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“Parenting with Heart”:
The Development and Evaluation of a Christian Parenting
Curriculum to Support and Encourage the Family
to Be the Domestic Church

A Thesis
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of the requirements for the degree of
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By

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ABSTRACT

The methodologies of participatory action research and curriculum development were used to develop and evaluate a Christian parenting curriculum, *Parenting with Heart*, to support and encourage families, in their vocation to be communities of love, of life, and of grace, the Domestic Church. A facilitator's guide was created and reviewed by experts in parent education and in theology from the Evangelical and Catholic traditions. The content and pedagogy were deemed suitable for parent education and the curriculum was deemed appropriate for use in the churches of both traditions.

DEDICATION

To Christine,
our parents, Renata and Boleslaw,
Dorothy and Paul,
and our children, Sean and Anne Marie

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I would like to express my gratitude and appreciation to the many who have been a constant source of care and sustenance throughout this DMin

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May the Holy Family of Nazareth continue to inspire, guide and intercede for us as we seek to be family, a communion of life, of love, and of grace.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

- CCC: Catechism of the Catholic Church
- CCCB: Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops
- COLF: Catholic Organization for Life and Family
- EFC: Evangelical Fellowship of Canada
- FC: *Familiaris Consortio*. The Apostolic Exhortation: *The Role of the Christian Family in the Modern World*
- NAB: New American Bible. Used to indicate Scripture texts in this work that are taken from the New American Bible, revised edition © 2010, 1991, 1986, 1970 Confraternity of Christian Doctrine, Washington, D.C. and are used by permission of the copyright owner. All Rights Reserved. No part of the New American Bible may be reproduced in any form without permission in writing from the copyright owner.
- NRSV: New Revised Standard Version Bible. Unless otherwise indicated, all Bible quotations in this paper are from *The New Revised Standard Version*, copyright 1989, 1995 by the Division of Christian Education of the National Council of the Churches of Christ in the United States of America. Used by permission. All rights reserved.
- OCCB: Ontario Conference of Catholic Bishops

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

The purpose of the thesis project was to develop and evaluate a Christian parenting curriculum, *Parenting with Heart*, to support families in responding to their call to be communities of love, of life, and of grace, to be the domestic church. Using the methodologies of action research and curriculum development, a facilitator's guide and participant's materials were created. Experts in parent education and in theology were invited to review the guide to comment on whether the content and pedagogy would likely be acceptable for parent education and whether it would be appropriate for use in churches and faith communities from the Evangelical and Roman Catholic traditions. The reviewers found that the content and pedagogy would be suitable for parent education and were thought appropriate for use in the churches of their respective traditions.

Within the Catholic tradition there are excellent programs in place to prepare families to welcome the newborn into the Christian community through the rites of initiation. Children and youth participate in religious education programs in schools and parishes to participate fully in the sacramental life of the Church. Young couples take part in marriage preparation courses offered by

parishes and retreat centres. Protestant churches often have programs to prepare parents for child dedication or baptism.

These courses fulfill an important role in religious education and sacramental preparation. However, more support is needed to assist parents and families to live out their daily call as the domestic church. This project was undertaken to address one area of the family life cycle – parenting – through the development and evaluation of a Christian parenting curriculum *Parenting with Heart*.

In this chapter are outlined the context, the challenge for more parenting education in the Church, the questions guiding the research, and the terms and definitions used in this thesis.

The Context

I am a lay Christian and religious educator of the Roman Catholic tradition. The approach taken in this thesis draws on the theology, tradition, and teachings of the Catholic Church. I am also an ecumenist that sees the unity of all believers in our diversity (Jn 17:20-22) NRSV. Therefore, this project thesis should be of interest to Christians of the Protestant, Evangelical, and Orthodox traditions. Throughout this thesis I will use “Church” to refer to the Catholic Church and “church” to refer to the universal church of all Christian believers.

The Domestic Church

Pope John XXIII convoked the Second Vatican Council, or general council of the Roman Catholic Church, 1962-1965. The purpose of the council was “to bring the life of the church up to date (*aggiornamento*) while remaining faithful to tradition” (Gaillardetz and Clifford 2012, 2). The council placed great emphasis upon the Church as 1) the People of God, the Body of Christ (CCCB 1994, 777), 2) a Pilgrim Church (CCCB 1994, 853), 3) a missional church sharing in God’s mission (CCCB 1994, 849-850).

Greater recognition was given to the laity who participated in the priesthood of all believers. Special attention was given to the role of parents and the family in the life and growth of the Church. The family was described as the “domestic church” (Second Vatican Council 2014b, 11). The family are members of the Church, the Body of Christ. As the little church of the home they are called to be a reflection of the Divine Communion of Persons, the Trinity, and are called to be a communion of life, of love, and of grace, the domestic church (OCCB 1983, 8). An elaboration of the important role of the family in the Church was further developed by John Paul II in the Apostolic Exhortation: The Role of the Christian Family in the Modern World, *Familiaris Consortio* (FC), (John Paul II 1981).

The call of the Church and those who minister to the family is to support the parents and their children:

Knowing that marriage and the family constitute one of the most precious of human values, the Church wishes to speak and offer her help to those

live it faithfully . . . the Church offers her services to every person who wonders about the destiny of marriage and the family. (FC, 1)

They support the family in becoming what they:

And since in God's plan it has been established as an “intimate community of life and love,” [Second Vatican Council 2014c, 48] the family has the mission to become . . . a community of life and love, in an effort that will find fulfillment, as will everything created and redeemed, in the Kingdom of God. (FC, 17)

The call of the family is to be a community of life, of love, and of grace, the domestic church (OCCB 1983, 8).

Family Ministry

For the past thirty years my partner, Christine Rybka-Miki, and I have been involved in family ministry as family life ministers and parenting educators within the Catholic tradition and in ecumenical settings. We see the importance of family life ministry and parenting education in building up the Body of Christ through the nurturing and support of families. As this is written, I am transitioning from my fulltime ministry as a Catholic religious educator in the Catholic education system in Ontario, Canada to family life ministry to the families of the parishes, communities, and dioceses served by Jericho House.

Jericho House is a Spiritual Retreat Centre in the Niagara Region that focuses on youth leadership, education, and social and ecological justice. Jericho House has the support of the diocesan Bishops (O’Mara 2014, Wingle 2014) . The ministry and outreach area includes the archdiocese of Toronto, the dioceses of St. Catharines, Hamilton, and London, and guests from other provinces and regions

of Canada. It is an ecumenical centre: from the mid-eighties, Jericho House has welcomed Christians of all denominations and other pilgrims to their retreats, workshops, and conferences. In 2011, Jericho House moved from Welland to its permanent setting in Wainfleet.

The centre is under the direction of Brother Bill Carrothers, CFC. (Christian Brothers) and Sister Jacque Keefe, CSSF. (Felician Sisters). Brother Bill and Sister Jacque have invited us to join them in extending their ministry outreach to families, parents and those who act in the place of parents. Sister Jacque and Brother Bill have fostered ongoing communication and ecumenical collaboration with the pastors and ministers of the various denominations of the community in which they serve together. They participate in the ministerial fellowship meetings and enjoy a very good working relationship with the member churches. They have welcomed to the Centre many faith groups for retreats and worship services.

In this project and in the family life ministry my primary collaborator has been my partner, Christine. We have been married for thirty years and are the parents of two adult children. Christine earned her MDiv degree through Regis College, Toronto School of Theology. She is a spiritual director and supervisor, and a marriage and family life educator. She has served as the executive director of the Etobicoke Family Life Education Centre (EFLEC), now known as the Parent Education Network (PEN). Christine was also the Associate Director, and

Director of the Office of Marriage and Family Life for the Archdiocese of Toronto.

I am a religion and family life educator with thirty years of experience in marriage and parenting education and school-based Catholic Religious Education. I also received training in Adlerian psychology. With Christine I have facilitated workshops, training programs, and courses in parenting, marriage preparation, and marriage and family enrichment. We have facilitated training programs for parent educators and marriage preparation instructors at the community, parish, and diocesan levels.

We are serving those who take the role of adult caregivers in families including couple parents, single parents, grandparents, foster parents and others. They come from the local parishes, faith communities of other denominations, and community based organizations.

Challenge: More Parenting Education in the Church

There exists a need for the church to support parents and caregivers and their families in meeting the everyday challenges they face in raising children to become loving, respectful, caring, responsible and contributing members of the family. The need for greater Roman Catholic Church involvement and attention to the needs and pastoral care of families has been made clear by Pope Francis who called for a Synod on the family to address “Pastoral Challenges to the Family in the Context of Evangelization” (Vatican 2013).

Today many families and parents look to the pastors, family life ministers, and catechists as the “experts” to whom they entrust the spiritual development and religious education of their children.

From my experience within the Church it is clear that much is done to focus on family life ministry throughout the life cycle. In the Church this ministry is closely linked with preparing parents and their children for the celebration of the sacraments that mark life passages: rites of Christian initiation (baptism, confirmation, first Eucharist), and the sacraments of commitment and healing (marriage and reconciliation). However, there is much room for ongoing support to parents and their families facing the daily challenges of Christian parenting. There are some programs available through community agencies and organizations. Excellent services are available to families when they are in crisis and in need of counselling services through Church sponsored agencies such as Catholic Family Services. A Christian parenting curriculum can play an important preventative and proactive role in support of healthy, happy, and loving families.

Research Questions

To guide the research in this project to develop a curriculum to support parents to live out their call to be family, this overarching question was formulated: How can parents be supported to fulfill their call to be a Christian family? This generated a series of questions:

1. What is the Biblical, theological, and Catholic Church’s teaching regarding the family in relationship to the Church?

2. What does psychology, particularly Adlerian psychology, contribute to our understanding of the family as a healthy community?
3. What are some contributions from the field of leadership development to a healthy family?
4. What are some pedagogical theories to undergird the notion of a healthy family?
5. What is an example of instructional support that can be given to a family that wants to be healthy and to be a communion of life, of love, and of grace?
6. What are some responses from selected experts in the field to assess and modify such a curriculum?

Response: Development of *Parenting with Heart* Curriculum

The project undertaken was: the development and evaluation of a Christian parenting education curriculum to encourage and support the family. A curriculum was designed to integrate our faith journey with everyday living and enable parents and children to see the loving presence of God in all things, especially those things we consider to be mundane and ordinary.

To do this, a parent education curriculum called *Parenting with Heart* was created. It is informed by Biblical and theological foundations and Church teaching discussed in Chapter Two. The curriculum incorporates the contributions from the social sciences to support families and parents in the challenging task of raising their children. The social science disciplines are reviewed in Chapter Three. They include the areas of parent education, counselling and psychology, leadership and organizational development, religious education, and spiritual

formation. The areas of curriculum development and program planning, and adult learning theory and practice are also reviewed. The contributions from these disciplines are also discussed in Chapter Three.

The methodologies and approaches used in the project focus on Action Research, Curriculum Development, and Evaluation they are reviewed with my action steps in Chapter Four. The outcomes, assessments, and implications of the project are presented in Chapters Five and Six.

Terms and Definitions

Domestic church: Since the Second Vatican Council, the Roman Catholic Church has recognized the family as the little church of the home, the domestic church (Second Vatican Council 2015b, 11). The family are members of the Church, the Body of Christ. As the little church of the home they are called to be a reflection of the Divine Communion of Persons, the Trinity, and are called to be a communion of life, of love and of grace, the domestic church (OCCB 1983, 8).

Missional Church: The People of God, the Body of Christ, the church, called to participate in the mission of the Triune God, *missio Dei*, and to proclaim and live out the good news of salvation and redemption.

CHAPTER 2: THEOLOGICAL FRAMEWORK

To contribute to the development of the parenting curriculum a sound theological framework regarding the family was needed. This chapter focuses on the Biblical, theological, and Catholic Church's teaching regarding the family in relationship to the Church.

In this chapter, an outline of the historical development of the family as domestic church in both the Protestant and Catholic traditions is presented. Scripture, theology, Church teaching, and sacramental practices are discussed to determine how support can be given to help the family respond to the call to be a community of life, of love, and of grace. In examining how the family can be viewed as a reflection of the Divine Communion of Persons, these subjects are discussed: Church and Mission, the Church as a Reflection the Trinity, the Church as Household, and the Family as a Reflection of the Trinity. To develop a Protestant understanding of the family as the domestic church, there is a discussion of the family as a center of spiritual formation.

Historical Development of the Family as the Domestic Church

The focus of this project is the support and encouragement of the family to respond to the call to be the domestic church. This historical overview examines the development of the Church's understanding of family as a domestic church and draws extensively on the work of noted theologian and ethicist, Lisa Sowle Cahill, *Family: A Christian Social Perspective* (Cahill 2000).

The Greco-Roman Culture

In the first century C.E., in the Mediterranean world, the family in Greco-Roman and Middle Eastern society played a central role. Christian families were influenced by this culture that was under the control of the Roman Empire. Roman law applied to all subjects, including those of Jewish and Hellenistic background, living in Palestine. The family was an extended family over which the father, *paterfamilias*, had complete authority. The family included the spouse, children, unmarried family members, and all household staff including free persons and slaves (Cahill 2000, 19).

The Ancient Hebrew Context

As a social institution the family of the first century the family was structured in such a way that male elders and elite classes held positions of power and privilege. They were in a position to offer goods both material and social to those who were inferior and dependent upon their favour (Cahill 2000, 23). By

Jesus' time there was a well-established kinship system that consisted of these three levels: tribe, clan and family (Cahill 2000, 23). The third level of this system, "the 'father's house,' is the strongest source of identity and inclusion for the Israelite. It is an extended family, comprising all the descendants of a living ancestor except for married daughters, who became part of their husband's families" (Cahill 2000, 24).

Jesus Introduces a New Understanding of Family

Into this highly structured, hierarchical understanding of family, Jesus calls for a new awareness of what it means to be family in the context of the Reign of God. The first indication of this changing perspective of family takes place in the Temple scene (Lk 2:41-51). It seems that Jesus is presenting a view of discipleship that challenges the predominant place of kinship and attachment to family that is the established societal and cultural norm. In Luke's account, Jesus seems to have placed a greater priority on remaining behind in Jerusalem to speak with the elders in his Father's house rather than considering the concern and worry it might cause Mary and Joseph (Cahill 2000, 29).

The understanding of family beyond the ties of kinship becomes very clear in (Mk 3:31-34) when Jesus declares that "Whoever does the will of God is my brother and sister and mother." An explanation for this and other responses of Jesus regarding family and the call of discipleship (Mk 10:28-30; Lk [2: 48-49] 14:25-26) may be attributed to the strong sense of loyalty to one's group at the expense of recognition and inclusion of any outsider who may interfere with the

close bonds of kinship. Such a stance is “incompatible with a life of mercy, service, and compassion for the neighbor in need or for social outcasts and the poor existing in the margins. Family loyalty certainly conflicts with mercy on competitors for prestige or goods with whom one has established longstanding enmity” (Cahill 2000, 29).

The story of the Prodigal Son (Lk 15:11-24) further serves to illustrate this “message about the reversal of standard social relationships”(Cahill 2000, 30). However, Jesus’ *compassion and concern for those family members who are ill and suffering* is very clear. Some examples are the stories of Jairus’s daughter (Mk 5:21-43), the official’s son (Jn 4:46-53), and the Canaanite woman’s daughter (Mt 15:21-28). Cahill points out that “These stories reveal parents in apparent states of concern for children for their own sakes, not only in view of the future advantages children offer to parents” (Cahill 2000, 30). This is to be noted for children held relatively little social status in Jesus’ time.

It is evident that children in Jesus’ day were not accorded the rights and place that children hold in today’s western societies. Infanticide by exposure was an accepted practice. Jesus restores the status to children as God’s beloved by welcoming the children and blessing them when the disciples prevent them from coming to him. When the disciples are arguing about who is the greatest, Jesus reverses the existing social structure and reminds them that “unless you change and become like children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven. Whoever becomes humble like this child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven. Whoever

welcomes one such child in my name welcomes me” (Mt 18:3-5). Rather than being concerned about their own status and power in the reign of God, they are called to humility, vulnerability, and service to be “last of all and servant of all”(Mt 9:35). Cahill concludes that “. . . anyone who receives a child in Jesus’ name receives Jesus himself: the standard criteria of honour and social worth are turned upside down, and Jesus identifies himself with the insignificance of a child” (Cahill 2000, 30).

