, attachments, compulsions, crutches, idols (or whatever you want to call them).
- I will spend my energy in trying to destroy them.
- If my idols are like the golden calf of the Israelites, then I will attend to the matter of getting rid of my calf.
- I will attempt to achieve freedom in this way.

The way of deepest desire

- I am becoming aware that I have these particular dependencies, attachments, compulsions, crutches, idols (or whatever you want to call them).
- I will not try to get rid of them by my own efforts.
- Instead, I will use the limited energy I have to attend to those things in my experience where I feel right with God, or on solid ground or living true.
- These will become the music in my heart that leads me into the dance and overrides fear.
- I will not spend my energy trying to melt down my golden calf.
- Instead, I will turn my attention to the holy mountain and my journey toward it, with all of God's surprises along the way.
- In this way God will lead me to freedom without my even realizing that it is happening.

Significant differences between the two:

- The first is me centered, the second is God centered
- The first is labored and heavy; the second is light and joy filled
- The first is centered on my fears, the second on my desires
- The first is a burden, the second an adventure

The importance of Reflection

Awareness of the angel of light; the enemy is active and present so we need to test the “spirits”. How do we do so? Some questions to ask ourselves in the process of discernment:

Is the prayer or decision leading to consolation or desolation? Do we have an increased desire for prayer and communion with God, or decreased?

What is the fruit of the experience or the decision? Is it leading to increased faith, hope and love, are the fruits of the Spirit becoming more evident or less?

Is there confusion and anxiety? The enemy uses these to muddy the water; when we experience confusion and anxiety it is helpful to return to prayer and to move beyond our thoughts to centre ourselves in God – entering into meditation and silence may be helpful.

Do we need to talk to someone about our experience or decision to gain some perspective and become aware of blind spots? Urgency is the enemy of good discernment – take time, be patient.

Learning from our Experiences

What was the feeling at the beginning, middle and end? Particularly, as we make decisions, reflect on these ‘phases’ and note how they feel. We learn to discern better as we take time to reflect on our experiences. Although this is particularly true of decision making, it is also true of other situations we discern.

Example in Spiritual Direction: when I felt the desire to share that verse, or say that ‘word’, what was the response? Did it lead to deeper understanding, connection with self or God? Did it produce an obstacle or distract from where the Spirit was moving?

Supervision in Spiritual Direction is a very effective way of helping us reflect on our experience of directing and become aware of the movements within ourselves.

**Appendix F:
Discerning the Dark Night of the Soul, Spiritual
Desolation and Depression**

Excerpt from: The Dark Night, Desolation and Depression:
A Five Session Workshop on The Dark Night of the Soul, Spiritual
Desolation and Depression (Cowie 2017)

What is the dark night?

We are using the expression “night” to signify a deprivation of the gratification of the soul’s appetites in all things. Just as night is nothing but the privation of light and, consequently, of all objects visible by means of the light -darkness and emptiness, then, for the faculty of the sight - the mortification of the appetites can be called a night for the soul. (A 1.3.1)

There are four ‘parts’ to the Dark Night of the Soul. It is comprised of the night of sense and the night of spirit, of which each has an active and a passive element. As St. John of the Cross (in future will be referred to as John) explains and comments on them he attempts to differentiate as clearly as he can, however, there are grey areas, particularly between the passive night of sense and the active night of spirit. Although the model has its limits it will be helpful to try to gather a sense of what John is attempting to describe.

Night of Sense

Table 20. The dark night of sense

Active night of Sense (A Book 1)	Passive night of Sense (N Book 1)
We choose to initiate a more radical imitation of Jesus There is a desire to destroy self-will and be fully aligned with God’s will	The start of the mystical life The transition from self-initiated contemplation to God-given contemplation Great temptations and trials may afflict the person in this stage The person may also experience delight in remaining alone in simple, loving awareness of God

Source: Christian Mysticism: The Future of a Tradition by Harvey D. Egan, SJ

The night of sense focuses on the exterior life, or as the name indicates, the area of our sensory life. This purgation of the senses frees us from inordinate

attachments and makes room for a deeper connection to God. It is the first night, “This dark night is a privation and purgation of all sensible appetites of the external things of the world, the delights of the flesh, and the gratifications of the will. All this deprivation is wrought in the purgation of sense” (A 1:1:4).

In the book *Mysticism for Beginners*, Sister Eileen Lyddon helps to clarify the difference between the active and passive parts of the night,

John tells us that we shall experience the “nighting” of sense and spirit in two ways. In the active nights there is something that we can do through our own efforts, aided by the grace and call of God. But these are interspersed with passive states into which God himself puts us, often against our own will. Here we can do nothing but remain as still and patient as we can, and let him do the work. (Lyddon 1995/2006, 36)

Night of Spirit

Table 21. The dark night of the spirit

Active night Spirit (A Book 2&3)	Passive night of Spirit (N Book 2)
<p>Consists of the willing and perfect rejection of all understanding, experience feeling, imaginings, fantasizing, and even supernatural communications. The Naked Way of Faith Paradox of faith that it is an excessive light that the person experiences as a baffling darkness</p>	<p>The state of experienced contemplatives Does not occur immediately after the night of the senses It begins after a contemplative has spent many years achieving inner freedom, joy and consolation through a very peaceful and profound loving contemplation. However, they are not ‘perfect’ and experience desolations. The total night – a trial, a way, and a light With the contemplative doing and understanding nothing, God strips the intellect, memory, and will of all support. Only pain, grief, and the ardent desire of love for God remain.</p>

Source: Christian Mysticism: The Future of a Tradition by Harvey D. Egan, SJ

As we look at the dark night of spirit the language of mortification continues.

John speaks at length about how the intellect, memory and will need to be purified through darkness and are connected to the virtues of faith, hope and charity. “John reorders a person’s love in the light of God’s prior love. His

emphasis upon emptiness, nudity, and total self-stripping must always be seen in the context of being filled with the God of self-giving love” (H. Egan 1984, 176)

This is the time when we are encouraged by John to stop seeking and even to reject most types of kataphatic prayer as well as aids to prayer. “For various reasons, John rejects systematically and unhesitatingly all secondary mystical phenomena” (H. Egan 1984, 166). John writes much about why in *Ascent*, Book 2;

To reach this essential union of love of God, a person must be careful not to lean upon imaginative visions, forms, figures, or particular ideas, since they cannot serve as a proportionate and proximate means for such an effect; they would be a hindrance instead. As a result a person should renounce them and endeavor to avoid them. (A 2.16.10)

The passive night of the spirit is the most painful and darkest part of the dark night and John articulates its end very clearly,

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. Through this contemplation, God teaches the soul secretly and instructs it in the perfection of love without its doing anything or understanding how this happens. (N 2.5.1)

Although John uses many images and spends much time describing the passive night of spirit, he acknowledges that it is in many ways indescribable. One of the striking images he uses is the log and the flame (N 2.10-12).