First Century House Churches

Because of the primary role the family household played in the Jewish and Greco-Roman cultures of the Mediterranean world, it had a significant influence on the development of the early Christian community. Much evidence of the role of families and house churches in the first century is found in the Pauline letters (Rom 16:3-5; 1 Cor 16:15-20; Col 4:15; 2 Tim 4:19; Phil 1:1-2). The family and household of Prisca and Aquila are a good example of this:

Greet Prisca and Aquila, who work with me in Christ Jesus, and who risked their necks for my life, to whom not only I give thanks, but also all the churches of the Gentiles. Greet also the church in their house. Greet my beloved Epaenetus, who was the first convert in Asia for Christ.
(Rom 16:3-5)

However, with the Edict of Milan in 313, which would lead to the recognition of Christianity as the state religion, the role of the family home as the focus of worship and service to the community begins to shift. State sponsored buildings, basilicas, are built to house Christian assemblies. Cahill notes that one outcome of this move is that “the transition to churches outside the home may

facilitate control of ecclesiastical practice by official leaders outside the household” (Cahill 2000, 36). She continues:

Moreover, the link between the family and the formation of the Christian community that did exist in the early house churches weakened as homes ceased to function as formal places of worship for the Christian assembly in the second century. Indeed, patristic writers of the first four centuries gave relatively little attention to the family . . . (Cahill 2000, 49)

The View of the Family as a Domestic Church through Church History

Cahill examines three major figures in the history of the church who have contributed to the understanding of the role of parents and family in the life and development of the church. They are John Chrysostom (ca. 349-407), Martin Luther (1483-1546), and John Calvin (1509-1564). John Chrysostom, Bishop of Constantinople, recognized the important role of parents in the faith development and formation of their children. As a pastor and bishop, he saw that the parents were best positioned to be the primary educators of their children to foster their spiritual and moral growth. In his homily on Ephesians he urges parents to be aware of their important call and vocation by reminding them that “the household is the little church” (Chrysostom 2013). Luther’s position on the role of parents, as quoted by Cahill is as follows:

Becoming parents and raising children are roles human beings are created to fulfill just as our parents have. “This is a duty which God has laid upon us, commanded, and implanted in us, as is provided by our bodily members, our daily emotions and the example of all humankind.” Bringing up children is in fact “the chief end and purpose of marriage,” not only so that they may be our heirs, but so they may learn “to serve God, to praise and honour him.” (Cahill 2000, 65)

In this way, Luther outlines an approach to marriage and family life where the wife and husband together with their children can actively participate in the creation of a community that is centred on Christ and called to be a communion that is life-giving and loving (Cahill 2000, 68).

Cahill tells us that “Calvin and the Puritans see salvation as a highly communal affair. Hence the key role of the church in salvation, of family as a cell of the church and of faith in transforming every sphere of life in which believers associate” (Cahill 2000, 70-71). Calvin in his *Commentary on 1 Corinthians 16:19*, as quoted in Cahill, writes, “What a wonderful thing to put on record, that the name ‘church’ is applied to a single family, yet it is fitting that all the families of believers should be organized in such a way as to be so many little churches” (Cahill 2000, 71). A number of English clergy such as Thomas Taylor, Richard Greenham, John Downname, William Gouge, and Cotton Mather and Eleazer Mather of New England, drew analogies “between family and church and between family and state” (Cahill 2000, 71-72). The two-fold responsibility of the family as the primary educators to prepare their children to be members of a community of faith and to be active members of the civil society is made clear. Furthermore, historian Christopher Hill suggests that the role of the family in establishing a holy and orderly household was greatly influenced by the Reformation. The Reformation sought to reduce clerical authority and ecclesial control in favour of a more active participation of the lay people in positions of responsibility and authority within the church (Hill 1964, 385).

Cahill identifies a number of characteristics that are common to the three theological viewpoints. They may be summarized as follows:

1. The prime responsibility of parents is to nurture and educate their children.
2. Parenting is a mutual and joint vocation shared equally by both partners.
3. The main purpose of parenting is to foster virtues in children that lead to fullness of life.
4. Parents provide spiritual and moral guidance.
5. Parents inspire and develop the children's capability to respond to God's call to love.
6. Parents by their example demonstrate how to live out God's call to love God and our neighbour. (Cahill 2000, 81)

Marjorie Thompson, an authority on spiritual formation, in *Family a Forming Center: A Vision of the Role of the Family in Spiritual Formation*

affirms support for these characteristics:

Clearly I am promoting a theological understanding of the Christian family as a domestic expression of the church itself. The church is the instrument through which God calls families of faith to exercise their own ministry with children – a ministry so unique nothing can fully substitute for it; a ministry of reflecting and embodying God's love to one another in the home. (Thompson 2008, 143)

With this historical background of the family and its relationship to the Church, the discussion now moves to the Scriptural, theological, and the Catholic Church's teaching regarding the family in relationship to the Church.

God is Love: A Hermeneutic of *Caritas*, Love

In Scripture there are many attributes of God such justice (Psalm 99:4), holiness (Ps 99:23), and goodness (Ps 25:8). However, I see these and all other attributes as flowing from love, which is their primary source. The approach taken in developing this theological framework has been informed by my deep conviction that God is Love. As a son, brother, spouse and father, religious educator, and family life minister I have been drawn to an understanding of God as love by my ongoing *metanoia*, a conversion or change of heart, shaped by the Great Commandment (Mt 22:37-38), the Gospel and letters of John (Jn 15:5-17; 1 Jn 4), and the letters of Paul (1Cor 13, Rom 5:7,8; Eph 3:14-21).

Benedict XVI in his encyclical, *Deus Est Caritas*, (God Is Love) addresses the subject by beginning with these words from the First Letter of John:

“God is love, and he who abides in love abides in God, and God abides in him” (1 Jn 4:16). These words from the First Letter of John express with remarkable clarity the heart of the Christian faith: the Christian image of God and the resulting image of mankind and its destiny. . . . Being Christian is not the result of an ethical choice or a lofty idea, but the encounter with an event, a person, which gives life a new horizon and a decisive direction . . . Jesus united into a single precept th[e] commandment of love for God and the commandment of love for neighbour found in the Book of Leviticus: “You shall love your neighbour as yourself” (19:18; cf. Mk 12:29-31). Since God has first loved us (cf. 1 Jn 4:10), love is now no longer a mere “command”; it is the response to the gift of love with which God draws near to us. (Benedict XVI 2005, 1)

Within the words of John we find the heart of the Christian faith, the Christian image of God, our image, the image of our destiny. Our identity as Christians comes as the result of an encounter with the person of Jesus who shows us that our love is not a command but a response to the One who has first loved us.

My hermeneutic may be described as a hermeneutic of *caritas*, love, that is life giving (Jn 3:16, 10:10), liberating (Lk 4:18), and transforming (2 Cor 5:17; Gal 2:20). It is based upon my firm conviction that God is Love and that all other attributes of God flow from God's love. My hermeneutic has been informed by the Catholic tradition and its approach to interpreting Scripture in light of the complete and ultimate revelation in the person of Jesus Christ and the role of tradition and Church teaching as outlined in the *Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation, Dei Verbum*:

There exists a close connection and communication between sacred tradition and Sacred Scripture. For both of them, flowing from the same divine wellspring, in a certain way merge into a unity and tend toward the same end. . . . Consequently it is not from Sacred Scripture alone that the Church draws her certainty about everything which has been revealed. Therefore both sacred tradition and Sacred Scripture are to be accepted and venerated with the same sense of loyalty and reverence. (Paul VI, 2015d, 9)

A hermeneutic of *caritas* is very much in keeping with the pastoral principle stated by the Roman Catechism:

The whole concern of doctrine and its teaching must be directed to the love that never ends. Whether something is proposed for belief, for hope or for action, the love of our Lord must always be made accessible, so that anyone can see that all the works of perfect Christian virtue spring from love and have no other objective than to arrive at love. (CCCB 1994, 15)

This principle has been applied throughout *Parenting with Heart*.

Call and Response

In researching the Scriptural, theological and Church's understanding of the family, I was guided by the theme of call and response that arises from our Scriptural heritage (Gn 6:8-18, 17:1-8; Ex 3:1-10; 1Sm 3:1-21; Jer 31:3-4; Lk

1:26-38). It has been the subject of both Protestant (e.g. Guinness 1998) and Catholic (e.g. Gula 1999) writers. The following call themes flow from God's call to love and our understanding of what it means to be human persons and to be family.

Five Callings

In formulating the theme of call and response the following pattern is followed:

1. Called To Respond: Made for Goodness and Relationship
2. Called to Wholeness
3. Called To Be the Beloved: By Our Baptism We Become Daughters and Sons of God. We Are Sisters and Brothers of Jesus.
4. Called To Be Family: We Are Church, God's Family.
5. Called To Be a Communion of Life, of Love, and of Grace: The Family Is a Reflection of the Trinity.

To become mindful of who we are as God's beloved there is a review of the Christian understanding of who we are called to be as human persons. We are created for goodness and relationship (Gn 1:27, 31). Jesus in the Incarnation (Jn 1:14-18) comes to "re-mind," make us mindful, of how we are to respond to the call to love (Mk 12:28-34; Jn 15:9-12) as God's beloved.

Responding from the Heart

The facilitator's guide to the curriculum, *Parenting with Heart* (Appendix 1), begins by acknowledging that we have been loved into existence by a God who loves us. This is consistent with the Church's teaching that "God who created

man [*sic*] out of love also calls him to love as the fundamental and innate vocation of every human being. For man is created in the image and likeness of God who is himself love (Gn 1:27; 1 John 4:8)” (CCCB 1994, 1604).

This understanding of being loved into existence is also taken up by C.S. Lewis in *The Four Loves*: “God, who needs nothing, loves into existence wholly superfluous creatures in order that He may love and perfect them. . . . Herein is love. This is the diagram of Love Himself, the inventor of all loves” (Lewis 1960, 176). Our God knows us and calls us by name (Is 43:1; Ps 139: 13-16). Parents are invited to “re-call”, that is, to be aware of God naming us and calling us God’s beloved.

In the curriculum, I have used the word heart. My understanding of the term heart has been shaped by the spirituality and the Spiritual Exercises of Ignatius of Loyola (Ignatius of Loyola, 2013). In discussing the Spiritual Exercises David Fleming, a Jesuit Ignatian scholar, notes that “Ignatius is after a response of the heart.” (Fleming 2008, 14). He continues:

‘Heart’ does not mean the emotions (though it includes our emotions). It refers to our inner orientation, the core of our being. This kind of “heart” is what Jesus was referring to when he told us to store up treasures in heaven instead of on earth . . . (Matthew 6:12 [NAB]) This is the heart Jesus worried about when he said “from the heart comes evil thoughts . . .” (Matthew 15:19) Jesus observed that our heart can get untethered from our actions: “This people honours me with their lips, but their hearts are far from me.” (Matthew 15:8) Heart in this sense—the totality of our response—is the concern of the Spiritual. (Fleming 2008, 14)

It is this “inner orientation, the core of our being” that *Parenting with Heart* invites parents to recognize, explore, and develop. As we open our hearts to

God, we are better able to respond to God's call to love God, our neighbour, and ourselves as God loves us (Ez 11:17-20, 36:26-29; Jer 31:33; Mt 22: 37-38) with heart, "the totality of our response" (Fleming 2008, 14).

Called To Be the Beloved

It is in the re-calling of who we are and being re-minded, made mindful once again, of how we are to live as God's beloved children that we are "remembered," that is, reconnected with our loving Creator as members of the Body of Christ and the family of the Church.

Sons and Daughters of God

By our Baptism, we become daughters and sons of our God (1Jn 3:12; Rom 8:14-16). As children of God, we are sisters and brothers in Christ (Rom 8:17; Mk 3:31-34). This is not to diminish the bond between parent and child. It is rather to help us see our children as our sisters and brothers in Christ, and to make us more aware that our children are to be viewed as persons with inherent dignity and worth by being created in God's likeness and image.

Sisters and Brothers in Christ

Parents and children, as sisters and brothers in Christ, are encouraged and supported in their desire to respond to God's call to love God, neighbour and self (Mt 18:3-5, Mt 25:40; Jn 4: 19-2). In *Parenting with Heart* the term "response-able," our ability to respond to God's call to love, is used. Parents, as older sisters and brothers in Christ, are called to model for their children how we each respond

to God's call to be loving. For it is our loving God who calls us first and then continues to call us forth into the fullness of life (Jn 10:10). To be response-able, parents are encouraged to be "re-spect-full." The term "re-spect" means to look again at the person and the situation or event through the loving eyes and heart of Jesus as in Jn 8:1-11 and Lk 7:36-50. *Parenting with Heart* emphasizes building relationships where all members of the family are respectful, respected, and responsible.

Called to be Family

It is within the heart of the family that children have their first experience of what it means to be a communion that celebrates life in all its fullness. They come to know a love that reflects the faithful enduring love of God, and welcomes the loving presence of the Divine in their midst.

From Catholic teaching is taken the understanding of parents as the primary educators of their children. The task of educating children is seen as the primary vocation of the married couple as stated in the *Declaration on Christian Education*, "Since parents have conferred life on their children, they have a most solemn obligation to educate their offspring. Hence, parents must be acknowledged as the first and foremost educators of their children" (Paul VI 2015a, 2).

There are many other views regarding the education of children. Some see it as the responsibility of religious institutions, state institutions such as public schools, all day kindergarten, and childcare centres, private enterprise, or the

home with home schooling. The Church recognizes the parents' need for support from the whole community, "The family which has the primary duty of imparting education needs help of the whole community. In addition, therefore, to the rights of parents and others to whom the parents entrust a share in the work of education, certain rights and duties belong indeed to civil society, whose role is to direct what is required for the common temporal good" (Paul VI 2015a, 3).

Love is central in the education of children. Parents are called to "create a family atmosphere animated by love and respect for God and man, in which the well-rounded personal and social education of children is fostered. Hence the family is the first school of the social virtues that every society needs" (Paul VI 2015a, 3). To participate in the creation of an atmosphere that is animated by love that fosters the well-rounded education of the whole child, *Parenting with Heart* invites parents to be Nurturers of the Heart and Teachers of Love.

Following the above themes, a theological framework was developed by drawing upon lessons from Scripture, Tradition, which includes Church teaching and sacramental life, that impact the project and shed light on directions and approaches to be taken in creating a parenting curriculum.

Called To Be a Communion of Life, of Love,
and of Grace

The Church's teaching on this subject is very comprehensive. Following the recognition of the family as the domestic church by the Second Vatican Council much has been written about the role of parents, family, and the

education of children in building up the Church by being a communion of life, of love and of grace (Second Vatican Council 2014b, 11). Among the writings are the *Apostolic Exhortation on the Role of the Christian Family, Familiaris Consortio* (John Paul II 1981), the *Declaration on Christian Education, Gravissimum Educationis* (Paul VI 2015a), and the *Decree of the Apostolate of the Laity, Apostolicam Actuositatem* (Paul VI 2015c). A review of the key teachings as they relate to the family and *Parenting with Heart* is presented in the section on Church teaching.

Scripture: God’s Story and the Family Story

The understanding of who we are as human persons is essential to our discussion of the family, family as domestic church, and family as ministry. The underlying theme throughout the thesis is one of call and response. The constant call of our Loving Creator who has loved us into being seeks us out. This call reminds us of who we are, where we come from, and where we are ultimately going.

The Human Person—Made for Goodness and Relationship

We are created in God’s image. We are “very good” and as Desmond Tutu states, “We are made for goodness” (Tutu and Tutu 2014):

So God created humankind in his image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them . . . God saw everything that he had made, and indeed, it was very good. And there was evening and there was morning, the sixth day. (Gn 1:27,31)

Made for Relationship

We are created to be in an intimate relationship with our Creator who has enlivened us with his breath and sustains us with that very breath “then the Lord God formed man from the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and the man became a living being” (Gn 2:7). It is this intimate connection that binds us to the Immortal One. Even in our apparent estrangement from the One who has loved us into being we are ever being called back home as the prodigal (Lk 15:11-32), (Tutu and Tutu 2010, 26). Augustine in his *Confessions*, put it so well, “You have made us for yourself, O God, and our heart is restless until it rests in you” (Augustine 2014, Ii).

Relationship with our Creator is our reason for being (Is 43:1; Is 49:15-16). It is a relationship that is founded on love. John (1 Jn 4:7-17) assures us that God is love and whoever abides in God abides in love. Further on he reminds us that we cannot love God whom we do not see and hate our sisters and brothers whom we do see (1 Jn 4:19-21). In an era of individualism and materialism, there seems to be an increased desire for connection and real relationships. It is a symptom of disconnection to see individuals attached to their personal electronic devices desperately trying to be in touch with their friends through virtual reality. We are made for more than this. As an educator I have seen how our young people have great difficulty to be still and become silent without the great urge to text or phone their friends or, what is even more disturbing, to be interacting with digital distractions.

Called to Wholeness

We often, however, seek to fill this desire for God with gods or idols of our own making. This has strong implications for us adults who as parents and caregivers of the young transmit these mistaken images and understanding of God to our children. I am in agreement with Tutu who suggests that we often confuse the being good with goodness (Tutu and Tutu 2010, 23). This confusion arises because we have been conditioned to believe that to be good we must be perfect. In other words, we must be flawless.

Tutu proposes that another way of interpreting “Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect” (Mt 5:8) is to consider this a call to wholeness (Tutu and Tutu 2010, 43). We can spend our lives considering our failures and shortcomings as barriers to our perfection. This, in turn, causes us to believe that we are unworthy and a disappointment to our God. We lose sight of who we are created to be. We cannot see ourselves as “very good” human persons created in the image and likeness of God.

Naming the Beloved

In our world we can experience separation/alienation from our Source. We feel lost and alone. We seek our identity, our purpose and destiny. We long to find our way home. How do we become reunited with our Creator who has loved us into being and longs to be in an intimate relationship with us? The discussion now turns to the Baptism of Jesus (Matt 3:12-14; Mk 1-9; Lk 3:21-22). John questions the need for Jesus’ Baptism. Certainly it is John who is in need of Baptism by

Jesus. Yet it is essential that Jesus undergo the baptism. What the baptism does is affirm what he has been struggling to articulate as a human being. What is my relationship to the Creator? Who am I? What is my call? What is to be my response? These are the same questions we may find ourselves asking. This should come to us as no surprise. The writer of Hebrews calls us to be mindful of the humanity of Jesus, “We do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who in every respect has been tested as we are, yet without sin” (Heb 4:15).