John compares the contemplative to a wet, green, dirty log thrown into the cleansing fire. As the log takes in the heat, it gives off noise, smoke, and odor. The more heated the log becomes, the less violent and more interior the purification. One’s deepest, most subtle, spiritual imperfections require an intimate, subtle, spiritual suffering to produce complete transformation. (H. Egan 1984, 192)

Signs of the Dark Night

John talks about signs in multiple places in the *Ascent* and *The Dark Night*. Following are signs that will be important for our purposes of discerning between the dark night, desolation and depression.

1. “The first is the realization that one cannot make discursive meditation or receive satisfaction from it as before. Dryness is now the outcome of fixing the senses on subjects which formerly provided satisfaction” (AC 2.13.2).

2A. “The second sign is an awareness of a disinclination to fix the imagination or sense faculties on other particular objects, exterior or interior. I am not affirming that the imagination will cease to come and go

- even in deep recollection it usually wanders freely – but that the person does not want to fix it purposely on extraneous things” (AC 2.13.3).

2N. The Dark Night has a different second sign:

“The second sign for the discernment of this purgation is that the memory ordinarily turns to God solicitously and with painful care, and the soul thinks it is not serving God but turning back, because it is aware of this distaste for the things of God” (N 1.9.3).

3A. “The third and surest sign is that a person likes to remain alone in loving awareness of God, without particular considerations, in interior peace and quiet and repose, and without the acts and exercises... of the intellect, memory and will” (AC 2.13.4).

Desolation and the Dark Night

This [dark night] desolation is radically different from the one described by Ignatius [spiritual desolation] – in source, content, and consequences. it [the dark night] is a spiritual experience in a fuller sense than the desolation which Ignatius describes; and it never depends on the agency of the evil spirit. It comes at a more advanced stage of spiritual growth, and it is not as common an experience as the spiritual desolation described in the Ignatian rules. To discern this sort of desolation and its sources from the more common one, and to give counsel on how to respond to it when it is discerned, comprise a principal task of spiritual direction. . . . [the dark night] would seem to be frequent enough, especially in its less intense forms, to justify saying that no spiritual counselor is adequately prepared for his work who is not able to recognize it so as to give suitable counsel, or to send the counselee to someone who can do so. (Toner 1982, 271)

All three signs of the dark night must be present – the first without the second could be desolation. “The second sign is an awareness of a disinclination to fix the imagination or sense faculties on other particular objects, exterior or interior. I am not affirming that the imagination will cease to come and go... but that the person does not want to fix it purposely on extraneous things” (AC 2.13.3).

The second sign clarifies that although the person feels that prayer is dry and has no desire to pray in the ways they have known previously, similar to desolation, they are not drawn to anything else, contrary to desolation where they are drawn to “earthly things”. “While these persons cannot find satisfaction in God, neither can they find satisfaction in or experience attraction to anything other than God. It is God or nothing with them. This is one of the main signs by which John discerns the passive dark night from any other desolation, spiritual or non-spiritual” (Toner 1982, 278) (N I.9.1-2).

Toner clarifies that one of the primary differences between spiritual desolation and the passive dark night is the source of the dryness in prayer. In spiritual desolation, it is either our own complacency, resistance, or the bad spirit who tries to persuade us away from God through our feelings. In the passive dark night it is the work of the Holy Spirit purifying us and drawing us nearer to God.

In the passive dark night, the reason why the person cannot use reason and imagination in prayer is not because of anti-spiritual disturbances, but because of infused divine light. . . . God is being experienced beyond all imagination and thought. . . . To the recipient of the divine light all seems darkness and absence of God. It is however, in truth excess of light and of intimacy that leaves the person in seeming darkness and separation. (Toner 1982, 277).

How to accompany one in the dark night:

1. Listening to Saint John of the Cross for accompanying during the dark night:
Indeed, it is a period for leaving these persons alone in the purgation God is working in them, a time to give comfort and encouragement that they may desire to endure this suffering as long as God wills, for until then no remedy – whatever the soul does - or the confessor says – is adequate”.
(A.P.5)

2. Listening to St. Ignatius on accompanying during desolation:
Rule 1.6. (319) Though in desolation we must never change our former resolutions, it will be very advantageous to intensify our activity against the desolation. We can insist more upon prayer, upon meditation, and on much examination of ourselves. We can make an effort in a suitable way to do some penance. (Puhl 1951)

3. Listening to Toner on the importance of discerning the difference as spiritual directors:
John’s recommendation to one in this desolation is exactly the contrary of Rule 1:6 and, as he notes, exactly the contrary of his own advice to those in the active night. He recommends doing nothing, keeping quiet and waiting in the darkness of pure faith, abandoning oneself to God while he accomplishes what he wills. (Dark Night II. 5,3; I. 9,4; I.6-7; 10) (Toner 1982, 277).

Failure to distinguish the two contrary sources of the two contrary kinds of desolation will lead to struggling against the infused light of God as if it were the power of evil, instead of yielding and waiting while the light painfully but lovingly purifies and gives life. (Toner 1982, 281)

Depression and the Dark Night

Lack of interest in life, sorrow and pain are also symptoms of depression. Depression is a very familiar disorder in our Western culture although not always well understood.

John mentions Melancholia and dark humors, which are roughly equivalent to our understanding of modern mental illnesses.

When one is incapable of making discursive meditation on the things of God and disinclined to consider subjects extraneous to God, the cause could be melancholia or some other kind of humor in the heart or brain capable of producing a certain stupefaction and suspension of the sense faculties. This anomaly would be the explanation for want of thought or of desire Because of this danger, the third sign, the loving knowledge and awareness in peace, and so on, is necessary. (A 2.13.6)

Key points

- The main types of depression are: major depression and persistent depression (dysthymia).
- The characteristics of major depression are: despondency, low spirits, inability to feel joy, appetite changes, sleep problems and fatigue, low self-esteem, concentration problems, and thoughts about death.
- Melancholia is a severe form of major depression when one is low spirited with an inability to shift the heavy, dark mood. This is an illness that cannot be altered by external stimuli.
- Persistent depression or dysthymia is when despondency has been shown for at least 1–2 years alongside problems with appetite, sleep, lack of energy, self-esteem, concentration, and feelings of hopelessness. Symptoms can however be diverted by external stimuli.
- Double depression is when a dysthymic also suffers from major depression.
- Manic-depressive illness, also called ‘bipolar disorder’, is characterized by extreme mood swings. A person’s mood oscillates between deep depression and elation known as mania.

Depression, like manic-depressive illness, belongs to a group of illnesses relating to the emotions. In medical science they are known as the ‘affective disorders’, and their onset is often subtle with no obvious external cause. The duration and severity of depression varies.

Figure 9. Mood disorders

Source: Wassermann, 2011, 11.

Here John reminds us of the three signs and that all three signs must be present for the experience of darkness to be a dark night of the soul. Just as the first sign

without the second can indicate desolation, so the first and second sign without the third can indicate depression or mood disorders. See Figure 3 for key points of mood disorders.

Culligan notes that “in the dark night of spirit, there is a painful awareness of one’s one incompleteness and imperfection in relation to God; however, one seldom utters morbid statements of abnormal guilt, self-loathing, worthlessness, and suicidal ideation that accompany serious depressive episodes” (Culligan, O.C.D. 2003, 80)

May indicates that depression and the dark night can co-exist. “My experience is that people often experience depression and the dark night at the same time” (May, *The Dark Night of the Soul: A Psychiatrist Explores the Connection Between Darkness and Spiritual Growth* 2004, 156). May also encourages those who experience depression at any time to seek medical help. Culligan also thinks it may be possible for someone to experience both, “we cannot always presuppose that persons are either in a dark night or in a serious depression. They may be experiencing both at the same time” (Culligan, O.C.D. 2003, 80). He does however acknowledge that normally the feeling of hope is present and is even contagious (Culligan, O.C.D. 2003, 80).

Dura-Villa in the book, *Sadness, Depression and the Dark Night of the Soul: The Medicalisation of Sadness*, does not concur. She writes,

I disagree with May’s (2004) position encouraging the prescription of antidepressants to those going through a Dark Night. . . . Leaving aside what to me seems a phenomenological impossibility – that an individual might experience at once both a Dark Night and depressive episode – by giving a diagnosis of a depressive episode to the Dark Night of the Soul a psychiatrist may delay – or even prevent – the attribution of meaning to take place. (Dura-Vila 2016, 283-284)

It seems that the most important factor to consider here is the element of hope and longing for God. “An essential difference with the pathological religious depression is that in the Dark night of the Soul the individual never ceases to feel hope; nor does it lead to suicide. In the pathological depression – in contrast with the salutary one – there is a feeling of hopelessness” (Dura-Vila 2016, 46).

When there is no hope and particularly when there is suicidal ideation the need for more than spiritual accompaniment is clear. The first step that Culligan suggests is referral to the persons family physician.

Appendix G: Introduction to *Lectio Divina*

Excerpt from “Promoting the Formational Reading of Scripture: *Lectio Divina*” (Cowie, Promoting the Formational Reading of Scripture: *Lectio Divina* 2016)

Questions to begin:

What do you know about *lectio divina*? How familiar are you with the practice?

If you have experienced it in the past, how did it impact you?

What is *Lectio Divina*?

Lectio divina literally translated means, Sacred Reading.

It is a way of reading that makes room for the text we are reading to penetrate our hearts. It is about ‘listening with the ears of our heart’. We move beyond reading for information or entertainment to reading for transformation.

Have everyone read the following quotes, share in groups of 3 what they are struck by.

“The main aim of *lectio divina*, or the formative reading of Holy Scripture, is less an explanation of concepts and more a penetration of the heart” (Muto 2012, 100).

The reading is formative and mysterious, not just rational. In describing *lectio divina* in *The Art and Discipline of Formative Reading*, Susan Muto writes, “It is as if we live simultaneously in two orders of reality: the invisible *and* the visible, the infinite *and* the finite, the eternal *and* the temporal. In short, the integration of heart and mind, of inspiration and incarnation, is the hidden goal of formative reading” (Muto 2012, 101).

“Encountering the word of God in a prayerful way draws us into communion with the One who speaks the word to us. If we are looking for deeper union with God, if we are truly willing to listen to the divine voice and are ready to respond to it, then we are on the right road with the practice of *lectio divina*” (Polan 2003, 199).

Scriptural Foundations:

We are encouraged to meditate on Scripture throughout the Old and New Testaments. Ask individuals to read through the following verses silently and to share briefly what they noticed.

- Joshua 1: 8,9; Psalm 119:9-16; Nehemiah 8:2,3
- 2 Timothy 3:16,17; Hebrews 4:12.

The Word of God is a very important source of knowing God and eternal truth and this Word must be approached with trust in the Spirit to lead us into the truth.

Jeremiah said, “When your words came, I ate them; they were my joy and my heart’s delight, for I bear your name, Lord God Almighty” (Jeremiah 15:16).

This verse is very descriptive of the approach to Scripture that is taken in *lectio divina*. We want the words of God to become a part of us – we chew them, consume them and they feed us.

Formational reading of scripture is a practice that is very ancient and was encouraged in the Reformed tradition. Wesley Kort in the article *Calvin’s Theory of Reading* explains, “Calvin took the discipline of *lectio divina*, the primary locus of which was monastic, and made it a central and defining act of Christian life and identity” (Kort 2013, 191). This has been lost in many places in the last century of a more rational approach to scripture.

What does *Lectio Divina* consist of?

1. Reading
2. Meditating
3. Prayer
4. Contemplation

Although they are communicated as consecutive steps they are not strictly linear, there is overlap and movement back and forth, there is ebb and flow between them.

The Carthusian monk Guigo II writes about the practice of *lectio divina* in the spiritual classic, *Ladder of Monks* where the four stages are described as follows:

Reading is the basis. It provides the material and leads you to meditation.

Meditation is the careful search for what should be desired. It digs deep and reveals the hoped for treasure; but it is incapable of seizing it.

Prayer, directed with all its strength to the Lord, asks for the desirable treasure of contemplation.

Contemplation, finally, comes to recompense the work of her three sisters and inebriates with heavenly dew the soul thirsting for God.

Reading is then an outer exercise. It is the beginner's stage.

Meditation is an inner act of the mind. It is the stage of those who progress.

Prayer is the action of a soul filled with desire. This is the stage of those who long for God.

Contemplation is beyond all feeling and knowledge. It is the stage of the blessed. (Carthusian 2012, 22-23)

Why practice *Lectio Divina* now?

Invite participation and facilitate dialogue to cover the following points.

It is accessible

“The scriptural metanarrative, despite the postmodernist flight from all such overarching designs, holds the promise of a new world in which human persons thrive with their God. Anyone can have access to that multifaceted and open-ended script through *lectio divina*” (Studzinski 2009, 209).

It is transformational

Lectio divina is a valuable practice because it is a way for us to encounter God through His word. The scriptures are central to our faith tradition but too often we approach them to gain information or we approach them as an answer manual. Listening with the heart is a way of being with scripture that needs to be recovered in our lives.