The Baptism of Jesus

What takes place at the Baptism, Monty Williams, spiritual director and Ignatian scholar, suggests, is the affirmation and naming of the beloved (Williams 2009, 165-167). “You are my Son, the Beloved, with you I am well pleased” (Lk 3:21-22). The Jesus who was born of Mary, welcomed as foster child by Joseph, heralded by the angels, and adored by shepherds and the Magi, has had revealed to him his identity, his call as God’s Beloved Son. It is noted that before there is a call and commissioning there is the naming. It is then that Jesus will enter into the desert, where he will be put to the test by the Tempter (Mt 4; Mk 1; Lk 4), before he begins his public ministry. His call will become clear: to love God with all his heart, soul, mind, and strength (Dt 6:4-6; Mt 22:36-38; Mk 12:29-31).

Yet, Williams reminds us that “When we are called to love [by our Creator], we are called to relationship. Each of us is loved for who we are, not for what we do. It is the other in the relationship who acknowledges us. This is pure

gift. . . . This is what Christ experienced at his baptism in the Jordan; God declares Jesus to be ‘my beloved Son.’ It is what we experience when God calls us by name” (Williams 2009, 166). By our baptism we are the adopted daughters and sons of God (1 Jn 3:12; Rom 8:14-16). We are each God’s beloved. This naming as the “beloved” plays a key role in the parenting curriculum *Parenting with Heart*. Both children and parents are first called to see and to know themselves as the beloved daughters and sons of God. Nouwen in *A Spirituality of Caregiving* reminds us that “Before we are caregivers, we are beloved children of God. As we come to claim this identity, we begin to see more and more that all others in our human family are also unconditionally cherished by our loving Creator” (Nouwen 2011, 29).

Called To Be Family: Co-operators in God’s Plan

Within the Catholic tradition as is the case in many societies and cultures, the family has been seen as the primary institution on which society is built. The Catholic Church teaches that the family is the “vital cell of society”(Paul VI 2015c, 11) and that “the importance and centrality of the family with regard to the person and society is repeatedly underlined by Sacred Scripture [Gn 2:18, 1:26, 2:24]” (Vatican 2015, 209).

Relationship and Communion

The vital role of the family in God’s plan of creation and salvation begins with the creation of the first parents, Adam and Eve. Male and female they are

created in the image and likeness of God (Gn 1:26, 27). They are called into relationship for it is not good for them to be alone (Gn 2: 18). They form a union and become co-operators with God in the creation of new life and a family (Gn 2:24, 4:1-2).

Participating in God's Plan of Salvation

It is through the family that the plan of God's salvation unfolds. God calls families to participate in the plan. Some examples include: the call of Noah and his family to ensure the continuation of the human family after the great flood (Gn 5:18, 9:8-17), the call of Abraham and Sarah to leave their homeland and to become the parents of many nations (Gn 12:1-5, 17:5), the call of Moses who with the help of his brother Aaron is called to lead God's people out of their bondage in Egypt and to enter into a covenant with God to become God's people (Ex 3:1-11, 24:1-8). From among God's chosen people God calls Zechariah and Elizabeth, a descendant of Aaron, to be the parents of the one to herald the coming of the Messiah (Lk 1: 5-17). Mary and Joseph are called to become the humble and holy family of Nazareth as mother and foster-father of Jesus (Mt 1:18-25; Lk 2: 51-52).

Parents as Educators

As noted above, Catholic teaching sees the parents as the primary educators of their children (Paul VI 2015a, 2-3). The lessons drawn from Scripture regarding the education of children are helpful and supportive in

affirming this important task. There are many references to parents and child raising and education to be found in Scripture. Proverbs 22:6, “Train children in the right way, and when old, they will not stray.” and Ephesians 6:1-4 on children and parents:

Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right. ‘Honour your father and mother’—this is the first commandment with a promise: ‘so that it may be well with you and you may live long on the earth.’ And, fathers, do not provoke your children to anger, but bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord.

They set a helpful direction for parents to follow. There are some passages that discuss approaches to discipline such as found in Proverbs 13:24; 19:18; 22:15; 23:13; 29:17, and these will be discussed further in a section below.

Proverbs 22:6, and Ephesians 6:1-4 may be seen as guidelines for parents. However, I was drawn to the approach taken in Deuteronomy 6 that instructs parents on how to teach and transmit to their children the Great Commandment. It is an approach that focuses on living out the Great Commandment. In this way it is similar to the method applied in *Parenting with Heart*.

In Deuteronomy 6:1-9, Moses instructs the people of Israel, the parents, so that they may observe and teach their children the great commandment. They are to do this “so that things may go well with you, and so that you may multiply . . . as the Lord, the God of your ancestors has promised you” (Dt 6:3).

How are the parents to teach their children? They are to appropriate the Great Commandment. “Keep the words that I am commanding you today in your heart” (Dt 6:7). They are to remind their children by re-calling, or reciting those

words. “Recite them to your children and talk about them when you are at home . . . when you lie down and when you rise” (Dt 6:7). The commandment is not static but dynamic and to be actualized in everyday living. As a constant reminder of the call, the commandment to love, it is to be affixed to the hand, the forehead, and to be written on the doorposts of the homes and gates (Dt 6:8-9). In their actions, the hand, in their thoughts, the forehead, and in their everyday living, the home, and in their coming and going, the doorpost and gates, parents and their children are being called to respond to God’s call to love. In *Parenting with Heart* parents are invited to help their children recall that they are God’s beloved and that they are called from their rising to their lying down, in their thoughts, words, and deeds to respond to the Great Commandment of Love.

Making the Story of God’s Love Come to Life

Parents as educators bring to their children an appreciation of the story of God’s love for us throughout all time. For the people of Israel, the central story of their relationship with God is the liberation from slavery and captivity in Egypt that is remembered and celebrated at Passover (Dt 6:20-25; Ex 12: 1-28). Still today at the Seder meal, the youngest member of the family asks four questions of the leader beginning with, “Why is this night different from all other nights?” (Sherman and Gold 1993, 25). In recalling the story, the children experience with the family in their home an age-old tradition that is central to their faith, the faith of their mothers and fathers. Within the Catholic sacramental tradition, the rites and rituals such as those associated with Eucharist, and reconciliation can come to

life when children see love and nurturing in breaking of the bread around the family table and opportunity for forgiveness and healing when relationships are broken.

The Family's Response to the Call To Love

It is through their relationship with their parents on a day-to-day basis that the children are educated and raised in an atmosphere of love. In *Parenting with Heart*, the love of the God is used as the model for parental love and the love all members of the family share as they live out their call to be a communion of life, of love, and of grace. In the Great Commandment (Mk 12:28-34) and Jesus' New Commandment (Jn 13:34-35; Jn 15:9-12), we find the foundational call to love. In developing the curriculum, the work of Hans Daigeler, theologian and author of the working paper of the Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops, *Responsible Parenting: Biblical and Theological Reflections*, was followed (Daigeler 1983, 20-23). Daigeler puts forward God's love as a model for families.

Love is God's call to be loving. As God loves each one of us as God's beloved daughters and sons, parents are called to love and care for their children as God's beloved (Mk 1:9-11; Jn 15:9-12; Mk 9:37). The care and love God has for us and all humanity is made manifest in the sending of God's only Son (Jn 3:16). Love is God's call to serve (Jn 13:1-13). We are able to give love for we have first received it from the God who is the Source of Love (1 Jn 4:7- 21).

Love is God's call to educate and to draw out the goodness, gifts, and talents of our children, God's beloved. Love is God's call to know God and to

enter into an intimate relationship with God (Is 43:1-5, 49:14-15). Parents are called to know their children and to foster and nurture a loving relationship with them (Jn 15:12-17; Jn 21:15-17; Ps 23). Love is God's call to be respectful. Parents are called to respect the individuality, uniqueness, and worth of their children who are created in God's image and likeness to be a reflection of God's love (1Cor 13:1-13).

Love is God's call to be forgiving. In relationships with their children parents may experience times of disappointment, sadness, anger, and even rejection. As God forgives, parents are called to be forgiving (Lk 18:11-32). Daigeler reminds us that "When children wrong their parents, forgiveness calls for the latter to heal the hurt and the pain, to surmount the barrier, and to use the experience of failure to create a new quality of relationship. New depths can emerge in parent child relationships as forgiveness heals wounds" (Daigeler 1983, 23).

Parenting with Heart and Not with Hurt

In *Parenting with Heart* the subject of discipline is discussed. Encouragement, respect for others and self, social interest, and concern for the well being of others in the community, the family, are presented as ways to create relationships that are respectful and life giving. They provide the context for an alternative to rewards and punishment: positive discipline through natural and reasonable outcomes, or consequences.

Given the imagery of our God as a loving parent, it is of concern that certain passages from Scripture have had a negative influence on approaches to parenting especially in the area of discipline that is often equated with corporal punishment. Michael Lawson, an authority on marriage and family ministry, cites as examples the following passages: (Prv 13:24; 19:18; 22:15; 23:13; 29:17) (Lawson 2011, 78). He carefully admonishes parents to be mindful:

The teaching about discipline must be couched within the overall teaching about the family. The model to follow is God the Father Himself. Unfortunately many parents see God as exclusively harsh and judgmental while failing to see His patient, providential care and love as He calls His human family and especially Israel's family back to the wholesome life He has designed for them" (Lawson 2011, 78).

William J. Webb, a Biblical scholar, has done an extensive study and commentary on the Biblical basis for the use of corporal punishment on children, adults, and slaves by applying a redemptive-movement hermeneutic (Webb 2011, 31-33, 49, 50). I have chosen to discuss Webb's work because his hermeneutic approach is consistent with my hermeneutic of *caritas*. He presents an alternative approach to discipline that seeks to move beyond corporal punishment. This approach is very much in keeping with the one of the principles presented in *Parenting with Heart*: "parenting with heart and not with hurt." Webb describes his approach as, ". . . a *redemptive-movement* appropriation of Scripture, which at times encourages movement beyond its concrete-specific instructions in order to pursue an ultimate application of Scripture that yields a greater fulfillment of its redemptive spirit . . ." (Webb 2011, 58).

In his study Webb examines the passages from Proverbs noted above by Lawson, other passages referring to punishment by parents (Sir 30:12; Dt 21:18-21), and passages referring to God's disciplining God's people (Dt 8:5; Ps 89:32; 2 Sam 7:14; Heb 12:5-7). In his conclusion Webb reminds us that as Christians we must be mindful of how our parenting actions impact on our witness for Jesus. He states, "If how we *act* toward children in our parenting practices and what we *say* about troubling corporal punishment texts intersect in a confirming and consistent redemptive fashion, then followers of Jesus might actually be able to engage their neighbours in a positive and proactive way" (Webb 2011, 136). He advocates an "alternative-discipline-only discipline [non-corporal punishment]" (Webb 2011, 137) and states that such an approach "carries the redemptive spirit and ethical application of Scripture further in five important ways: more gentle (least violent) means, increased safety against abuse, more constructive means, greater human dignity, and enhanced Christian witness" (Webb 2011, 137).

Biblical scholar David Garland and Diana Garland, noted authority in the field of social work and family ministry, also help to place the lessons from Proverbs regarding family and parenting (Prv 30:21, 23; 6:29; 17:25; 29:17) in a context that is more conducive to building a communion of life and love. They suggest:

The stories of Abraham, Sarah and Hagar . . . Jacob and his sons, and David and his sons Amnon and Absalom illustrate these truths, and they communicate things that cannot be communicated by proverbs. Their stories have much more power than the preceding proverbs do, because they invite us into the complexities and depths of life as we experience it. We can see our own conflicts and problems and may even find comfort in

seeing ourselves in the company of these ancient family members of Jesus. (Garland and Garland 2007, 12-13).

It is into this human family with its conflicts, vulnerabilities, and imperfections that Jesus comes to reveal to us God's faithful and everlasting love for us, God's beloved (Jn 3:16-17).

The Bishops of Southern Africa (SACBC 2013) have clearly stated a legitimate position of the Catholic Church on the use of corporal punishment:

There is nothing in the Catechism of the Catholic Church which supports the right of parents to use corporal punishment. The New Zealand Catholic Bishops' Conference asserts that "Our basic Christian teaching applies equally to children and adults: *every person is made in the image and likeness of God and therefore has an innate dignity*. We invoke this teaching in confirming our commitment to support everything that will promote the protection of children" (NZCBC 2014). (SACBC 2013)

Recent Catholic Church Teaching

For parents who are called to receive their children as gifts from a loving God who invites them to be co-creators, it is essential that they have a clear understanding of the Christian view of the human person. The Church, in *Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church*, affirms that children are received as a gift and with the precious gift of children there is the inherent responsibility to foster their wholeness and ability to respond to God's love as persons created in God's image and likeness.

The family has central importance in reference to the person. It is in this cradle of life and love that people are born and grow; when a child is conceived, society receives the gift of a new person . . . In the climate of natural affection which unites the members of a family unit, persons are recognized and learn responsibility in the wholeness of their personhood. (Vatican 2015, 212)

The Human Person

This understanding of the human person is drawn from the teachings of the Catholic tradition as outlined in the Catechism of the Catholic Church (CCCB 1994). Created in the image and likeness of God, we have innate dignity and goodness. We have been created by God's love. The "[human person] alone is called by God to share, by knowledge and love, in God's own life. It was for this end that he was created, and this is the fundamental reason for his dignity" (CCCB 1994, 356). Because we are created in the image and likeness of God we are "capable of self-knowledge, of self possession . . . and of entering into communion with other persons" (CCCB 1994, 357). We are created equal. Man and woman are both with one and the same dignity "in the image of God" (CCCB 1994, 369). "Endowed with a spiritual soul, with intellect and with free will, the human person is from his very conception ordered to God and destined for eternal beatitude . . ." (CCCB 1994, 1711). The human person is endowed with a moral conscience that opens him to God's call "ever calling him to love and to do what is good and to avoid evil" (CCCB 1994, 1776).

The Family: Three Communions

The family is called to be a "communion of life, a communion of love and a communion of grace" (OCCB 1983, 2). The family is the child's first school. Through the family children learn how to share with family members and one another, how to become aware of their own worth, and how to recognize the

worth and dignity of all persons. (OCCB 1983, 2-3) To become a communion of life the family is first called to be a communion of love.

A person cannot live without love. If love is not revealed to someone; if a person does not encounter love and experience it and take it to heart, if a person does not participate intimately in love, then that person's own being remains to himself or to herself incomprehensible; her life, his life is senseless. (OCCB 1983, 3)

Called To Be Family: Become What You Are

The family was recognized as the domestic church by the Second Vatican Council (Second Vatican Council 2014b, 11). An elaboration of the important role of the family in the Church is found in *The Apostolic Exhortation: The Role of the Christian Family in the Modern World, Familiaris Consortio* (FC), (John Paul II 1981). The call of the Church and those who minister to the family is to support the parents and their children in becoming what they are:

The family finds in the plan of God the Creator and Redeemer not only its identity, what it is, but also its mission, what it can and should do. . . . And since in God's plan it has been established as an "intimate community of life and love," [Second Vatican Council 2014b, 48] the family has the mission to become more and more what it is, that is to say, a community of life and love, in an effort that will find fulfillment, as will everything created and redeemed, in the Kingdom of God. (FC, 17)

The theological teachings and pastoral approaches presented in this foundational document form the basis of the discussion that follows.

In the Catholic sacramental tradition, the sacrament of marriage is seen as a sign of God's love for the People of God:

The communion of love between God and people, a fundamental part of the Revelation and faith experience of Israel, finds a meaningful expression in the marriage covenant, which is established between a man and a woman.

For this reason the central word of Revelation, "God loves His people," is likewise proclaimed through the living and concrete word whereby a man and a woman express their conjugal love. Their bond of love becomes the image and the symbol of the covenant, which unites God and His people. (FC, 12)

The loving relationship of the married couple is "the real representation, by means of the sacramental sign, of the very relationship of Christ with the Church" (FC, 13). Marriage "is the foundation of the wider community of the family, since the very institution of marriage and conjugal love are ordained to the procreation and education of children, in whom they find their crowning" (FC, 14). Children are a gift and a reflection and sign of God's love. "When they become parents, spouses receive from God the gift of a new responsibility. Their parental love is called to become for the children the visible sign of the very love of God, 'from whom every family in heaven and on earth is named' [Eph 3:15]" (FC, 14).

Familiaris Consortio goes on to outline in detail the teachings and approaches necessary to address these four tasks of the family as they participate in God's mission:

1. forming a community of persons
2. serving life
3. participating in the development of society
4. sharing in the life and mission of the Church (FC, 17)

These tasks have much in common with the six foundational pillars of the organization, Focus on the Family, which are discussed in Chapter Three.

God's Mission and the Family Mission

The working paper of the Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops:

Building Christian Families makes clear the missional role of the family as the domestic church:

Building on the teaching of the Fathers of the Church, Vatican II has called the Christian family “the domestic church.” [Second Vatican Council 2014b, 11] This implies the family is summoned by the Word of God and receives from the Church the mission of announcing the Kingdom within itself, and outside, in the setting which is proper to it...

Through its faith the People of God must be able to define the pastoral mission of couples and families and in light of their lived experiences, to interpret the signs of the time and the realities of today's world. Indeed, God's salvation plan will be realized by, through and with them. (Rochon and McCarthy 1983, 7, 9)

Missiologist David Bosch notes the impact of Vatican II on the position of the Catholic Church with respect to God's call to the People of God to go beyond evangelization and the planting of churches (Bosch 2011, 386). This is made clear in the opening sentence of *The Pastoral Constitution of the Church in the Modern World, Gaudium et Spes* “The joy and hope, the grief and anguish of the people of our time, especially those who are poor or afflicted in any way, are the joy and hope, the grief and anguish of the followers of Christ as well. Nothing fails to find an echo in their hearts that is genuinely human” (Second Vatican Council 2014c, 1).