Group Practice: 15 minutes

Psalm 62:1-8

Sharing our experience: 10 minutes

I would like to invite you to share anything that you would like to out of your experience, whether positive or negative, mundane or amazing. Just a reminder that anything shared in this time is confidential. Also, I invite you to leave a short time of silence after someone shares to honor his or her experience.

Appendix H: Miscellaneous Prayer Experiences

Creation as an Act of Love

“It was so much like God to create, to imagine possible worlds and then to actualize one of them. Creation is an act of imaginative love” (Plantinga 2002, 23).

Think about the ‘story of love’ that creation tells - that everything in creation speaks of God’s love for us.

Reflect on God as creator and on His creation. Imagine what it would have been like for God (the Trinity) in relationship within Himself to dream up the incredible variety, beauty and whimsy that is expressed in creation. Dwell on specifics – notice a flower, a bird, a tree, or anything else in creation that draws your attention.



“Apprehend God in all things,
For God is in all things.

Every single creature is full of God
And is a book about God.

Every creature is a word of God.

If I spent enough time with the
tiniest creature-
Even a caterpillar-
I would never have to prepare a
sermon.
So full of God
Is every creature.”

Meister Eckhart

If you would like, write, draw, paint, sculpt, or make something that expresses some of your reflections.

Practicing *Lectio Divina*:
A Personal Experience

The point is not to get through the passage. Once you start, stay with the words or phrases that catch your attention, don't concern yourself with finishing, just spend the time that you have reflecting on the parts that speak to you. Allow some time at the end for reflection and review – you may want to journal. If you would like to continue with the meditation the next time you pray do so as many times as you want to!

Preparation and Prayer

Quiet yourself – Relax - breathe deeply several times.

Express your dependence on God and take time at the beginning for silence to compose yourself to hear.

Reading:

Read the scripture slowly twice, if possible aloud - savor each word.

Meditating:

Read the scripture again and stay with the words that especially catch your attention. Keep meditating on this word or phrase – pay attention to the feelings and thoughts that are awakened.

Praying:

How are you being moved to respond? Talk to God about what you are feeling and thinking. Allow time for God to respond to you.

Continue reading the passage, paying attention to the words that stand out.

Contemplating:

Allow time before ending the prayer to be still in God's presence – enter into a time of silent communion with God.

Rest in the reflection, prayer or insight that has been given.

Close with a prayer of gratitude.

Review

Reflect at the close of the prayer. The purpose of this is to heighten our awareness of how God has been present. Some possible questions to reflect on:

Was there a word or phrase that particularly struck you?

What were your feelings? Hope, fear, joy, despair, peace, trust, discouragement?

What do these feelings say to you?

Are you more aware of God's presence? If so, how are you more aware?

Was there a feeling of God's absence? How do you feel about this?

Repetition

If there has been a significant movement of joy, sadness, or confusion (or any other interior feeling) in a prayer period it may be helpful to return to the passage again. Recall the feelings of the first prayer period.

Use, as a point of entry the word or feeling that was most significant previously.

Allow the Spirit to direct the inner movements of your mind and heart.

Gospel Contemplation:
Encountering Jesus in the Gospels

The most consoling or the most desolate wasteland you have ever walked through – the reality of our experience of prayer is that it can be either of these extremes or something in between. The ‘goal’ is not to receive consolation but to deepen our life in God; this sometimes happens in ways that we are unaware of. When we have periods of silence or prayer that seem dry and ‘unproductive’ we can still trust in God’s grace at work within us. (Sacred Space website, n.d.)

Choose the Gospel passage you will pray with

Quiet yourself – Relax - breathe deeply several times

Declare your dependence on God – recognize that you cannot make anything happen

Ask God for what you want and need in the prayer time – for a grace

Enter the passage by way of the imagination, making use of all your senses
Watch what happens, listen to what is being said, imagine what the smells would have been, the tastes in your mouth the textures on your skin.

First Reading

Enter the story as if you are there

Look at each individual; what does he or she experience?

How do they interact with Jesus?

Become part of the mystery; assume the role of one of the persons in the story

Second Reading

What catches you in the story?

Does the gospel event surface a question? a wondering? a strong feeling?

Stay in the place in the story where you sense some inner movement.

Notice where you are in relation to Jesus.

Third Reading

Talk to Jesus, tell him your feelings, ask him your questions, enter into dialogue with Him

Talk to him about what is on your mind and heart.

Close with a conversation with God about your experience of prayer and if you like the Lord’s Prayer.

The Examen

The *Examen* prayer asks us to reflect on our day with the aid of the Holy Spirit, I look at “my life with God, my life with myself, and with all created reality” (Roccasalvo 2008, 315).

There are five parts to the *examen* prayer:

1) God, thank you.

I thank God for His presence and grace in my life.

2) God, help me to see clearly.

I ask the Holy Spirit to enlighten my minds that I may know where and how I have been on this day.

3) God, help me look at my day.

God, where have I felt your presence, seen your face, heard your word this day?

God, where have I ignored you, run from you, perhaps even rejected you this day?

4) God, help me to be grateful and to ask forgiveness.

God, I thank you for the times this day we have been together and we have worked together.

God, I am sorry for the ways that I have offended you by what I have done or what I did not do.

5) God, help me tomorrow to remember you and live with you.

God, I ask that you draw me ever closer to you this day and tomorrow.

God, you are the God of my life and I desire to follow you — thank you.

Prayer of the Heart and Breath Prayers

Group Experience of Finding your own breath prayer:
Adapted from *Soul Feast* by Marjorie Thompson

Lead into quiet and deep breathing

Invite participants to find a comfortable posture, putting books, etc. on the floor, closing eyes or focusing on the centre of beauty.

– breathe in... breathe out...

SILENCE for one or two minutes

As you continue to breathe slowly and deeply think about the name you call God in your prayer.

Let a name rise to your awareness, if there are several that come to mind, repeat them silently and choose one that feels the most natural for you today.

SILENCE

Hold onto that name in the back of your mind

In the coming moments of silence ask God to bring to your mind what you need or desire from Him

If there are a few things than ask God to help you see what is the root desire that they may have in common

Express this desire or need in a short phrase of one to three words if possible

SILENCE

Combine your name for God with your desire

Spend some time finding the order and phrasing that seems most natural and has a good rhythm

SILENCE

Pray this breath prayer as you wake, as you walk, as you enter into quiet, and whenever you can.