Gaudium et Spes, set the stage for a greater participation of all the church, the People of God, to actively participate in the mission of the Church (Second Vatican Council 2014c). There was great momentum for renewal, and a true engagement of the laity in being Christ to and for others (Second Vatican Council

2014c). There was an authentic desire for inclusivity among fellow Christians and closer ties with all people of goodwill. *The Decree on Ecumenism, Unitatis Redintegratio* signalled this shift (Second Vatican Council 2014a).

Fifty years after the Vatican II, there is a call for the new evangelization within the Catholic Church. It provides us with an excellent opportunity to recall who we are as Christians and renew our efforts to respond to God's call to be who we are called to be: a missional church, a people sent out into the world. We are a people on mission. Bosch gives this definition of mission:

Mission was understood as being derived from the very nature of God. It was put in the context of the doctrine of the Trinity, not of ecclesiology or soteriology. The classical doctrine on *missio Dei* as God the Father sending the Son, and God the Father and the Son sending the Holy Spirit was expanded to include yet another "movement" the Father, Son and Holy Spirit sending the church into the world. (Bosch 2011, 399)

We are called to incarnate the Word so that once again Jesus may take on flesh and blood and dwell among us.

Companions on the Journey

The Church recognizes the need to assist families to participate in God's mission. Part four of *Familiaris Consortio*, Pastoral Care of the Family: Stages and Structures, Agents and Situations, examines the way in which the Church can support the family throughout the life cycle:

Like every other living reality, the family too is called upon to develop and grow. After the preparation of engagement and the sacramental celebration of marriage, the couple begin their daily journey towards the progressive actuation of the values and duties of marriage itself. . . .

Therefore, it must be emphasized once more that the pastoral intervention of the Church in support of the family is a matter of urgency.

Every effort should be made to strengthen and develop pastoral care for the family, which should be treated as a real matter of priority, in the certainty that future evangelization depends largely on the domestic Church. (FC, 65)

The initial emphasis is placed upon marriage preparation. This preparation takes place in three phases:

1. Remote preparation begins in early childhood. . . . It is the period when esteem for all authentic human values is instilled, both in interpersonal and in social relationships, with all that this signifies for the formation of character . . . (FC, 66)
2. [*P*]roximate preparation, which—from the suitable age and with adequate catechesis, as in a catechumenal process—involves a more specific preparation for the sacraments, as it were, a rediscovery of them. (FC, 66)
3. The *immediate preparation* for the celebration of the sacrament of Matrimony should take place in the months and weeks immediately preceding the wedding, so as to give a new meaning, content and form to the so-called premarital enquiry required by Canon Law. (FC, 66)

Pastoral care (support) after the celebration of the sacrament of marriage is seen to be equally important:

The pastoral care of the regularly established family signifies, in practice, the commitment of all the members of the local ecclesial community to helping the couple to discover and live their new vocation and mission. In order that the family may be ever more a true community of love, it is necessary that all its members should be helped and trained in their responsibilities as they face the new problems that arise, in mutual service, and in active sharing in family life. (FC, 69)

The role of the bishop in this task is highlighted, “It will be his particular care to make the diocese ever more truly a ‘diocesan family,’ a model and source of hope for the many families that belong to it” (FC, 73). By extension, priests and deacons are called to provide support and assistance to the married couples and their families. “Priests and deacons, when they have received timely and serious

preparation for this apostolate, must unceasingly act towards families as fathers, brothers, pastors and teachers, assisting them with the means of grace and enlightening them with the light of truth” (FC, 73). However, ministries to offer the practical help, support, and training of parents and families in living out their vocation need further development.

The discussion of support to help parents and families face the challenges of the transitions and family life cycle situations is quite succinct:

Other difficult circumstances in which the family needs the help of the ecclesial community and its pastors are: the children's adolescence, which can be disturbed, rebellious and sometimes stormy; the children's marriage, which takes them away from their family; lack of understanding or lack of love on the part of those held most dear; abandonment by one of the spouses, or his or her death, which brings the painful experience of widowhood, or the death of a family member, which breaks up and deeply transforms the original family nucleus.

Similarly, the Church cannot ignore the time of old age, with all its positive and negative aspects. In old age married love, which has been increasingly purified and ennobled by long and unbroken fidelity, can be deepened. There is the opportunity of offering to others, in a new form, the kindness and the wisdom gathered over the years, and what energies remain. But there is also the burden of loneliness, more often psychological and emotional rather than physical, which results from abandonment or neglect on the part of children and relations. There is also suffering caused by ill-health, by the gradual loss of strength, by the humiliation of having to depend on others, by the sorrow of feeling that one is perhaps a burden to one's loved ones, and by the approach of the end of life. (FC, 77)

The immensity of the task to support families throughout the family life cycle from the care of newborns, raising young children and adolescents, ministry to young adults, care for married couples and their families, to compassionate care of the elderly, presents many challenges.

Sacraments

The primary way the Church addresses these life cycle events and the attending circumstances each brings is through the sacraments by means of catechesis, religious education, sacramental preparation, and pastoral care. The sacramental tradition of the Church follows the life cycle events in the rites embodied in the seven sacraments.

The Sacraments of Initiation

Baptism: Children are welcomed into the Christian community and begin the journey of faith to live out their baptismal call as priest, prophet, and beloved child of the Royal Shepherd, King, (CCCB 1994, 1267-1270).

It is within the family that the children are reminded that they are God's beloved who are called to respond to God's call to love as they are loved. Parents can help them to live each day as daughters and sons of God. They are members of a larger family (Eph 3:14-15). Baptism is not a one-time event but an ongoing process that empowers and invites the followers of Jesus to growth and to conversion as they face the challenges of living together as a community (Rm 6:4).

Eucharist: The children, with the family of believers, participate in this celebration of thanksgiving, are nourished by God's word and God's body and blood, and sent forth to love and serve God and neighbour (CCCB 1994, 1360, 1407-1408).

For families mealtimes and family gatherings around the table provide an opportunity to recall the graces, blessings, and challenges experienced throughout

the day. In the sharing of our stories and in the breaking of the bread, like the disciples on the road to Emmaus (Lk 24:27-32), we remember and are reconnected as the Body of Christ. We are in communion (Mt 18:20).

Confirmation: The young person/adult is further prepared to live out their baptismal call and realize in their daily living a life empowered by the Holy Spirit they received at baptism (CCCB 1994, 1302-1305).

Again, confirmation is not a one-time event but rather an invitation for young adults to be more response-able and to intentionally live out God's call to love as they are loved. They do not arrive at that point without the love, support, teaching, and guidance of their parents and those who take the role of parents. Oftentimes this aspect of parenting goes on unseen and unnoticed, as with Jesus (Lk 2:51-52), yet the impact of this devotion on the child is immense. In this way they are better equipped to continue their journey of faith as young adults.

For adults wishing to become members of the Church, there is the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults (RCIA). Through a process of catechesis and companioning, the candidates are prepared to receive and celebrate the sacraments. Family members and friends may act as sponsors and mentors. They accompany the candidate through this journey of faith.

Sacraments of Healing

Reconciliation: Throughout our lives we are called to take account of the ways in which we have failed to love God, our neighbour and our self. We seek

pardon and mercy and restoration of broken relationships that have separated us from the family of God (CCCB 1994, 1421, 1468-1469).

Wives and husbands, parents and children are called to be reconcilers and to be reconciled (Mt 5:23-25). Couples are often advised to settle any differences before the end of each day (Eph 4:26). The lived daily experience of loving forgiveness and the restoration of relationships brings life to the sacrament of reconciliation that brings healing and renewal.

Anointing of the Sick: In times of illness and frailty that weaken the body, mind, heart, and spirit, this sacrament calls forth the comfort and compassion of the Divine Healer to bring physical, emotional, mental, and spiritual comfort and healing (CCCB 1994, 1499, 1520).

Throughout the life cycle, families experience illness, stress, loss and pain. The sacrament of anointing of the sick recognizes this and calls families to participate in Jesus call to care for the sick, the dying, and those who suffer in our families and in our communities (Mt. 25:36, 5:4; Jas 5:14).

Sacraments of Commitment

Marriage: Celebrates the covenant of the couple that choose to commit themselves to one another for life to become a communion of life, of love, and of grace (CCCB, 1994, 1601).

As noted below, it is the couple who are the ministers of this sacrament. Marriage is a sacrament that is dynamic rather than static. It has been said that after the wedding is over, the marriage begins. Wife and Husband invite Christ to

be at the centre of their lives and to be the source of life and love throughout their journey together. Each day they live out their call to be a reflection of God's faithful and constant love for us all.

Holy Orders: Celebrates the choice of the person to commit their life in love and service to God and God's people (CCCB 1994, 1536).

Although not included among the sacraments, the commitment of women and men to a consecrated single life as a religious sister or brother and, indeed, the commitment to love and serve God as a single person are to be celebrated and nurtured by the Church (CCCB 1994, 1618).

Rite of Christian Burial

The sacraments accompany the family through the life cycle. Death is not the end but rather a beginning that marks our entry into eternity. While not one of the seven sacraments, this rite celebrates the life of the person and commits them to our Loving God as they continue on to the next stage of life (CCCB 1994, 1684).

Appropriation of the Sacraments

Within the Catholic Church the distinction between the laity and clergy has played a significant role in distancing the lay People of God from their baptismal call to participate in the priesthood of all believers.

The baptized have become "living stones" to be "built into a spiritual house, to be a holy priesthood." [1 Pt 2:5] By Baptism they share in the priesthood of Christ, in his prophetic and royal mission. They are "a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's own people, that

[they] may declare the wonderful deeds of him who called [them] out of darkness into his marvellous light.”[1 Pt 2:9] *Baptism gives a share in the common priesthood of all believers.* (CCCB 1994, 1268)

It has been that there is a common misconception among couples preparing for marriage that it is the priest who administers the sacrament of marriage. In actual fact it is the couple, wife and husband who are the ministers of the sacrament. The Church teaching is that “According to Latin tradition, the spouses as ministers of Christ's grace mutually confer upon each other the sacrament of Matrimony by expressing their consent before the Church” (CCCB 1994, 1623).

In their everyday lives parents and their children are called to participate in the priestly, prophetic, and royal mission of Jesus. Sacraments are signs that mark a beginning and not an end. They empower us and call us to live out what they signify: the loving presence of God in our everyday lives, the God who calls us to fullness of life. Sacraments are meant to bring wholeness and not to create an artificial division between what is holy and what is human.

We celebrate sacraments in daily living. For example, we encounter the sacrament of Eucharist not only in “the breaking of the bread” but also in “the baking of the bread.” Craig Dykstra , noted Christian educator, speaks of this experience and encounter of the loving presence of God as he describes his son’s experience at Sunday school

I was having a typical what-did-you-do-in-Sunday school-today conversation with my two sons. The younger, who was six, came up to me with this: “My teacher, we made bread together and I ate mine already and it was good.” I didn’t pay much attention at the time, but the line stuck

with me. As I thought about it, it occurred to me that he had said something both simple and deep about what good teaching in the church is like. (Dykstra 2005, 162)

As families gather around the table to break bread there is an excellent opportunity to make the time to share the stories of their day that reveal God's loving presence in their midst. They can celebrate the day with thanksgiving, Eucharist. In forgiving and in seeking forgiveness for all the times we have been unloving or have been hurt, we bring healing and restoration of broken relationships, Reconciliation. In caring for one another in times of illness and misfortune we bring healing. Each day provides occasions for the family members to invite Jesus to be in their midst and to send his Holy Spirit to empower them to help them to be a communion of life, of love, and of grace. The sacraments call us to an awareness of God's grace in our lives that we often miss. We begin to experience the real meaning and significance of the rites and rituals: God's loving presence in our midst. The occasions of the presence of the Divine are so obvious but we are often blind to them because they seem too ordinary.

Catechesis and religious education have an important role in the faith formation of the family and, indeed, all the laity. On-going formation, transformation, and evangelization are required to nurture and support families and the whole People of God on their daily journey of faith. Much work is needed to bring to the whole People of God an understanding of spirituality and of holiness that speak to them and give real meaning to their lives.

The opportunities for ministry and service to families are great. They call for involvement and support from the whole faith community in collaboration with many agencies, services, for example, Catholic Charities, Catholic Family Services, and organizations beyond usual Church boundaries. It does “take a whole village to raise a child” (Afripro 2014). Therefore the project to develop and evaluate a Christian parenting curriculum focused on that one limited aspect of the family life cycle.

The Monastery and the Call To Be Family

Although the focus of this project thesis has been on the family: wife, husband and children, it is important to recognize another way of being family in the Church: the consecrated life of women and men religious who join religious congregations and orders as sisters and brothers. These religious communities have their beginnings in the monastic tradition that began to flourish in the early centuries of the Church. Church teaching tells us:

From the very beginning of the Church there were men and women who set out to follow Christ with greater liberty, and to imitate him more closely, by practicing the evangelical counsels [chastity, poverty, and obedience]. They led lives dedicated to God, each in his own way. Many of them, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, became hermits or founded religious families. These the Church, by virtue of her authority, gladly accepted and approved. (Paul VI 2015b, 1)

From the God-given seed of the counsels a wonderful and wide-spreading tree has grown up in the field of the Lord, branching out into various forms of the religious life lived in solitude or in community. Different religious families have come into existence in which spiritual resources are multiplied for the progress in holiness of their members and for the good of the entire Body of Christ. (Second Vatican Council 2014b, 43)

This discussion of the rise of monasteries in the life of the Church and the vocation of single men and women religious draws upon the work of noted theologian Keenan Osborne (Osborne 1993). The development of the monastic way of life (ca. 250-600) has had a long lasting effect on the Church even to this day. During the early centuries of the monastic movement was non-clerical and led by laywomen and men who sought to be disciples of Jesus in settings apart from the secular world.

The monastic way of life created an “alternative church” and an alternative family (Osborne 1993, 233). During these centuries there were two ways to be laypersons in the Church. The first and most common was as parents and spouses who were farmers and labourers. The second was as nuns and monks. The path of discipleship chosen by the nuns and monks slowly evolved to be known as the “better” way (Osborne 1993, 234). Even today in the Catholic tradition, many single people, couples, and parents see the nuns, sisters, and religious brothers as being more spiritual and holy.

As monasteries developed they established communities and rules by which to live. Pachomius, one of the key figures in the monastic movement, founded such a community (ca. 320-325). Osborne tells us that “For Pachomius a strongly motivating ideal was the community of the primitive church in Jerusalem, in which everyone shared his or her possessions in the community structure. In many ways, with the wall of separation from the outside world and even the outside church . . . these enclaves can be seen as replicas of the primitive

Jerusalem community, even as ‘small churches’ in their own right” (Osborne 1993, 248). Monastic communities of laywomen and men continued to grow and Benedict of Nursia (ca. 480-550) organized a community and developed the Rule of Benedict that would become the established rule for all religious orders, male and female, and influences monastic life even today (Osborne 1993, 257).

Osborne notes that “[Benedict] stabilizes the day in a strong liturgical way. For Benedict the monastery is a family, a Roman family of course, but a family” (Osborne 1993, 257). The monks observed a life of prayer and work and vowed “stability to this single monastery and to the absolute sovereignty of the written rule [to conversion] . . . and obedience” (Osborne 1993, 257). The role of the abbot played a major role in the life of the monastic family. “Without any doubt the personality and quality of the abbot was central and crucial for the quality of life in any monastery. Not an autocrat, but a pastoral, shepherding father is the mirror in which the abbot should see himself” (Osborne 1993, 257).

The monastic way of life was another way that followers of Jesus could live out their lives as disciples as celibate women and men. This was not a rejection of family but another way to live in community, a family, as a layperson. Although removed from the secular world, the monasteries opened their doors of hospitality to welcome the poor and the sick. The Benedictine Rule placed great importance on hospitality to strangers. Christian ethicist, Christine Pohl, tells us that “ The Rule of Benedict required that monks graciously receive clerics,

pilgrims, and the poor because of Christ's identification with the stranger in Matthew 25:35" (Pohl 1999, 46).

The Rule of Benedict would guide the congregations and orders of women and men religious for many centuries to the present day. With Francis of Assisi (1181-1226) the vows of poverty, chastity, and obedience, the evangelical counsels, were introduced and are now made by all Roman Catholic religious and clergy.

The Family As Church

In developing the curriculum, one challenge was to develop an understanding of Church and a common language and understanding of the family as the domestic church.

Church and Mission

The Catholic Church teaches that the Church 1) is the People of God, the Body of Christ, 2) is in a personal relationship with Christ as members of the whole Church, the bride of Christ, 3) has a missionary mandate and shares in God's mission:

1. The word "Church" means "convocation." It designates the assembly of those whom God's Word "convokes," i.e., gathers together to form the People of God, and who themselves, nourished with the Body of Christ, become the Body of Christ. (CCCB 1994, 777)

2. The unity of Christ and the Church, head and members of one Body, also implies the distinction of the two within a personal relationship . . . The Apostle speaks of the whole Church and of each of the faithful, members of his Body, as a bride "betrothed" to Christ the Lord so as to become but one spirit with him [Mt 22:1-14]. (CCCB 1994, 796)

3. The Lord's missionary mandate [Mt 28:19-20] is ultimately grounded in the eternal love of the Most Holy Trinity . . . The ultimate purpose of mission is none other than to make men share in the communion between the Father and the Son in their Spirit of love. (CCCB 1994, 849-850)

In the desire to share the curriculum with churches of the Evangelical tradition, the following description of church presented by eminent Christian Educator, Ted Ward, is helpful in creating a bridge of common understanding of church among Christians from the Evangelical tradition and the Catholic tradition (Ward 2006). The two key identifying characteristics of church he focuses on are the body of Christ and the bride of Christ. Ward tells us that “The church is more than an organization. It is a body of people; biblically it is identified as ‘the body of Christ.’ It is a community of faith, a collective of those committed to a belief” (Ward 2006, 9). He continues, “Biblically, the church is identified with the qualities of personhood as ‘the bride of Christ.’ The relationship of Christ and his followers is identified in the vocabulary of relationships. The intimacy is revealed in its special form of affiliation. The church is a family, not merely a membership organization” (Ward 2006, 9). The purpose of this people, who are the family of God, is “to perpetuate Christ’s call to humankind. *Repent and be baptized*” (Ward 2006, 12). This understanding of church is very much in keeping with Catholic teaching.

The Church as a Reflection of the Trinity

In order to understand the family as church it is helpful to see how the Church is a reflection of the Trinity and how the image of Church as household

applies to the family. The work of theologian Catherine LaCugna (LaCugna 1993) on the Church as a reflection of the Trinity and as household, forms the basis of this section.

LaCugna points to the Trinity, the Divine Communion of Persons, as a basis for understanding the church as an image or reflection of the Trinity:

The nature of the church should manifest the nature of God. Just as the doctrine of the Trinity is not an abstract teaching about God apart from us but a teaching about God's life with us and our life with each other, ecclesiology is not the study of an abstract church but a study of the actual persons in a common faith and common mission. . . . The Christian community is the image or icon of the invisible God when its communitarian life mirrors the inclusivity of divine love. (LaCugna 1993, 403)

Just as the Divine Communion of Persons, the Trinity, the Church is called to be in a communion of persons who share a common faith and participate in God's mission.

The Church as Household

LaCugna throughout her work makes reference to the "economy of God's salvation (*oikonomia*), in the self-communication of God in the person of Christ and the activity of the Holy Spirit" (LaCugna 1993, 2). *Oikonomia* in its most basic meaning speaks of the management of the household (LaCugna 1993, 24). Yet Paul (Eph 1:8-10) uses this term to describe the unfolding of God's plan of redemption and salvation of humankind (LaCugna 1993, 21). In the conclusion of her work LaCugna states:

Household is an appropriate metaphor to describe the communion of persons where God and creature meet and unite and now exist together as

one. The Reign of God is the rule of love and communion; God's economy is the history of this communion: the history of its origin in love and providence, its fracture through sin, its restoration by the Covenant with Israel, redemption by the blood of the Cross, and everlasting consummation by the power of the Holy Spirit. (LaCugna 1993, 411)

It is fitting that image of family and household be used to describe the Triune God's act of restoration of God's relationship and loving communion with humankind. In this relationship, we are called to reflect the love of the Divine Community of Persons.

The Family as a Reflection of the Trinity

An understanding of the family as the domestic or household church is based upon the call of the Christian family to be a communion or a community of life, of love, and of grace. They become a reflection of the Trinity. Catholic teaching reminds us:

The Christian family is called to be a community of faith, hope, and love in an environment of prayer. Aided by a number of other virtues such as prudence, justice, fortitude, and temperance, the family that practices them begins to actualize its spiritual calling as a domestic church. When a family becomes a school of virtue and a community of love, it is an image of the loving communion of the Father, the Son and Holy Spirit. It is then the icon of the Trinity. (USCCB 2012, 377)

As wives and husbands live out their call to be a living reflection of Christ's love for his bride, the Church, they share and model that love with their children in their day-to-day activities. They make present the domestic church within the home and become a witness to others outside their home of what it means to parent with heart and to be a reflection of the Trinity

The Family a Center of Formation: Toward a Protestant Understanding of the Domestic Church

Marjorie Thompson, a Presbyterian authority on spiritual formation proposes that “One of the most serious tasks of the church at large is to help its member families to *be* the Body of Christ within the home” (Thompson 2008, 144 , original emphasis). She comes to this conclusion as result of her work in *Family the Forming Center: A Vision of the Role of the Family in Spiritual Formation* (Thompson 2008). Her insights on how the family can be seen as the domestic church, or family forming center, and how the family is called to take an active role in the spiritual formation of their children may be helpful in developing a Protestant vision of the family as the little church of the home.

The Body of Christ

How do families contribute to building up the church, the Body of Christ? As we choose to respond to God’s call as followers of Jesus we are incorporated into God’s family (Eph 3:14). In Psalm 128 we have a beautiful image of the home and the family of those who choose to respond to God’s call to love (Mt 22:36-40; Jn 15:12). As followers of Jesus we are one Body and also individual members of the Body of Christ (1 Cor 12:12). We participate in the priesthood of all believers (1 Pt 2:9-10)

Marriage and the Family

In marriage, wife and husband enter into a covenant before God (Mt 19:6). Together they become a reflection of Christ's love for the church (Eph 5:21-33). In raising their children, parents are called to instruct them in the love of the Lord (Eph 6:1-4). They extend and reflect for their children the love Christ has for each member of his Body (Jn 15:9-12).

The family as the first community of the child can be seen as the church of the home, a part of the Body of Christ. Jesus has promised to be present in their midst (Mt 18:19-20). The Christian family is seen as the locus where children are formed in heart, mind, body, and spirit. It is within the family that they begin to live out their call as daughters and sons of God to be "conformed to the image of Christ" (Thompson 2008, 20-21).

The family is not alone in this important task and does not replace the role of the communal church or congregation in the faith formation of the child. Thompson proposes that the family can be for the child a "sacred shelter" (Thompson 2008, 57). It is a place of safety where the child is loved, affirmed, empowered, and formed in order to participate in God's mission. Within the family the child finds a community that is a reflection of God's love. In this community the child may experience God's love through presence, acceptance, affirmation, accountability, forgiveness and hospitality (Thompson 2008, 59).

It is in this context that the parents can by the gift of their presence listen with the heart of Jesus. In *Parenting with Heart*, this is called "heart listening."

Parents are able to express their acceptance of their child by loving the child as we are loved. In doing so, they affirm to their children that they are God's beloved. Through respect for self and for their children and by teaching their children to take responsibility for their decisions and actions, parents guide their children toward accountability.

Parenting with Heart calls for forgiveness and reconciliation. Within the family, the child experiences and learns to understand God's loving mercy and forgiveness. Hospitality is integral to the Christian family, which is a place of welcome. The children learn that what has been given is to be lovingly shared as gift to others. As the family nurtures and fosters these values, they create a community that is life giving and loving, a reflection of the Divine Community of Persons, the Trinity. In doing so, they contribute to the formation of their children, who as members of the Body of Christ, are being equipped to participate in God's mission, the mission of the Triune God.

The Family and the Sacraments The Family and the Priests

In developing a theological framework for *Parenting with Heart* the historical development of the family as domestic church in both the Protestant and Catholic traditions was examined. Using the theme of Call and Response as seen through the lens of a hermeneutic of *caritas*, lessons from Biblical, theological and Church teaching regarding the family in relationship to the Church were

discussed. As God's beloved we are called to be family, and called to be a communion of life, of love, and of grace.

To develop an understanding of the family as church there was a discussion on Church and Mission, the Church as a Reflection of the Trinity, the Church as household and the Family as a Reflection of the Trinity. The family is understood to be a community or communion of life, of love, and of grace.

Given the important role the family plays in the education of children and building up the Body of Christ, the Church recognizes its duty and obligation to support and to serve the family (FC 65). In addition to catechesis, sacramental preparation, and pastoral care there is a need to:

- create a greater awareness and understanding of the God's vision for the family
- affirm the role of parents as the primary educators and evangelizers of their children
- empower parents and families to live out their call in a practical way

A parent education curriculum such as *Parenting with Heart* is a step toward addressing these issues.

CHAPTER 3:
PRECEDENT CASES AND SOCIAL
SCIENCE LITERATURE

In this chapter the contributions of the social sciences to a healthy family are discussed. Among the disciplines reviewed, the following are included: parent education, counselling and psychology, leadership and organizational development, religious education, and spirituality. The literature regarding curriculum development, program planning, and assessment as it relates to adult and parent education is examined.

The project focused on Christian parenting and integrated contributions drawn from the social sciences to support and encourage parents and their families in their call to be the domestic church as recognized by the Second Vatican Council (Second Vatican Council 2014b, 11). The Council also acknowledged the contribution of the social sciences in the pastoral care of the family and stated that “In pastoral care, sufficient use must be made not only of theological principles, but also of the findings of the secular sciences, especially of psychology and sociology, so that the faithful may be brought to a more adequate and mature life of faith” (Second Vatican Council 2014c, 62).

I was encouraged by this recognition of the importance of the social sciences at the service of the family and I began studies in counselling and psychology that led me to become interested in parent education. As a result, my ministry has been in the area of family life and religious education where I have been able to benefit from theological studies and the contribution of the social sciences to ministry to families.

Adlerian or Individual Psychology

I have chosen to focus upon Individual psychology (also known as Adlerian psychology), discussed below, in part because its principles are consistent with Catholic teachings about the human person. Each person created in the image and likeness of God has innate dignity and goodness (CCCB 1994, 356). Each person:

- is endowed with a spiritual soul, with intellect and free will
- is capable of self-knowledge, of self possession . . . and entering into communion with other persons
- is ordered to God and destined for eternal beatitude
- is endowed with a moral conscience (CCCB 1994, 357, 369, 1711, 1776)

Adlerian psychology recognizes the spiritual dimension of the person and considers it one of the five life tasks. It emphasizes respect for the individual person, respect and care for all members of the human community, responsibility for one's decisions and actions, and the important role of parents and family in the life and development of the child.

The Psychology of Adler

Alfred Adler and Rudolf Dreikurs were pioneers in the field of parent education (Dinkmeyer et al. 1987). Adler, a contemporary of Sigmund Freud and Carl Jung, is the founder of the school of psychology known as Individual (Adlerian) Psychology. Edith Dewey, a respected parent educator and interpreter of Adler, tells us that he used the term individual meaning “indivisible” to distinguish his approach from the Freudian school (Dewey 1978, 1). Freudians held the view that “[t]he individual was divided into “parts” which were antagonistic to each other e.g., id-ego-superego, Eros vs. Thanatos . . .” (Mosak 1979, 49).

Five Basic Principles

The five basic principles of Adlerian Psychology relate well to the Catholic teachings regarding the human person. Adler saw the human person as being “socially imbedded,” “self-determining and creative,” “goal directed or teleological,” “subjective,” and “holistic” (Dewey 1978, 2).

1. Socially Embedded

The human person is a social being and seeks to belong. Within the family context, children must find their place in relation to the other members (Dreikurs 1990). Because human beings are socially embedded, they have “the feeling of being part of a larger whole . . . the willingness to contribute in communal life for the common [good] . . .” (Mosak 1979, 44). Adler used the term

Gemeinschaftsgefühl or social interest to describe this “social factor” (Ansbacher and Ansbacher 1964, 134). Social interest is seen as an indicator of mental health. “Adlerians believe that mental health can be measured in terms of one’s social interest, the willingness to participate in the give and take of life and to cooperate with others and be concerned about their welfare” (Dinkmeyer et al.1987, 64).

2. Self-Determining and Creative

The human person is self-determining and creative. Dewey points out that we have freedom to choose and to act and are able to “shape” our destiny. “Therefore we can change- this is the basis for Adlerian optimism. If we are powerless to change the situation, we can still decide how to react to it” (Dewey 1978, 2). This is a hopeful view of the human person and allows for growth and change as the person takes responsibility for their choices and actions in the face of life’s challenging events and is consistent with the Christian understanding of free of will.

3. Goal Directed

In Individual psychology all behaviour is understood in terms of the person’s goal. Less focus is placed on determining the cause of one’s behaviour. Dinkmeyer and Dreikurs tell us that “It is essential to recognize the purposiveness of behaviour. Actions and movements of the individual are directed toward specific goals. . . . For real understanding, one needs to see behaviour in terms of its purposes . . . This approach accepts the freedom of choice of each individual in

regard to his goals and direction. He decides and acts” (Dinkmeyer and Dreikurs 1963, 10-11).

In counselling and in parent education this principle is applied to assist the client and parents to identify the goals of behaviour in order to respond in a manner that is loving and respectful.

4. Subjectivity

The subjectivity of the person plays an important role in Individual psychology. According to Dinkmeyer and Dreikurs:

The individual must be viewed subjectively. [The person] can only be understood in terms of his phenomenological field. We are influenced not only by facts but by our particular interpretation of them. It is more important to know how the child feels than to know the concrete details of his act. All behaviour makes sense to the individual in terms of the way in which he views the world. (Dinkmeyer and Dreikurs 1963, 11)

Each person sees the world through their own particular set of lenses that have been shaped by their experiences and how they have chosen to interpret them. Dinkmeyer and Dreikurs point out that “We only see what we want to see. This is called ‘biased apperception.’ The uniqueness of the individual is the result of what he perceives and how he chooses to perceive it” (Dinkmeyer and Dreikurs 1963, 12). This calls upon parents to be aware of the need to take time to listen and to be present to their children in order to understand how they see and feel about what is going on in the world around them.

Missiologist and anthropologist Paul Hiebert acknowledges the role of subjectivity and its influence on human understanding and knowledge. In his

work, *Missiological Implications of Epistemological Shift: Affirming Truth in a Modern/Postmodern World*, he points to critical realism as a way to affirm truth (Hiebert 1999). He states that “Critical realist epistemology strikes a middle ground between positivism, with its emphasis on objective truth, and instrumentalism, with its stress on the subjective nature of human knowledge []. It affirms the presence of an objective truth but recognizes that this is subjectively apprehended” (Hiebert 1999, 69). The middle way that Hiebert suggests is very much in keeping with Alder’s understanding of human perception, learning, and knowing.

5. Holistic

In Individual psychology the human person is viewed holistically and not broken down into individual parts. Dinkmeyer and Dreikurs state:

This is a contrast to an atomistic, reductionistic approach. It is neither efficient nor necessary to fragmentize behaviour in order to understand it. The whole individual, in all his aspects, reveals himself through his movements. . . . Understanding [of behaviour] is not facilitated through the development of atomistic systems. Behaviour must be seen and interpreted as a whole pattern. (Dinkmeyer and Dreikurs 1963, 13-14)

Behaviour, motivations, emotions, beliefs, and memories are not seen in isolation but parts of a unified whole. They all contribute to the person’s development of a worldview, methods of operating, and attitudes that help her to face the life situations and events as they arise (Dinkmeyer and Dreikurs 1963, 14).

Other Adlerian Concepts

It is within the family that children develop the “lenses” through which they will perceive themselves, others, and the world around them. Adlerian psychologists use the term “life style” (Griffith and Powers 2007, 63). The life style influences the way children will face the challenges or life tasks they encounter throughout their lifetime. To face these challenges requires courage and ongoing encouragement. This section discusses the following concepts:

1. Life Style: Forming Our Lenses
2. Life Tasks: Facing Life’s Challenges
3. Encouragement and Discouragement: Taking Heart

Life Style: Forming Our Lenses

In Individual psychology the concept of life style, Adlerian psychologists, Jane Griffith and Robert Powers tell us, “. . . is meant, in brief, to refer to (a) the person's characteristic way of operating in the social field; (b) the basic convictions concerning self, others, and the world actively maintained in the person's schema of biased apperception; and (c) the person’s self-created goal of perfection, or self ideal” (Griffith and Powers 2007, 63). An understanding of life style and its development is central to Individual psychology and parent education. According to Adler, the life style is formulated by the age of four or five (Griffith and Powers 2007, 63). Adler states, “[The child's] opinion of life, which is at the bottom of his attitude to life and is neither shaped into words nor expressed in thought, is his own masterpiece. Thus the child arrives at his law of movement

which aids him after a certain amount of training to obtain a style of life, in accordance with which we see the individual thinking, feeling, and acting throughout his whole life” (Ansbacher and Ansbacher 1964, 187-188).

The life style is formed and influenced by a number of factors among them are heredity, or the “internal environment,” and factors of the “child’s outer environment” which include the following:

- “family atmosphere” or the climate of the family, emotional, social, and religious
- family values, mores and conventions
- “family constellation” or the configuration of the family: mother, father, the child, siblings, and their birth order (Dreikurs 1990, 18-20)

Life Tasks: Facing Life’s Challenges

In Individual psychology, five distinct life task are identified:

1. The social task of being able to establish friendships and co-operative relationships with others.
2. The task of work which involves meeting the needs and obligations to provide and to engage in meaningful activities for sustaining one’s life and creative energy.
3. The love task which involves relationships with the other sex.
4. The task of being able to relate to the self in healthy and life-giving ways.
5. The spiritual task which enables one to establish a loving relationship with the Divine Creator and to seek meaning and purpose in one’s life. (Dewey 1978, 24-27)

These tasks are encountered and engaged in throughout one’s life. In age appropriate ways a person faces these tasks and responds according to their worldview as it is shaped and influenced by their lifestyle.

The life tasks and development of a person's lifestyle as proposed by Adler have been addressed in some of the theories in the following disciplines: child development (Piaget and Inhelder 1969), psychosocial development (Erikson 1993), moral development (Munzy 1980), and faith development (Fowler 1995). Stonehouse in *Joining Children on the Spiritual Journey: Nurturing a Life in Faith* (Stonehouse 1998) gives an excellent overview of these developmental theories and how they can be of use to parents and those who take the role of parents as they join in the spiritual journey of their children.