Closing

(Thompson 1995, 48)

Centering Prayer Exercise

1. Find a quiet place to sit. A place where you'll have at least 20 minutes of uninterrupted quiet. Set a timer if it helps you forget about when to stop.
2. Get comfortable. In Christ, with faith, place yourself in God's loving presence. Recite silently a brief prayer giving yourself to God asking that you might be attentive to his presence.
3. Be quiet, be still. It's not unusual during the first several minutes for your mind to be filled with an assortment of thoughts. Do not worry about these thoughts. Acknowledge them and give them to God. Use your centering word or phrase (Jesus, Lord, You are my Shepherd) to center yourself on God. Remember the goal is to be attentive to God's presence. If distractions persist be gentle on yourself. Adele Calhoun suggests that when distractions persist imagine that you are visiting a friend who lives on a busy city street. Because it is a warm day, the windows are opened and all the noise and bustle of life flow into the room through the window. At times, you are conscious of sirens or people talking or children laughing, but your attention is devoted to your friend and you do not let your mind follow the sounds outside. As you meet with Jesus, acknowledge the noisy distractions that pull your attention, but continually return to the moment with Jesus through your prayer word or phrase. (Calhoun 2005, 209).
4. Rest in God's embrace. Trust that something good is taking place even if you're not aware of it.
5. When 20 minutes have passed end your prayer time with a short prayer of thanks to God asking that God may help you stay rooted in his presence for the remainder of the day.

“Remain in me and I will remain in you.” John 15

SoulStream©2008
Used with Permission

Appendix I: Spiritual Direction Supervision Reflection

Reflect after each spiritual direction session and journal on the following:

1. Write a brief summary of the session.
 - How did you begin?
 - What were the main topics of conversation?
 - How did you conclude?

 2. What do you notice about your own reactions and feelings during the session?
 - Can you recall what was happening when you started to have that reaction or feeling?
 - How was the directee describing their relationship with God, with themselves or with others?
 - Recall and journal about all different kinds of feelings you experienced—both positive and negative.
 - If there was a specific phrase, word or action that caused a strong reaction within you write down the particulars.
 - Where did your strongest reactions occur?

 3. When were you aware of God's presence in the directee?

 4. When were you aware of God's presence in yourself?

 5. What was your manner of relating to the directee?
 - Can you recall your own body language or facial expressions?
 - Were you able to offer hospitable space?
 - What was the quality of your contemplative presence?

 6. What have you learned about yourself as a director from this session?
Examples: Areas of discomfort, doubt, concern, confusion, or resistance. Areas of giftedness, grace, peace or wisdom.

 7. What strengths and weaknesses were evident in your responses?

 8. What listening skills do you recall using? What skills do you feel you need to grow in?

 9. What do you want to explore further with a supervisor?
- The Studion School of Spiritual Direction @2017
Used with Permission

**Appendix J:
Research Study Permission Letter**

The Practice of Silence in Preparation for Spiritual Direction

My name is Heather Cowie and I am a student at Tyndale University conducting a study on silence and spiritual direction for a Doctor of Ministry in Spiritual Formation. My telephone number is 403-510-8309 and email is heather.cowie@tyndale.ca. My professor is Dr. Mark Chapman, his email is mchapman@tyndale.ca and phone # is (416) 226-6620 x2602. This project has been reviewed by the Tyndale Research Ethics Board and has received approval. Questions about Tyndale's Research Ethics Policy can be directed to REB@tyndale.ca.

I am accountable to:

Doug Schroeder (MDiv): Spiritual Director trained through SoulStream, Executive Director of Soul Stream, Co-director and facilitator of The Art of Spiritual Direction SoulStream Training .(587) 223-2868; dougkschroeder@gmail.com

Pearl Nieuwenhuis (MASF): Spiritual Director trained through SoulStream, Co-director and facilitator of The Art of Spiritual Direction SoulStream Training; Chaplain at the University of Calgary Faith and Spirituality Centre. (403) 243-2955; nieuwenhuis@live.ca

Rev. Ron Klok (MDiv): Spiritual Director trained through Providence Renewal Centre, Interim Pastor at Neerlandia CRC, and Co-director of The Studion School of Spiritual Direction. (780) 905-4740; rev.klok@gmail.com

You may contact any of the above with questions or concerns.

The purpose of the research is to study the effect the regular practice of silence before spiritual direction sessions has on the experience of the spiritual director.

If you consent, you will be asked to participate in one interview at the beginning of the study. You will practice silence for ten minutes before each spiritual direction session and journal after each spiritual direction session. You will give this journal or a copy of it to me. You will also participate in a second interview at the end of the study. I will audio-record the interviews, which will then be transcribed by me. The study will run from late September to the end of December. The first interview will take 1 ½ - 2 hours and the second interview will take approximately 50-60 minutes.

Your participation in the study is completely voluntary. If you choose to participate, you may still refuse to answer any questions that you do not wish to answer. You may also withdraw from the study at any time without consequence. You are not waiving any legal rights by participating.

There are no known risks associated with this study. However, it is possible that you might feel discomfort in the course of conversation. If this happens, please inform me promptly.

While there is no guaranteed benefit, it is possible that you will find the practice of silence helpful in your spiritual direction ministry. You may also find the conversation in the interviews meaningful. This study is intended to benefit The Studion School for Spiritual Direction by evaluating the effect of a regular practice of silence in preparation for spiritual direction.

There will be no compensation for participating in this study.

Your name will be kept confidential in all the reporting and /or writing related to this study. I will be the only person present for the interview unless you prefer to have a third-party present. When I write the report I will use pseudonyms – made up names - for all participants. You will be asked to use pseudonyms if you refer to any directees in your interviews or journal.

I plan to write a report based on what I learn in these interviews and journals together with reading other sources on the topic of silence and spiritual direction. This report will be submitted to my professor in April 2017 and the content may be used in The Studion School for Spiritual Direction. This report will also be included in a project portfolio later in 2017, which may be published. In addition, this report may be used in other contexts encouraging the ongoing formation of spiritual directors, such as workshops. I may alter some personal details in addition to using pseudonyms to protect the confidentiality and anonymity of your contribution.

Thank you for taking time to consider whether you will participate in this study. I have also attached a consent form. If you would like to participate please return the consent form to me either in person or scan a copy with your signature to send by email.

Sincerely,
Heather L. Cowie

Adapted from Appendix 1: Sample Consent Form for Interviews (Sensing 2011, 235-236)

**Appendix K:
Research Study Consent Form**

The Practice of Silence in Preparation for Spiritual Direction

By signing below, you are agreeing that you have reviewed the permission letter thoroughly and understand what you are being asked to do for this study. You are agreeing to be interviewed twice and to have these interviews recorded. You are also agreeing to keep a journal that will be shared with me. Be sure that any questions you have are answered to your satisfaction. If you agree to participate in this study, a copy of this document will be given to you.

You may contact the following with concerns or questions:

Dr. Mark Chapman: (416) 226-6620 x2602. mchapman@tyndale.ca

Doug Schroeder: (587) 223-2868; dougkschroeder@gmail.com

Pearl Nieuwenhuis: (403) 243-2955; nieuwenhuis@live.ca

Rev. Ron Klok: (780) 905-4740; rev.klok@gmail.com

I am aware that if I have any questions about study participation they may be directed to Heather Cowie at 403-510-8309, Heather.Cowie@mytyndale.ca. Any ethical concerns about the study may be directed to the Chair of the General Research Ethics Board, reb@tyndale.ca.

Participant's Name (please print):

Signature: _____

Date: _____

Researcher's Name (please print):

Signature: _____

Date: _____

**Appendix L:
Interviews for Spiritual Directors**

The Practice of Silence in Preparation for Spiritual Direction
Interview One (1 hour):

1. Please tell me something about the story of your life with God?
prompts: how did your relationship with God begin?
 what were some of the low points?
 what were some of the high points?
2. What role has silence played in your spiritual journey?
prompt: is there an experience of silence you want to share?
3. Tell me about becoming a spiritual director?
prompts: how were you drawn to this ministry?
 what keeps you engaged in it?
4. What do you understand the main purpose of spiritual direction to be?
prompt: how does the purpose impact how you offer direction?
5. Describe a typical session with a directee?
prompts: how do you generally structure the time?
 what kind of practices do you incorporate?
6. Can you tell me about the last direction session you offered?
prompts: what happened?
 describe the interior movements you experienced.

Interview Two (30 minutes)

1. What do you understand the main purpose of spiritual direction to be?
same prompts as interview one question 4
2. Describe a typical session with a directee?
same prompts as interview one question 5
3. Can you tell me about the last direction session you offered?
same prompts as interview one question 6
4. Do you feel that the silence made a difference over the course of the time that you practiced it? Do you anticipate continuing the practice in a regular way?

**Appendix M:
Prompts for Journal Entries of Spiritual
directors**

The Practice of Silence in Preparation for Spiritual Direction:

Be attentive to your own interior movements before, during and after the session.

1. Were you able to practice ten minutes of silence before this session?

2. What was the strongest movement?
Consolation – movement toward God?
Desolation – movement away from God?
Describe the movement.

3. Describe God's felt presence or felt absence during the session. Which was stronger?

4. Reflect on your own presence during the session.
Was it contemplative? evocative? focused? companioning? discerning? free?
caring? patient?
Or was your presence unfocused? fragmented? aggressive? unfree? self-absorbed?
impatient? talkative? Did it lead to a problem-solving or advice-giving approach?

From Looking into the Well: Supervision for Spiritual Directors by Maureen Conroy, R.S.M., p. 176-177. Permission falls under fair use confirmed with Loyola Press by email dated September 22, 2017.

REFERENCE LIST

- Ammer, Christine. 2002. *Story*. The American Heritage Dictionary of Idioms. Accessed March 28, 2018. <http://www.dictionary.com/browse/story>.
- Arrupe, Pedro. 2011. *Praying with the Jesuits: Finding God in All Things*. Edited by SJ Charles J. Healey. Mahwah, NY: Paulist Press.
- Barry, William A., and William J. Connelly. 1986. *The Practice of Spiritual Direction*. New York, NY: HarperSanFrancisco.
- Barry, William. 2012. *Praying the Truth: Deepening Your Friendship with God through Honest Prayer*. Chicago, IL: Loyola Press.
- Beesing, Maria, Robert J. Nogosek, and Patrick H. O'Leary. 1984. *The Enneagram: A Journey of Self Discovery*. Denville, NJ: Dimension Books, Inc.
- Bell, Rob. 2005. "Movement 6: New." In *Velvet Elvis: Repainting the Christian Faith*, 138-152. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing Company.
- Benner, David. 2002. *Sacred Companions*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press.
- Bibby, Reginald W. 2017. *Resilient God: Being Pro-Religious, Low Religious, or No Religious in Canada*. Vancouver, BC: UBC Press.
- Boeteneff, Vera. 1998. *Father Arseny: 1893-1973, Priest, Prisoner, Spiritual Father*. Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press.
- Bonhoeffer, Dietrich. 1954. *Life Together*. New York, NY: Harper & Row Publishers, Inc.
- Bourgeault, Cynthia. 2004. *Centering Prayer and Inner Awakening*. Lanham, MD: Cowley Publications.
- Brother Lawrence. 1977. *The Practice of the Presence of God*. Translated by John J. Delaney. New York, NY: Doubleday.

- Bruce, Elizabeth McIsaac. 2008. "Narrative Inquiry: A Spiritual and liberating Approach to Research." *Religious Education* 103 (3): 323-338.
- Brueggemann, Walter. 2002. *Spirituality of the Psalms*. Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg Fortress.
- Calhoun, Adele. 2005. *Spiritual Disciplines Handbook*. Downers Grove, IL: IVP.
- Carthusian, Guigo II the. 2012. *The Ladder of Monks*. Translated by Sr. Pascale-Dominique Nau. San Sebastian.
- CGIT–Canadian Girls in Training. 2018. Accessed 08 22, 2018. <http://cgit.ca>.
- Christian Reformed Church of North America. 2008. "Our World Belongs to God." *Christian Reformed Church*. Accessed 02 10, 2016. <http://production.crcna.org/welcome/beliefs/contemporary-testimony/our-world-belongs-god>.
- Clandinin, D. Jean, and F. Michael Connelly. 2000. *Narrative Inquiry*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.
- Cocksworth, Christopher. 2005. "Spirit, Holy." In *The New Westminster Dictionary of Christian Spirituality*, edited by Philip Sheldrake, 594-596. Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press.
- Conroy, Maureen. 1995. *Looking into the Well: Supervision of Spiritual Directors*. Chicago, IL: Loyola Press.
- Cornick, David. 2005. "Reformed Spirituality." In *The New Westminster Dictionary of Christian Spirituality*, 533-535. Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press.
- Countryman, L. William. 2005. "Forgiveness." In *The New Westminster Dictionary of Christian Spirituality*, edited by Philip Sheldrake, 308-309. Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press.
- Cowie, Heather. 2016. "Promoting the Formational Reading of Scripture: Lectio Divina." Paper, Tyndale Seminary, Toronto.
- . 2017. "The Dark Night, Desolation and Depression: A Five Session Workshop on The Dark Night of the Soul, Spiritual Desolation and Depression ." Paper, Tyndale Seminary, Toronto.
- Culligan, Kevin. 2003. "The Dark Night and Depression." In *Carmelite Prayer: A Tradition for the 21st Century*, edited by Keith J. Egan, 75-83. New York, NY: Paulist Press.