Encouragement and Discouragement: Taking Heart

Harold Mozak, Adlerian psychologist and educator, states, "The individual with 'psychopathology' is discouraged rather than sick, and the therapeutic task is to encourage him, to activate his social interest and to develop a new life style . . ." (Mozak 1979, 44). Within Individual psychology this principle has been applied to the counselling setting and parent education programs. Dreikurs explains, "A misbehaving child is a *discouraged child*. Each child needs continuous encouragement just as a plant needs water. He cannot grow and develop and gain a sense of belonging without encouragement" (Dreikurs 1990, 36). Dreikurs provides this definition of encouragement, "Encouragement, then, is a continuous process aimed at giving the [person] a sense of self-respect and a sense of accomplishment" (Dreikurs 1990, 39).

Rather than employing a clinical-medical model that focused on pathology and disease, Adler introduced an educational model that looked at dis-ease as the result of a person's becoming discouraged, lacking in social interest, and choosing unhelpful or useless ways to face the challenges related to their life situation and the life tasks. Because the focus is educational and prevention oriented, Adler moved from clinical work and began community outreach and child guidance centres where he introduced public family education. Families would volunteer to appear with Adler on stage to speak about the problems they were encountering with their children. Together they would explore goals of behaviour, discouragement, the use of encouragement to foster responsibility, respect for self and others, and social interest (Mosak 1979, 53-54).

Parent Education

The important role that parents play in the formation, development, and growth of their children cannot be overstated. As noted above, it is through the family, the domestic church, where the parents are the first educators, that children come to an understanding of what it means to be a communion of life, of love, and of grace. Bernard Shulman, psychiatrist and Adlerian educator, as quoted in Dinkmeyer et al. notes:

Parents exert a tremendous influence upon the child. They are the earliest and often the only models a child has and it is from them that beliefs, attitudes, and techniques are chosen. It is the parents' behaviour that generally establishes the atmosphere of the home, i.e., whether it is peaceful or warlike, cheerful or depressing, marked by warmth, closeness, and mutual involvement, or cold, distant, and detached. (Dinkmeyer et al. 1987, 317)

Dreikurs and the Role of Encouragement

Dreikurs notes that “As a child needs training, so do parents” (Dreikurs 1990, x). Dreikurs paved the way for a number of parent education books in the Adlerian tradition with the publication of *Children the Challenge*. The content he outlines is drawn from his studies and collaboration with Adler and focuses on the need for encouragement to foster among children a healthy respect for self and others, responsibility for their choices and actions, and a compassionate concern and care for all members of the human family. Dreikurs devotes much time in his work to help parents understand their children’s behaviour and the mistaken beliefs that lead to children’s misbehaviour as a result of discouragement. He urges parents to allow themselves and their children to have the “courage to be imperfect” (Dreikurs 1990, 38). Research sociologist Brené Brown has taken up the importance of this courage. She speaks of the importance for us to have the courage to dare to be vulnerable and to acknowledge our imperfection. She shows how these principles can transform the way we choose to live, love, parent, and lead (Brown 2012).

Rather than focus on punishment and rewards, Dreikurs proposes that parents consider using natural and logical consequences to teach their children to become accountable and responsible for their decisions and actions. Through family meetings and encouragement meetings all family members are invited to take part in the decision-making process. All have a voice and participate in becoming a community of love and caring where each person is loved and

respected. An essential of parenting is to encourage the children and to find them doing things right. Parents are the prime encouragers and express their confidence and belief in their children even when their children may give up on themselves.

The work of Dreikurs is continued by many other parent educators (Dinkmeyer, McKay, and Dinkmeyer 1997, Leman 2000, Leman 2009, Coloroso 2010, Nelsen 2006, Nelsen et al. 2008). They have updated the context and language of parent education since Dreikur's classic work was first published in 1964. The main principles espoused by Adler and Dreikurs still remain very much relevant for today's parents. Other authors such as (Faber and Mazlish 1980, Faber and Mazlish 1987, Gordon 2000) continued in a similar vein to help parents in their task of raising co-operative and responsible children.

From Gordon the following topics are a very helpful addition to parent education programs: The Language of Acceptance, Who owns the problem? Active Listening, I-messages, and The No-lose method of resolving conflicts (Gordon 2000). Faber and Mazlish in their classic work, *How to Talk so Kids Will Listen & How to Listen so Kids Will Talk*, provide excellent information on listening for the emotions and the underlying messages the children are sending (Faber and Mazlish 1980). Chapter one: Helping Children Deal with Their Feelings and chapter six: Freeing Children from Playing Roles provide information and skills useful for inclusion in parenting programs.

Christian writers have also contributed greatly to the field of parent education, family life, and faith development of children. They include among

others Bortel (1985), Curran (1983), Cavalletti (1992), Holmen (2005), May et al. (2005), Nelsen et al. (2008), Stonehouse et al. (1998), and Webb (2011). In addition, James Dobson has made a considerable contribution to parenting education and family life ministry through his writings and the organization he founded: Focus on the Family as shown below.

James Dobson and the Role of Discipline

Dobson, a noted Evangelical psychologist, has been a leader in the field of marriage, parenting and family life ministry. He has authored numerous books on these subjects such as: *5 Essentials for Lifelong Intimacy* (Dobson 2007), *The Dr. James Dobson Parenting Collection* (Dobson 2011), and *Dr. Dobson's Handbook of Family Advice: Encouragement and Practical Help for Your Home* (Dobson 2012).

In 1977 Dobson developed a very successful video series entitled *Focus on the Family* that became a valuable resource for parents and began the launch of an organization devoted to the support of Christian families: Focus on the Family (Focus on the Family 2015a). Focus on the Family is guided by six principles drawn from Scripture and the Judaeo-Christian tradition. They are summarized as follows:

The Preeminence of Evangelism: the ultimate purpose of life is to know and glorify God and to attain eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord, beginning within our own families.

The Permanence of Marriage: the institution of marriage is a sacred covenant designed by God to model the love of Christ for His people and

to serve both the public and private good as the basic building block of human civilization.

The Value of Children: children are a heritage from God and a blessing from His hand. Parents are therefore accountable to Him for raising, shaping and preparing them for a life of service to His Kingdom and to humanity.

The Sanctity of Human Life: human life is created by God in His image. It is of inestimable worth and significance in all its dimensions . . . Christians are therefore called to defend, protect, and value all human life.

The Importance of Social Responsibility: God has ordained the social institutions of family, church, and government for the benefit of mankind and as a reflection of His divine nature. Therefore, Christians are called to support these institutions, according to God's design and purpose, and to protect them against destructive social influences.

The Value of Male and Female: God created humans in His image, intentionally and immutably male and female, each bringing unique and complementary qualities to sexuality and relationships. Sexuality is a glorious gift from God to be offered back to Him either in marriage for procreation, union, and mutual delight or in celibacy for undivided devotion to Christ. (Focus on the Family 2015b)

It will be noted that these principles are very much in keeping with the Catholic teachings, as discussed in Chapter Two, with respect to marriage: as a covenant and a reflection of Christ's love for the Church, marriage and family as the vital cell of society, children as gift, the role of parents as primary educators, the dignity of the human person, the role of the family in society and the responsibility of the society toward the family, and the goodness and gift of sexuality.

In the area of parenting, Dobson has placed emphasis on the role of discipline. In his most recent book, *The New Dare to Discipline* (Dobson 2014),

he recognizes that discipline has an important part to play in raising healthy, respectful, happy children:

The term “discipline” is not limited to the context of confrontation and neither is this book. Children need to be taught *self*-discipline (original emphasis) and responsible behaviour. They need assistance in learning how to handle the challenges and obligations of living. They must learn the art of self-control. They should be equipped with the personal strength needed to, meet the demands imposed upon them by their school, peer group, and later adult responsibilities. (Dobson 2014, 6)

The development of self-discipline and responsible behaviour are an essential part of *Parenting with Heart* also. The goal is to equip and to empower our children to handle the challenges of dealing with the life tasks they will face throughout their lifetime. Dobson goes on to say:

When properly applied, loving discipline works! It stimulates tender affection, made possible by mutual *respect* (original emphasis) between parent and child. It bridges the gap which otherwise separates family members who should love and trust one another. It allows the God of our ancestors to be introduced to our beloved children. . . . It encourages a child to respect other people and live as a responsible, constructive citizen. (Dobson 2014, 7)

I would agree with Dobson that “loving discipline works!” However, in *Parenting with Heart*, the understanding of discipline excludes any form of corporal punishment as discussed in the section on “Parenting with Heart and not with Hurt” in Chapter Two. With loving discipline, that guides and instructs the children as disciples of Jesus, parents build a communion of, love, trust, and respect. They help their children to be response-able to God’s call to love as we are loved.

Leadership and Organizational Development

The family is an organization and the parents have an important leadership role to play. The learning and insights drawn from the fields of leadership and organizational development were examined to integrate the findings into the parent education program. Their contributions to a healthy family will be discussed as follows:

1. Implications of the New Science: Living with Complexity, Uncertainty, and Change
2. The Family and Complex Adaptive Systems
3. The Courage To Be Imperfect: Appreciative Inquiry
4. Family as Community: Asset Based Community Development
5. Understanding Our Children Takes Head and Heart: Emotional Intelligence.
6. Parents Are Leaders: Leadership and Mentoring

Implications of the New Science: Living with Complexity, Uncertainty, and Change

The new science has had a great influence on complex adaptive systems theory. Fritjof Capra, astrophysicist and one of the main proponents of the new science, speaks of a new way in which science understands living systems from simple organisms to ecosystems. He uses the term “deep ecology” to describe a paradigm that takes a “holistic worldview, seeing the world as an integrated whole rather than a dissociated collection of parts” (Capra 1997, 6). He goes on to say:

Deep ecology does not separate human beings—or anything else—from the natural environment. It sees the world not as a collection of isolated

objects, but a network of phenomena that are fundamentally interconnected and interdependent. . . . Ultimately, deep ecological awareness is spiritual or religious awareness. (Capra 1997, 7)

This shift in understanding asks us to examine our thinking and values. Capra claims that our “Western industrial culture” has placed too much emphasis on characteristics that are closely related to a patriarchal, mechanistic, and reductionist worldview (Capra 1997, 9). He suggests we pay attention to the need for balance between self-assertion and integration and offers the chart of thinking and values in Table 1 for consideration.

Table 1: Thinking and Values

THINKING		VALUES	
Self-assertive	integrative	Self-assertive	integrative
rational	intuitive	expansion	conservation
analysis	synthesis	competition	cooperation
reductionist	holistic	quantity	quality
linear	nonlinear	domination	partnership

Source: Fritjof Capra, *The Web of Life: A New Scientific Understanding of Living Systems* (New York: Anchor Books, 1997), 10.

What I appreciate about Capra as an eminent scientist is that, in the context of deep ecology, he sees the importance of values and ethics in the natural and physical sciences as well as in the social and human sciences:

It is generally not recognized that values are not peripheral to science and technology but constitute their very basis and driving force . . . In reality, scientific facts emerge out of a constellation of human perceptions, values, and action— in one word, out of a paradigm—from which they cannot be separated. . . . Scientists, therefore are responsible for their research not only intellectually but also morally. (Capra 1997, 11)

The Family and Complex Adaptive Systems

Edwin Olson and Glenda Eoyang, organizational theorists, draw from the insights of the new science and provide an approach to organization change that was useful in developing a parent education program. In their complex adaptive model of organization change there are a number of concepts that were drawn upon:

1. The whole is different from the sum of the parts (holistic).
2. Direction is determined by the emergence and participation of many people.
3. Individual or system behaviour is unknowable, unpredictable and uncontrollable.
4. Relationships are empowering.
5. Each system is unique.
6. Responsiveness to the environment is the measure of value.
7. Leaders are facilitators and supporters. (Olson and Eoyang 2001, 1-2)

Within the area of parent education and family counselling, the family as a complex adaptive system is well recognized (Corsini 1979, Sherman and Dinkmeyer 1987). It is encouraging and helpful to see how social theorist Francis Westley and her collaborators use raising a child as an example of a complex problem (Westley et al. 2007, 9). They highlight a number of important concepts that have a direct application to parent education. They speak of the limitations and negative impact of “rigid protocols” (Westley et al. 2007, 9).

Parents often set down too many rules that that are often unreasonable and impractical. In raising children a “one size fits all” approach needs to be carefully

examined Parents must understand that each child is unique and what was successful with one may not necessarily be appropriate for the other (Westley et al. 2007, 9). In parenting, uncertainty is a given in the context of dynamic growth, development, and change that touches all family members. Fostering relationships, cooperation, recognition of differences, and interdependence are paramount in the task of parenting and family building just as in any complex adaptive system (Westley et al. 2007, 9-10).

The family as the domestic church is well suited to the application of complex adaptive systems theory. As noted above, the family as a system is well established in family systems theory. In introducing a parent education program, particularly in the context of the Judaeo-Christian tradition, it was helpful to make the linkages to the findings of the new science and the family as a complex adaptive system.

The approach to parent education developed by Adler and Dreikurs is based on the principles of Individual psychology that are very consistent with the principles presented by Olson and Eoyang above (Dreikurs 1990). Individual psychology sees the person as a unique individual who is socially embedded. The approach is holistic and inclusive as opposed to reductionistic and exclusive. Emphasis is placed upon, relationships, interdependence, cooperation, collaboration, openness, flexibility, and responsiveness to ever-changing environments and situations i.e. self-organization (Mosak 1979, 49). Within the family constellation or system all members have an influence and impact on the

others e.g. “family atmosphere” and family values (Sherman and Dinkmeyer 1987, 15-36).

A healthy family is a family where each member is respectful of self and others, seeks the well being of the whole community: family and beyond, has the courage to be imperfect, and is able to learn, grow, and change as a result of the uncertain challenges, the failures, and the successes they face daily (Dewey 1978, 1, 8).

Parents take the role of facilitators, supporters, coaches, and co-learners with their children. The role of parent as coach becomes quite evident when one sees how principles of Individual psychology are applied in the Adler Coaching Certificate program (Adler International 2013). This program trains and equips coaches to support others in their personal and professional life settings. Adler and Dreikurs focused on the positive and what is going well. They anticipated the approach taken by leadership theorist David Cooperrider and his collaborators in the field of appreciative inquiry (Cooperrider, Whitney, and Stavros 2008).

The Courage To Be Imperfect: Appreciative Inquiry

Adler and Dreikurs put the focus of the parent education upon encouragement and helping parents and children have the “courage to be imperfect” (Dreikurs 1990, 56). As do Cooperrider, Whitney, and Stavros (Cooperrider, Whitney, and Stavros 2008), they focus on the strengths and assets of each member of the organization(the family) and what they do well. Rather than dwell on what went wrong, they ask themselves what they can do to make

the situation better. They emphasize the importance of mutual respect, cooperation, collaboration and loving relationships. The principles of Appreciative Inquiry as embodied in the 4D-cycle: “*Discovery* (appreciating and valuing), *Dream* (envisioning), *Design* (coconstucting [*sic*] the future), and *Destiny* (learning, empowering, and improvising to sustain the future)” a helpful and practical approach that was applied to the parent education program (Cooperrider, Whitney, and Stavros 2008, 5).

In comparing the pursuit of perfection and excellence, Cooperrider, Whitney, and Stavros describe the pursuit for perfection as motivated by a fear of failure and not meeting the expected result of perfection. As a consequence the person feels discouraged and has little desire to cooperate with others or contribute to the well being of the group (Cooperrider, Whitney, and Stavros 2008, 304). In Adlerian terms the person lacks the courage to be imperfect and is discouraged because of their mistaken belief that they must be perfect at all cost. A sign of this discouragement is low self esteem and a low level of social interest (Mosak 1979, 44). Dinkmeyer and Eckstein (Dinkmeyer and Eckstein 1993) and Losoncy (Losoncy1985), Adlerians who have contributed to the field of leadership and motivation, affirm the appreciative inquiry approach taken by Cooperrider.

The Family as Community: Asset Based Community Development

The family is a community and the principles of Asset Based Community Development formulated by John McKnight, an expert in the field of community development, were helpful and affirmed the Adlerian understanding of the human person as socially embedded, self-determining and creative, goal directed and subjective (McKnight 2013). McKnight suggests these basic concepts:

1. A community creates its own culture.
2. People create community.
3. A community needs the gifts of all.
4. From their gifts, “new possibilities emerge” (McKnight 2013, 2-5).

Each community has a culture of its own. It is “the way the community members learn, through time, how to survive and prosper” (McKnight 2013, 2). The creation of a community becomes an expression of all those who participate in it. This includes “their vision, inner knowledge, their skills and limitations” (McKnight 2013, 2). They build a community that is a reflection of who they are and rejoice in it. The gifts of all members contribute to the creation and wellbeing of a community. “Communities are built on the gifts, skills, and capacities and their strong relationships that grew as they worked together” (McKnight 2013, 3). McKnight’s approach empowers people in community. When we know the gifts and potential of each member “new possibilities emerge” (McKnight 2013, 5). There is an opportunity to change and transform the way things are. Because the family is the child’s first community, an understanding of community and how to

build and create a community of care and compassion for all is essential.

McKnight's Asset Based approach contributes to the understanding of community and offers concrete approaches to build communities and families that can be transformative and empowering.

Understanding Our Children Takes Head and Heart: Emotional Intelligence

The work of psychologists Travis Bradberry and Jean Greaves on emotional intelligence has great relevance to the art and science of parenting (Bradberry and Greaves 2009). Parents as leaders, coaches, and managers within the family setting, benefit from an understanding and awareness of themselves and their children and partners as they live together to be a communion of life, of love and grace. Bradberry and Greaves present four skills that comprise emotional intelligence: in the area of personal competence there are self-awareness and self-management, and in the area of social competence there are social awareness and relationship management (Bradberry and Greaves 2009, 24).