- de Bres, Guido. 2011. "Belgic Confession Christian Reformed Church." *Christian Reformed Church*. Accessed 02 9, 2016.
<http://production.crcna.org/welcome/beliefs/confessions/belgic-confession>.
- Dirks, Morris. 2013. *Forming the Leader's Soul: An Invitation to Spiritual Direction*. SoulFormation.
- Dura-Vila, Gloria. 2016. *Sadness, Depression, and the Dark Night of the Soul: Transcending the Medicalisation of Sadness*. London: Jessica Kingsley Publishers.
- Dyckman, Katherine Marie, and L. Patrick Carroll. 1981. *Inviting the Mystic, Supporting the Prophet*. New York, NY: Paulist Press.
- Egan, Gerard, and Wilma Schroeder. 2009. *The Skilled Helper*. First Canadian Edition. Toronto, ON: Nelson Education Ltd.
- Egan, Harvey. 1984. "St. John of the Cross." In *Christian Mysticism: The Future of a Tradition*, 165-214. New York, NY: Pueblo Publishing Company.
- Faith Alive Christian Resources. 2011. "Christian Reformed Church." *Heidelberg Catechism Christian Reformed Church*. Accessed 02 08, 2016.
<http://production.crcna.org/welcome/beliefs/confessions/heidelberg-catechism>.
- Fenelon, Francois. 1962. *Selections from the Writings of Francois Fenelon*. Edited by Thomas S. Kepler. Nashville , TN: The Upper Room.
- Fleming, David L. 1996. *Draw Me Into Your Friendship*. St. Louis, MO: Institute of Jesuit Sources.
- Fleming, David L., ed. 1988. *The Christian Ministry of Spiritual Direction: The Best of Review 3*. St. Louis, MO.
- Foster, Richard. 1998. *Streams of Living Water*. New York: HarperCollins Publishers.
- Fowler, James W., Karl Ernst Nipkow, and Friedrich Schweitzer. 1991. *Stages of Faith and Religious Development*. New York, NY: Crossroad Publishing Company.
- Gaillardetz, Richard. 2005. "Communion/Koinonia." In *The New Westminster Dictionary of Christian Spirituality*, 200-202. Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press.

- Green, Thomas. 1984. *Weeds Among Wheat*. Notre Dame, IN: Ave Maria Press.
- Hagberg, Janet, and Robert A. Guelich. 1989. *The Critical Journey: Stages in the Life of Faith*. Dallas, TX: Word Publishing.
- Healey, Charles J. 1988. "Seeking God's Will." In *The Christian Ministry of Spiritual Direction: The Best of Review - 3*, edited by SJ David L. Fleming, 326-332. St. Louis, MO.
- Job, Rueben P., and Norman Shawchuck, . 1983. *A Guide to Prayer for Ministers and Other Servants*. Nashville, TN: The Upper Room.
- John of the Cross. 1991. *The Collected Works of Saint John of the Cross*. Rev. Ed. Translated by Kieran, OCD Kavanaugh and Otilio, OCD Rodriquez. Washington, DC: ICS Publications.
- Johnson, Ben. 2004. "Spiritual Direction in the Reformed Tradition." In *Spiritual Direction and the Care of Souls*, edited by Gary W. Moon and David G. Benner. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press.
- Keating, Thomas. 2009. *Intimacy with God: An Introduction to Centering Prayer*. New York, NY: Crossroad Publishing Company.
- . 1992. *Open Mind, Open Heart*. New York: St. Benedict's Monastery.
- Kelly, Thomas R. 1992. *A Testament of Devotion*. New York, NY: HarperCollins.
- Kelsey, Morton. 1976. *The Other Side of Silence: Meditation for the Twenty-First Century*. Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press.
- Kort, Wesley A. 2013. "Calvin's Theory of Reading." *Christianity and Literature* 62 (2): 189-202.
- Ladinsky, Daniel, trans. 2002. *Love Poems from God: Twelve Sacred Voices from the East and West*. New York, NY: Penguin Compass.
- Laird, Martin. 2011. *A Sunlit Absence: Silence, Awareness and Contemplation*. New York, NY: Oxford University Press.
- Lawrence, Brother, and Frank Laubach. 1988. *Practicing His Presence*. Jacksonville, FL: SeedSowers Publishing.
- Lewis, C. S. 2001. *Mere Christianity*. New York, NY: HarperCollins.
- Loyola Press. 2017. "Ignatian Spirituality.com." Accessed 12 15, 2017. <http://spex.ignatianspirituality.com/SpiritualExercises/Puhl#c28-1234>.

- Lyddon, Sister Eileen. 1995/2006. *Mysticism for Beginners: John of the Cross Made Easy*. New York, NY: New City Press.
- Magdalen, Margaret. 1987. *Jesus: Man of Prayer*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press.
- Majidi, Majid, dir. 1999. *The Color of Paradise*. Directed by Majid Majidi. Produced by Mehdi Karimi, Ali Ghaem Maghami, Mehdi Mahabadi and Mohsen Sarab.
- Masters, Edgar Lee. 2010. *The Project Gutenberg EBook of Spoon River Anthology, by Edgar Lee Masters*. 01 27. Accessed 03 18, 2015. <http://www.gutenberg.org/cache/epub/1280/pg1280.html>.
- Mathewes-Green, Frederica. 2010. *The Jesus Prayer: The Ancient Desert Prayer That Tunes the Heart to God*. London: Darton Longman and Todd.
- May, Gerald. 1991. *The Awakened Heart*. San Francisco, CA: HarperSanFrancisco.
- . 2004. *The Dark Night of the Soul: A Psychiatrist Explores the Connection Between Darkness and Spiritual Growth*. New York, NY: HarperCollins Publishers.
- McCormack, Coralie. 2000a. "From Interview Transcript to Interpretive Story: Part 1 - Viewing the Transcript through Multiple Lenses." *Field Methods* 12 (4): 282-97.
- McCormack, Coralie. 2000b. "From Interview Transcript to Interpretive Story: Part 2 - Developing an Interpretive Story." *Field Methods* 12 (4): 298-315.
- Merton, Thomas. 1996. *Contemplative Prayer*. New York, NY: Image Books.
- . 1960. *Spiritual Direction and Meditation*. Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press.
- Milne, A.A. 2018. *Goodreads*. Accessed 08 27, 2018. <https://www.goodreads.com/quotes/580688-supposing-a-tree-fell-down-pooh-when-we-were-underneath>.
- Morris, Danny E., and Charles M. Olsen. 2012. *Discerning God's Will Together*. Herndon, VA: Alban Institute.
- Muldoon, Tim. 2004. *The Ignatian Workout: Daily Exercises for a Healthy Faith*. Chicago, IL: Loyola University Press.