Self-awareness focuses on being able to have a sense of our feelings in the moment and how they might arouse negative and self-defeating reactions. This skill calls us to take time to think about what is happening within us and to be aware of how the situation and people involved are "pushing our buttons" (Bradberry and Greaves 2009, 25). Bradberry and Greaves tell us that "The surprising thing about self-awareness is that just thinking about it helps you to improve the skill, even though much of the focus initially tends to focus on what

you do ‘wrong.’ Having self-awareness means you are not afraid of your ‘emotional’ mistakes”(Bradberry and Greaves 2009, 26). Self-management enables us to decide how we will respond to the situation after taking time to think about our initial emotional response. We can choose to act in a way that is respectful of self and others, positive, and growth giving (Bradberry and Greaves 2009, 32).

Social awareness enables us to tune in to the feelings of others in order to have an understanding of what is really going on with them. This skill requires us to be good listeners and observers of the other. It calls us to be truly present to the other in order to appreciate and to respect their point of view (Bradberry and Greaves 2009, 38). Relationship management makes use of the three skills of self-awareness, self-management and social awareness to establish links and bonds with others in the organization or group. Relationships and the fostering of relationships are essential for creating an atmosphere of mutual respect and understanding which is so necessary for effective communication, problem solving and conflict resolution (Bradberry and Greaves 2009, 44-45). Bradberry and Greaves have much to offer parents and families in understanding the importance of emotional intelligence and social intelligence and in developing the skills needed to live together with care, compassion and respect for one another.

Parents Are Leaders: Leadership Development and Mentoring for Parents

As the first educators and nurturers of their children, parents and those who take the role of parents are leaders. Alan J. Roxburgh, missional leadership consultant and Fred Romanuk, organizational psychologist, in discussing the paradigm of missional leadership, refer to the ministry of parenting to highlight the way that missional leadership creates a caring, creative, imaginative, and life giving environment:

What do we mean by the language of “environment”? We use the word in much the same way as we would say we want to create an environment that enables our children to thrive. In other words, what are the skills, capacities and habits that we as parents would want to cultivate that give our children all the things they need to thrive? . . . we cannot *make* our children into what they become . . . we can, as parents or responsible citizens, set the context for the child . . . to thrive as it should. In the same way, missional leadership is about creating an environment within which the people of God in a particular location may thrive. (Roxburgh and Romanuk 2006, 5-6)

This understanding of the leadership role played by parents is supported by Robert Lowney, an authority on Ignatian leadership formation, who proposes that all of us are leaders and that leadership is not simply an act but a way of living as he outlines in these four characteristics:

1. We're all leaders and we're leading all the time, well or poorly.
 2. Leadership springs from within. It's about who I am as much as what I do.
 3. Leadership is not an act. It is my life, a way of living.
 4. I never complete the task of becoming leader. It is and ongoing process.
- (Lowney 2003, 15)

This view of leadership highlights the need to recognize the leadership role of parents and the contribution they make to the building up of a community of faith.

The leadership concepts presented by Lowney and the missional model of leadership suggested by Roxburgh and Romanuk are very compatible with the principles and practices that were applied to *Parenting with Heart* (Roxburgh and Romanuk 2006, 12-13).

Because leadership is “a way of living” there is a need for ongoing formation and mentoring for parents throughout the process of being and becoming the church of the home. This need for leadership development and mentoring of church leaders is well recognized (Malphurs and Mancini 2004, Pue 2005). But even within congregations and parishes it is not given a high priority as pointed out by Aubrey Malphurs and Will Mancini, noted authorities in Christian leadership, (Malphurs and Mancini 2004, 10). It is just as crucial to provide leadership training, development and mentoring for parents and those who take on the role of parents who often see that they are on their own in their vocation as parents, the first nurturers and teachers of their children.

Roy Oswald and Barry Johnson, experts in the field of organizational management and development, in *Managing Polarities in Congregations: Eight Keys for Thriving Communities*, identify two sets of polarities that are applicable here: “spiritual health and institutional health” and “inreach and outreach” (Oswald and Johnson 2010, 4).

As church we are all called to support and encourage one another daily in our journey of faith. However, in our congregations and parishes we may focus more on outreach and institutional health, and place less emphasis on inreach and

the spiritual health of our faith communities. Oswald and Johnson make it clear that it is not a matter of one over the other, but rather a matter of managing the polarities in order that the people of God may flourish together in community, “Thriving congregations thrive in part because they manage these polarities well. They have learned to carry out both components of each polarity . . .” (Oswald and Johnson 2010, 5).

With respect to a parenting curriculum, the values that Oswald and Johnson identify for inreach, that are found in a thriving congregation, are very supportive. These values are the following:

1. Responding to the needs of members.
2. The congregation supports competent staff for inreach ministries.
3. The congregation nourishes members at all points of their spiritual journey.
4. Focus is on deepening the spiritual life of members.
5. Strong, nurturing fellowship among members is supported. (Oswald and Johnson 2010, 116)

Religious Education and Spirituality

A Christian parenting curriculum is one way of supporting families to respond to the call to be the domestic church. In developing *Parenting with Heart*, many resources were examined to help parents to be the primary educators of their children and to participate in their spiritual formation. In this section, the discussion will focus on these subjects:

1. Bringing Life to Our Faith
2. The Family Fosters Spirituality
3. A Response of the Heart: A Practical Spirituality for Every Person

4. My Happiest Time Today: Ignatian Examen with Children
5. Seeing God in All Things: Characteristics of Ignatian Spirituality
6. Creating a Climate of Love: Application to Parent Education

Bringing Life to Our Faith

Resources for religious education, especially in the areas of sacramental preparation and catechesis, are plentiful in the Catholic tradition. Thomas Groome is an accepted authority in religious education. In his classic work, *Christian Religious Education: Sharing Our Story and Our Vision*, he proposes an approach to religious education known as “shared praxis” (Groome 1999). Groome provides this description of shared praxis: “Christian religious education by shared praxis can be described as a group of Christians sharing in dialogue their critical reflection on present action in light of the Christian Story and its Vision toward the end of Christian faith” (Groome 1999, 184).

Shared praxis forms the backdrop for his subsequent works on religious education. In his most recent book, *Will There Be Faith?*, “proposes an approach that is contemporary, natural, holistic and flexible” (Groome 2011, 5). He intends the approach to be “user-friendly” one that can inform, form and transform (Groome 2011, 12). With the “help of God’s grace” he believes this approach can:

Educate people to know, understand and embrace with personal conviction Christianity’s core beliefs and values (*inform*).

Grow people’s identity through formative pedagogy and the intentional socialization of Christian family and community (*form*).

Open people to a lifelong journey of conversion toward holiness and fullness of life for themselves and “for the life of the world” (John 6:51; *transform*). (Groome 2011, 12-13, original emphasis)

It is an invitation for people to “bring their lives to Faith, and their Faith to their lives” (Groome 2011, 13). He reminds us:

Christians often lose sight of this simple truth: *the heart of Christian faith is Jesus Christ*. It is not the scriptures or the dogmas and doctrines, or the commandments, or the sacraments or the Church, or any other one “thing” – important and vital as they are. Rather, as the *Catechism of the Catholic Church (CCC)* so well summarizes: “At the heart . . . we find a Person the Person of Jesus of Nazareth, the only Son from the Father” (n.426). (Groome 2011, 19, original emphasis)

He urges us to be mindful of our baptismal call to be “sharers in the priestly, prophetic and kingly functions of Christ . . . in the mission of the whole Christian people . . . to the world.” We are all called to participate in the transmission of the faith. Groome focuses on the role of the family as the domestic church and the “primary agent of an *incarnate* transmission of faith” (Groome 2011, 205, original emphasis). To do this, he proposes that the family participate in the role of educators “by being a community of *koinonia*, welcome, and *marturia*, witness, by its *leitourgia* of shared worship, by its common *diakonia* toward well-being, and as a community that shares the *kerygma* and *didache* of God’s Word” (Groome 2011, 206, 207). This does not take place as in a “formal school setting.” But rather, it is in the context and atmosphere of a loving, welcoming home that the family lives out daily their call to be a communion of life, of love, and of grace.

The Family Fosters Spirituality

This working definition of spirituality is taken from theologian John T. Ford, “spirituality is a personal Spirit-led way of living as a Christian in the world

that (a) seeks to discern and respond to the presence of God in the experiences of daily life, and (b) leads to the transformation of personal, familial, and social dimensions of human existence . . .” (Ford 2006, 177). Spiritual practices, drawn from centuries old practices, are again being revisited in many Christian denominations (Aronis 2002, Barton 2008, Barton 2012, Calhoun 2005, Mazzuca 2014, Nouwen, Christensen, and Laird 2013, Parker 1991, Shigematsu 2013, Waaijman 2002).

In her discussion of family life as Christian formation, Diana Garland, an authority in the field of family ministry, notes that “As we form families, live in covenant with one another, care for one another and are cared for by another, we are also formed as Christians. The concept of spiritual disciplines has been wonderfully helpful to Christians” (Garland 2012, 235). Garland compares the disciplines: “prayer, Bible study and meditation” (Garland 2012, 235) which strengthen the spirit to physical exercise and conditioning. This comparison brings to mind the *Spiritual Exercises* of Ignatius of Loyola (Ignatius of Loyola 2013) which was drawn upon in the development of the Christian parenting program.

Garland points out that “For 2,000 years, some Christians have decided to live their faith by devoting themselves to a solitary life of prayer and contemplation. A dichotomy consequently developed between this ascetic life of prayer and devotion, considered the “spiritual” life, and a life of the mainstream community” (Garland 2012, 236). This unfortunate distinction has further served

to make many Christian lay people feel that they are not holy or spiritual. There is little wonder that ordinary people, like mothers and fathers find it difficult to see that they too are called to holiness and spirituality. Garland puts it well:

Parents of preschoolers say, “I just can’t find ten minutes to meditate when the children don’t bother me, much less an hour.” They feel guilty and “unspiritual.” The world of contemplation is often pictured as the kernel of spiritual life, whereas the busyness of an active family life seems its opposite. Yet I believe that as we form families, live in covenant with one another, care for and are cared for by one another, we are also formed as Christians. (Garland 2012, 236-237)

What is essential for married couples, parents, and families to realize is that by their baptism and the sacrament of marriage, they are called to holiness and participation in God’s mission. They are called to be a “communion of life, a communion of love, and a communion of grace” (OCCB 1983, 2).

A Response of the Heart: A Practical and Accessible Spirituality for Every Person

I am drawn to the spirituality of Ignatius of Loyola. Based upon his life’s trials and conversion experiences, he developed a spiritual discipline which would come to be known as the *Spiritual Exercises* (Ignatius of Loyola 2013). These exercises then became the central focus of the formation process of all those who entered the Society of Jesus, the Jesuits. In describing the exercises, David Fleming SJ tells us:

Spiritual exercise, [Ignatius] writes, is good for “strengthening and supporting us in the effort to respond ever more faithfully to the love of God.”

Note what Ignatius did not say. He did not say that the *Spiritual Exercises* are designed primarily to deepen our understanding or to strengthen our will. He did not promise to explain spiritual mysteries to us

or enlighten our minds. We may emerge from the Exercises with enhanced intellectual understanding, but this is not the goal. The goal is a response—a certain kind of response. Ignatius is after a response of the heart. (Fleming 2008, 13,14)

Although the Jesuits used the exercises in their formation, Ignatius intended them to be made available to all women and men who sought to respond to God's loving call. "A person of education or ability who is taken up with public affairs or suitable business, may take an hour and a half daily to exercise himself" (Ignatius of Loyola 2013, 19). Some Ignatian spiritual practices were introduced such as the consciousness *examen* and the process of discernment in my parenting program so that parents could put them to use daily (Aschenbrenner 2013).

My Happiest Time Today: Ignatian Examen with Children

Matthew Linn et al., authorities on Ignatian spiritual formation, have adapted the Ignatian examen for parents and children. They tell us:

When we do the examen each night, we begin by lighting a candle. Then we ask ourselves two questions: For what moment during the day am I most grateful? For what moment of the day am I least grateful? After a few moments of silence, we share with one another as much as we wish of our answers to these questions. . . . for children we have changed the language, substituting "most favourite time" for "most grateful" and least favourite time" for least grateful." Other families have changed the language in their own way, such as, "When was your happy/sad time today?" or "What did you like best/least today?" (Linn, Linn, and Fabricant Linn, 2006, n.p.)

Seeing God in All Things: Characteristics of Ignatian Spirituality

These six characteristics of Ignatian spirituality as presented by Ignatian scholar George Traub provide a context for the practices mentioned above (headings added):

Be Grateful: It sees life and the whole universe as a gift calling forth wonder and gratefulness.

In all Ways: Heart, Soul, and Mind: It gives ample scope to imagination and emotion as well as intellect.

Seeing God in All Things: It seeks to find the divine in all things—in all peoples and cultures, in all areas of study and learning, in every human experience, and (for the Christian) especially in the person of Jesus.

Be Aware and Attentive: It cultivates critical awareness of personal and social evil, but points to God's love as more powerful than any evil.

Be Responsible: It stresses freedom, need for discernment, and responsible action.

Be for Others: It empowers people to become leaders in service, men and women for others, whole persons of solidarity, building a more just and humane world. (Traub 2013)

Parents, Contemplatives in Action

In responding to God's love and God's call to love God, our neighbour as we love our self, parents become aware of the great responsibility and gift they have received in their children. It all has to do with a "response of the heart." In their day-to-day activity and encounter with their children they are conscious of their constant need for God's love and grace to care for and to nurture God's beloved daughter or son. How do they see God in all they are and do as parents? How does God ask them to love? Daigeler proposes that we look to the love of Our Creator God:

It is important for parents to know their special responsibilities and rights within the family so that they may give due consideration to all aspects of

their calling. However, of equal importance is the way in which these responsibilities are carried out. Christian parents do not simply perform a list of duties. They create a climate of trust, mutual respect and love patterned on God's loving concern for mankind. The Father's incomprehensible love for humanity should serve as a model for Christian parents. They can appreciate their responsibilities better by reflecting on various characteristics of the Father's love: caring, giving, disciplining, respecting, knowing, forgiving. (Daigeler 1983, 20)

Application to Parent Education

The Christian parenting curriculum, *Parenting with Heart*, is based on Adlerian principles of parent education, Scripture and Church teaching, insights drawn from the new science, human and social sciences, and leadership and organizational theory. The model used is adapted from Daigeler. The basic premise is that parents are called to "create a climate [and a communion] of trust, mutual respect, and love" that have their foundation in God's love, compassion, and care for each of us as beloved daughters and sons of God (Daigeler 1983, 20). This awe inspiring love of God, who has loved us first and loved us into being, provides a model for parents and those who take the role of parent.

We can have a greater understanding of our call to parenthood by reflecting on the characteristics of God's love: "caring, giving, disciplining [instructing and guiding], respecting, knowing, forgiving" (Daigeler 1983, 20).

The curriculum addresses these areas:

- Parenting with Heart Means Caring
- Parenting with Heart Means Knowing: Understanding Our Child's Behaviour
- Parenting with Heart Means Instructing and Guiding

- Parenting with Heart Means Respecting
- Parenting with Heart Means Forgiving
- Parenting with Heart Means Creating a Home with Heart
- Parenting with Heart Means Teaching Response-Ability.

Together parents and children, as partners, work cooperatively, collaboratively, and compassionately, to face with courage, the challenges of a complex and ever changing world. Guided by the call to love, they contribute as co-creators to building a communion of life of love and of grace.

Curriculum Development

In developing *Parenting with Heart*, principles and practices of adult learning from adult educator Rosemary Caffarella were applied. They include:

Adults have a rich background of knowledge and experience and learn best when this experience is acknowledged and new information builds on their past knowledge and experience.

Adults are motivated to learn based on a combination of complex internal and external forces.

Adults are not likely to willingly engage in learning unless the learning is meaningful to them.

For the most part, adults are pragmatic in their learning; they want to apply their learning to present situations.

Adults prefer to be actively involved in the learning process rather than passive recipients of knowledge.

Adults are more receptive to the learning process in situations that are both physically and psychologically comfortable.

What, how, and where adults learn is affected by the many roles they play as adults . . . and their context as learners . . . (Caffarella 2002, 29)

The work of adult educator Jane Vella on dialogue education was also a resource (Vella 2002). In her discussion of the twelve principles she has developed, Vella explains:

Adult learning is best achieved in dialogue . . . the “word between us.” The approach to adult learning based on these principles holds that adults have enough life experience to be in dialogue with any teacher about any subject and will learn new knowledge, attitudes, or skills best in relation to that life experience (Knowles, 1970). Danah Zohar calls dialogue a quantum process, the means of doing quantum thinking (Zohar, 1997, p. 136). (Vella, 2002, 3)

Vella’s twelve principles and practices include: “learning needs and resources assessment; safety; sound relationships; sequence; praxis (action/reflection/action; respect; ideas/feelings/actions; immediacy; clear roles; teamwork); engagement; and accountability” (Vella 2008, 1). Vella also outlines the basic components of dialogue education (Vella 2008, 2-3). Her categorization of the learning tasks was very helpful in the design and preparation of the session format found in Appendix A of the Facilitator’s Guide used in *Parenting with Heart*.