- Mursell, Gordon. 2005. "Suffering." In *The New Westminster Dictionary of Christian Spirituality*, edited by Philip Sheldrake, 602-603. Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press.
- Muto, Susan. 2012. "The Art and Discipline of Formative Reading: Revisiting Holy Scripture with Humble Receptivity." *Journal of Spiritual Formation & Soul Care* 5 (2): 100-116.
- Neafsey, James. 2005. "The Human Experience of God." In *Sacred is the Call: Formation and Transformation in Spiritual Direction Programs*, edited by Suzanne M. Buckley, 19-26. New York: The Crossroad Publishing Company.
- New England Primer. 1750. In *New England Primer: A Primary Source Website*. Accessed 08 2018. <http://cdlrsandbox.org/neprimer/tableofcontents2.html>.
- Nouwen, Henri. 2013. *Discernment: Reading the Signs of Daily Life*. New York, NY: HarperOne.
- . 1986. *Reaching Out*. Garden City, NY: Doubleday Image Books.
- . 2010. *Spiritual Formation: Following the Movements of the Spirit*. New York, NY: HarperOne.
- . 2003. *The Way of the Heart: Connecting with God Through Prayer, Wisdom, and Silence*. New York, NY: Random House Publishing Group.
- Oates, Wayne E. 1996. *Nurturing Silence in a Noisy Heart: How to Find Inner Peace*. Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg Fortress.
- O'Brien, Kevin. 2011. *The Ignatian Adventure*. Chicago, IL: Loyola Press.
- Patterson, Sarah Penney. 2014. "Shepherd Care: How the Discipline of Spiritual Direction Facilitates Pastors' Relationships with God, Their sense of Call, and Their Relationships with Congregations." *Doctor of Ministry Thesis* (Tyndale University and Seminary).
- Perrine, Myra. 2007. *What's Your God Language*. Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House Publishers.
- Peterson, Eugene H. 1987. *Working the Angles: The Shape of Pastoral Integrity*. Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co.
- Plantinga, Cornelius. 2002. *Engaging God's World*. Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co.

- Polan, Gregory J. 2003. "Lectio Divina: Reading and Praying the Word of God." *Liturgical Ministry* 12 (Fall), 198-206.
- Pray as you Go. n.d. *Pray as you Go - Prepare*. Accessed 02 18, 2016.
<http://pray-as-you-go.org/prayer-resources/prepare/>.
- Puhl, Louis J. 1951. *The Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius*. Chicago, IL: Loyola Press.
- Rice, Howard L. 1991. *Reformed Spirituality: An Introduction for Believers*.
 Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press.
- Riso, Don Richard, and Russ Hudson. 1999. *The Wisdom of the Enneagram*. New York, NY: Bantam Books.
- Roccasalvo, Joan L. 2008. "The Daily Examen." In *The Christian Ministry of Spiritual Direction: The Best of Review 3*, by David L. Fleming, 312-317. St. Louis: Review for Religious.
- Rowe, David L. 2011. "Will of God." In *Dictionary of Christian Spirituality*, edited by Glen G. Scorgie, 839-840. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan.
- Ruffing, Janet K. 2000. *Spiritual Direction: Beyond the Beginnings*. Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press.
- . 2011. *To Tell the Sacred Tale; Spiritual Direction and Narrative*. Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press.
- Savage, Carl, and William Presnell. 2008. *Narrative Research in Ministry: A Postmodern Research Approach for Faith Communities*. Louisville, KY: Wayne Oates Institute.
- Savin, Olga. 2001. *The Way of a Pilgrim and A Pilgrim Continues his Way*. Boston: Shambhala Classics.
- Sensing, Tim. 2011. *Qualitative Research: A Multi-Methods Approach to Projects for Doctor of Ministry Theses*. Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock Publishers.
- Silf, Margaret. 1999. *Inner Compass: An Invitation to Ignatian Spirituality*. Chicago, IL: Loyola Press.
- Smedes, Lewis B. 1984. *Forgive and Forget*. San Francisco, CA: Harper & Row Publishers.

- Smith, Gordon T. 2003. *The Voice of Jesus: Discernment, Prayer and the Witness of the Spirit*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press.
- St. Ignatius of Loyola, as paraphrased by David L. Fleming, S.J. 2004. "The Principle and Foundation." Guelph, ON, October. Accessed April 08, 2015. http://www.bc.edu/bc_org/prs/stign/prayers.html.
- Standish, N. Graham. 2014. *Becoming a Blessed Church*. Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield.
- Stringer, Ernest T. 2014. *Action Research*. 4th Edition. Los Angeles: SAGE Publications.
- Studzinski, Raymond. 2009. *Reading to Live: The Evolving Practice of Lectio Divina*. Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press.
- Sweeney, Richard J. 1988. "Discernment in the Spiritual Direction of St. Francis de Sales." In *The Christian Ministry of Spiritual Direction: Best of Review 3*, edited by David L. Fleming SJ, 354-367. St. Louis, MO.
- Syrup Bergan, Jacqueline, and Marie Schwan CSJ. 2004. *Forgiveness: A Guide for Prayer*. Chicago, IL: Loyola Press.
- Teilhard de Chardin, Pierre. 2018. *Goodreads*. Accessed 08 27, 2018. <https://www.goodreads.com/quotes/3267-do-not-forget-that-the-value-and-interest-of-life>.
- . 2004. *Hearts on Fire: Praying with Jesuits*. Edited by Michael Harter, SJ. Chicago, IL: Loyola House Press.
- Tetlow, Joseph A. 1999. *Choosing Christ in the World*. St. Louis, MO: Institute of Jesuit Resources.
- Thakkar, Elizabeth Ann. 2017. "Practices to Facilitate Faith Amidst Suffering." Doctor of Ministry Project, Carey Theological College, Vancouver, BC.
- Thomas, Gary. 2010. *Sacred Pathways: Discover Your Soul's Path to God*. Rev. edition. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing.
- Thompson, Marjorie. 1995. *Soul Feast: An Invitation to the Spiritual Life*. Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press.
- Toner, Jules J. 1982. *A Commentary on Saint Ignatius' Rules for the Discernment of Spirits*. St. Louis, MO: Institute of Jesuit Sources.

Tugwell, Simon. 1978. *Prayer: Living with God*. Springfield, IL: Templegate Publishers.

Wasserman, Danuta. 2011. *Depression*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Willard, Dallas. 1988. *Spirit of the Disciplines*. New York, NY: HarperCollins Publishers.

Zimmerman, Mari West. 1998. "Walking with the Wounded." *Presence: The Journal of Spiritual Directors International* 4 (1): 44-52.