Vella’s learning tasks include:

- a. *Inductive* – work connecting with the life of the learner
- b. *Input* – new content: knowledge, skills, attitudes
- c. *Implementation* – work using new content
- d. *Integration* – projecting use of the new learning at home (Vella 2008, 2, emphasis in original)

Understanding the Learners

Augustine, as quoted by Vella, tells us that “No man teaches another anything, all one can do is to prepare the way for the Holy Spirit” (Vella 2014).

This is very much the case when it comes to parent education. The facilitator and the parents are co-learners and must be open to discerning God's call to nurture and guide our children to become the person God has created them to be. Parents model for their children an approach to life-long learning that will equip them to face the challenges, joys, and sorrows life has to offer. Often parents have the mistaken notion that "If our children were just like us, all would be well."

Rather than create a dichotomy between adults as learners and children as learners, the parent education curriculum looks first at the Christian understanding of the human person as outlined in Chapter Two. Both children and parents are seen as beloved daughters and sons of God and sisters and brothers in Christ. Each has innate dignity and is worthy of respect. No one is greater or lesser than the other for we have been created in the image and likeness of our Creator.

Our children are not our own. They are gifts from our God (Ps 127:3-5) who calls each of us to fullness of life. Each one of us is gifted and unique. We are called to love and respect the self and the other. We are made for relationships and created to care for one another, especially the least among us. Our age, experience, strength, intelligence, and wisdom may vary, but each one of us belongs and is called to contribute to the well being of all. We are all called to be compassionate, to collaborate, and to cooperate with our Creator in carrying out God's mission.

The approach to learning in *Parenting with Heart* is one that:

- Shows respect for self and others.

- Fosters the gifts and talents of each person.
- Encourages dialogue, partnership, cooperation, and collaboration.
- Focuses on the process of continuous growth and learning rather than on the achievement of perfection.

Works to bring transformation of the self and others for the well being of all.

Assessment of Learning

In the area of assessment and evaluation, these principles developed by the York Catholic District School Board were followed:

- Respecting the dignity and worth of all learner
- Providing successful experiences for all [learners] . . .
- Fostering life-long learners and recognizing the God-given capacity of all persons to learn and grow throughout their lives
- Reflecting the holistic nature of assessment that integrates the nature of learning and faith formation (YCDSB 2011, 1).

The concepts of assessment *for*, *as*, and *of* learning were used (YCDSB 2011, 3).

Assessment *for* learning is an ongoing process that is used to determine where the learners are “in their learning, where they need to go and how best to get there”(YCDSB 2011, 28). Assessment *as* learning is a process of “developing and supporting metacognition”(YCDSB 2011, 28). Metacognition involves the learners in “the process of thinking about their] own thought processes” (YCDSB 2011, 30). Assessment *of* learning is the “process of collecting and interpreting evidence for the purpose of summarizing learning”(YCDSB 2011, 28).

In an adult learning program, self-evaluation and reflection on personal progress and understanding are more appropriate. Caffarella outlines assessment techniques to address different learning outcomes that include the following:

acquisition of knowledge; changes in attitudes, beliefs and values; and problem solving skills and abilities (Caffarella 2002, 189). These are particularly applicable and useful in assessing the learning outcomes in parent education.

Organizations and Associations

I drew on my experience and service with PEN, the Parent Education Network of Toronto, a not for profit community organization that for over forty years has offered parent education courses in Toronto (PEN 2014). I have benefited from the materials and resources available to me as a member of the North American Society of Adlerian Psychology (e.g. Rasmussen 2014) and the National Association of Catholic Family Life Ministers (NACFLM 2000). Resources from the Catholic Organization for Life and Family (COLF 2015), and the Vanier Institute for the Family were also used (Vanier Institute 2012).

Summary

This chapter reviewed the precedent social science literature and cases as they related to the development of a parent education program. The disciplines included:

1. parent education, counselling, and psychology
2. leadership and organizational development
3. religious education, and spirituality
4. curriculum development, program planning, and evaluation

The principles from Individual Psychology and their application to parent education were outlined. Key relevant concepts and principles drawn from

complex systems theory, appreciative inquiry, asset based community development, and emotional intelligence were identified. The work of authorities in religious education and spiritual formation that informed the curriculum, *Parenting with Heart*, were reviewed. The work of Caffarella and Vella who provided the framework for the adult learning approach taken in *Parenting with Heart* was discussed.

CHAPTER 4:

METHODOLOGY AND PROJECT

In outlining the approach of this project to develop a Christian parenting curriculum the following subjects are discussed: scope, methodology, phases, curriculum, and expert review.

Scope

The main focus of the project was on the development of a Christian parenting curriculum, which included the use of an expert review panel to assess and give feedback for improvements. A facilitator's guide and participant's materials were created. The curriculum is but a starting point. Further work is required to implement the curriculum and to develop facilitator and leadership training courses and materials. This will help to ensure that support and ministry to families can be ongoing and self-sustaining within a local church setting or a collaborative group of faith communities. A comprehensive approach to family ministry including married and engaged couples, teens, grandparents, and self-care for all those ministering to the family, by necessity, will have to be part of a larger vision well beyond the scope of this project.

Methodology

The primary approach taken was action research, also known as participatory action research (PAR). Ernest Stringer, a leading authority on action research, describes it as “a systematic approach to investigation that enables people to find effective solutions to problems they confront in their everyday lives” (Stringer 2007, 1). Bramer and Chapman speak of the process as “iterative” or cyclical rather than linear. The process involves both the leader/researcher and the participants who in the context of their situation work together to bring about “positive individual and social change” and to develop “transferable and theoretical knowledge” (Bramer and Chapman 2011, 3).

Stringer suggests a basic action research routine comprised of three steps: “look, think, act” followed by reflection. When repeated, they form a cyclical pattern (Stringer 2007, 8-9). This pattern was applied to the project and included these phases:

Phase 1: Research into the theological foundations and the findings from social science that lead to the development and growth of a healthy family to respond to the call to be a communion of life, of love and of grace.

Phase 2: Development of a Christian parent education curriculum.

Phase 3: Expert review.

Phase 4: Reflection on the pedagogy, content, assessments, and preparation of the report.

In their discussion of the work of Zuber-Skerritt and Perry on the application of action research to university thesis writing (Zuber-Skerritt and

Perry 2002, 175), Bramer and Chapman refer to the distinction made between the “core action research project” and “thesis action research project” (Bramer and Chapman 2011, 13). Coghlan and Brannick have taken up this concept in their discussion of “meta-learning.” They point out that in an action research project, “there are two action research cycles operating in parallel” (Coghlan and Brannick 2010, 11).

In this project the core action research cycle was the development and evaluation of the Christian parenting curriculum, *Parenting with Heart*. The thesis action research cycle involved the reflection, assessment, and report on the overall approach taken to develop the curriculum and the implications to the body of knowledge associated with Family Ministry and support for the family.

The Curriculum

Parenting with Heart is a curriculum based upon the call to love as we are loved (Jn 15:9-12). Throughout the development of the curriculum, the theme of “call and response” has guided the work. To be attentive to God’s call to love and to respond with love, as we are loved, requires the “gift of presence.” Presence may be understood in these two ways. The first is our awareness and openness to the loving presence of God in our lives and in the life of the other, that is, our family members and those in the greater community. This openness and awareness open us to the Spirit of God who enables and empowers us to respond in a loving manner.

The second presence speaks about our own presence as gift. It is complete openness, disposition, and attentiveness to the other as God's beloved. As we parent with heart, the greatest gift we can give our children and family is the gift of our presence. In this way, we create a "sacred shelter" and a "forming centre" (Thompson 2004, 19, 17). The pedagogical approach taken in *Parenting with Heart* draws on the principles of parent education and adult learning that foster and support the gift of presence in the life long learning process. This is a process that parents and their children may participate in, experience, and practice as they face the challenges and tasks of everyday living.

In developing the curriculum and materials, resources were drawn from parenting education (Lott and Nelsen 1991, NACFLM 2000), parenting handbooks and guides (D. Dinkmeyer, McKay, and Dinkmeyer, Jr. 1980, Dinkmeyer, Sr., McKay, and Dinkmeyer, Jr. 1997, Nelsen 2006, Nelsen et al. 2008), adult education (Caffarella 2002, Knowles, Swanson, and Elwood 2011, Vella 2002, Vella 2008) and assessment of learning (YCDSB 2011).

The Facilitator's Guide (Appendix 1) contains a learning covenant, session format, opening discussion starter, and session reflection and evaluation forms that are found in Appendix A of the guide.

The Format

The format utilized for each session, as shown below, was drawn from Lynn Lott and Jane Nelsen, leaders in the field of parent education. They suggest

an outline for a two-hour session (Lott and Nelsen 1991, 21). Each session is composed of their activities in (List A) to which I have added my titles (List B).

Table 2: Session Format

List A	List B
Warm-up	Open Your Hearts (a time of prayer and refection has been added).
Discussion	Heart Feeding (Facilitator input and Comments)
Experiential Activity	Heart Work
Problem solving	Home Is Where the Heart Is
Appreciations	Heart Talk, A Grateful Heart

Essential Content

The content of *Parenting with Heart* as contained in the Facilitator's Guide is summarized below.

Table 3: Essential Content: *Parenting with Heart*

Session I: To love as we are loved

- a view of the human person
- the call to love
- the family: three communions
- the power of encouragement

Session II: To understand our child's behaviour

- a desire to belong and to be in community
- the influence of family environment
- the family constellation
- mistaken goals of behaviour

Session III: To instruct and to guide

- parenting with heart and not with hurt
- what the situation demands

- encouraging response-ability
- natural and reasonable outcomes

Session IV: To respect

- looking again with the eyes and heart of Jesus
- fostering respect for self and others

Session V: To forgive and to be reconciled

- how to resolve problems with love and respect
- creating a positive climate
- the courage to be imperfect
- reconciliation and “re-membering”

Sessions VI-VIII: To create a home with heart

- heart seeing: appreciation
- heart listening: gift of presence
- heart caring: our response-ability
- heart laughing: celebration and rejoicing

The entire curriculum is found in the Facilitator’s Guide (Appendix 1). The participant’s materials are also included in the Facilitator’s Guide. A list of the participant’s materials is provided in Appendix 2.

Expert Review

An expert review was used to evaluate the curriculum. This was to see whether the pedagogy and contents would be suitable for a parent education curriculum that would be appropriate for use in Catholic parishes and organizations and in churches in the Evangelical tradition.

Parent Education Expert Review

Lu Watson reviewed the program content and approach as an expert in parent education, counselling, and Adlerian psychology. Watson was an educator, department head of Guidance, and administrator with the North York Board of education for over twenty years. She initiated the first daytime parenting program for parents of children attending school. With her husband, John, she developed parenting courses throughout Toronto and York Region. The most popular course was called “Living with Teens and Surviving.” Watson left the school board to establish a practice in Marriage and Family Counselling. She also taught Communications Courses at Seneca College, Toronto for over twelve years. She holds a MEd from the University of Toronto and MA in Counselling Psychology from the Adler Institute of Chicago.

Watson reviewed the Facilitator’s Guide and Participant’s material for *Parenting with Heart*. Watson was asked to use as criteria the key concepts and principles of parent education, following the work of Adler and Dreikurs (Dreikurs 1990) that are still employed by current authorities in the field of parent education (Dinkmeyer, Sr., McKay, and Dinkmeyer, Jr. 1997, Lemay 2000, Nelsen 2006, Nelsen et al. 2008, Rasmussen 2014). These principles and concepts are summarized by Adlerian psychologist and educator Paul Rasmussen as follows:

- a) emphasizing an encouragement-based rather than a praise-based approach;
- b) relying on natural and logical consequences rather than punishment and reward;

- c) fostering cooperation as opposed to simple obedience;
- d) having a belief in a democratic or authoritative philosophy of child care rather than one characterized by autocratic control, permissiveness, or indulgence;
- e) making a commitment to preparing children to meet the life tasks associated with sustaining the self and others and getting along with others, including the ability to develop healthy intimacies. (Rasmussen 2014, 93)

Roman Catholic Theological and Pastoral Review

To ascertain if the content and pedagogy of the curriculum were likely to be in keeping with Catholic Church teachings and would be appropriate and acceptable for use in Family Life programs in Catholic parishes, schools, agencies, and organizations, Professor Maureen McDonnell was asked to be an expert reviewer. She is an Assistant Professor at Regis College, University of Toronto and is the Director of Diploma Programs and Acting Director of the Master of Arts Program in Ministry and Spirituality (MAMS). She holds a DMin from the University of Toronto, and post-graduate degrees and diploma in Theology, Divinity, and Spiritual Direction from Regis College. She and her husband have three children and three grand children.

The reviewer was requested to use as criteria the model of parenting proposed by Daigeler (Daigeler 1983, 20-23), as shown below, in light of the Catholic Church's teachings on marriage and family life (OCCB 1983, CCCB 1994, John Paul II, 1981).

In order to develop a greater understanding of our call to parenthood by reflecting on the characteristics of God's love: "caring, giving, disciplining [instructing and guiding], respecting, knowing, forgiving" (Daigeler 1983, 20).

The *Parenting with Heart* addresses these areas:

- Parenting with Heart Means Caring
- Parenting with Heart Means Knowing: Understanding Our Child's Behaviour
- Parenting with Heart Means Instructing and Guiding
- Parenting with Heart Means Respecting
- Parenting with Heart Means Forgiving
- Parenting with Heart Means Creating a Home with Heart
- Parenting with Heart Means Teaching Response-Ability.

In her review McDonnell began with this pastoral principle taken from the Preface of the Roman Catechism:

The whole concern of doctrine and its teaching must be directed to the love that never ends. Whether something is proposed for belief, for hope or for action, the love of our Lord must always be made accessible, so that anyone can see that all the works of perfect Christian virtue spring from love and have no other objective than to arrive at love. (CCCB 1994, 15)

She also formulated these three questions for discussion:

1. Is this program faithful to the pastoral principle quoted above?
2. Can this program be used with participants who are from other faith traditions or have no professed faith?
3. How accessible is the process and the content of the program for participants?

Protestant Theological and Pastoral Review

Coming from the Roman Catholic tradition, I wanted to see if the curriculum content and pedagogy would be appropriate and acceptable for use by families and churches of member churches of the Evangelical Fellowship of Canada. Shelley Campagnola was invited to be an expert reviewer. Campagnola has been a professor at Heritage College and Seminary, a researcher, pastor, ministry consultant, and chair of the Child in the Church and Culture Partnership, and most recently, the Executive Director of Kids Alive International, Canada. She has served on a number of non-profit organizations including: the Children's Spirituality Conference, Women Alive, and her own church. Her major writings include: *Come to the Table: the Missional Church in Canada* (Campagnola 2007) and "Unless You Become As One of These" (Campagnola 2004). Campagnola holds a Master's degree in Theological Studies in addition to degrees in Commerce and Religious Education. Campagnola was requested to review the content and pedagogy of *Parenting with Heart* in light of Biblical principles and teachings consistent with the Evangelical tradition.

Revisions

This section discusses some of the recommendations of the expert reviewers that were implemented in *Parenting with Heart*. Other recommendations were beyond the scope of the project and are discussed in Chapter Six as next steps.

Watson recommended the inclusion of role-playing, as an effective tool in helping parents to employ the concepts they were learning. In the Session Discussion Format of *Parenting with Heart*, role-play is recommended as a useful technique to help parents to practice and apply new principles. Watson also underlined the importance of “using statements rather than questions. (Questions are often perceived as a potential attack and can put children on the defensive).” In *Parenting with Heart* in Session Six: “Parenting with Heart Means: Creating a Home with Heart,” parents are taught to use “I-messages” as a way to describe to the child what they observe and how they feel in a given situation. The third suggestion was to disengage from a potential conflict situation by “declaring bankruptcy” and turning the responsibility for a solution over to the child. This technique is presented in *Parenting with Heart* in Session Four: “Parenting with Heart Means Respecting.”

Campagnola recommended the inclusion of John 15:9 to highlight the theme of “loving as we are loved” in Session One. A selected reading from John 15: 5-17 and reflection were added to open the session. In the Facilitator’s Guide a number of traditional prayers had been included as helps along the way. One of them was the prayer of Ignatius of Loyola, “Take, Lord receive . . .” Campagnola suggested that this prayer be incorporated as part of the reflection that concludes the second session. This was done.

Two versions of *Parenting with Heart* were considered in order to recognize some of the differences between the Catholic tradition and the

Protestant traditions. Campagnola recommended one version only and suggested that a brief introduction be provided to develop an understanding of the family called to be the domestic church and the vital role parents play in the faith formation of their children. This is done in Session One with a discussion of the role of parents, the family as three communities or communions of life, of love and of grace, and the family as the little church of the home.

Summary

In this chapter, the following subjects were discussed: scope, methodology, phases, curriculum, essential content, and expert review. The methodological approach, participatory action research was described. The essential content of the curriculum as presented in the Facilitator's Guide was outlined. The credentials of the expert reviewers and the criteria for their reviews were discussed. The revisions based on their recommendations and suggestions were outlined. In Chapter Five, the findings and an interpretation of the expert review reports are presented.

CHAPTER 5:
OUTCOMES, FINDINGS, AND
INTERPRETATION

The intent of the project was to develop a parent education curriculum that would incorporate learning from the social sciences, in particular, psychology, counselling, and parent education as developed by Adler and Dreikurs (Dreikurs 1990), with the teachings drawn from Scripture, theology and the Catholic tradition. Integrating the principles, approaches, and concepts, drawn from both a faith and social science perspective, a parent education curriculum called *Parenting with Heart* was developed. A facilitator's guide and participant's materials were created and experts assessed these materials using criteria outlined in Chapter Four. This chapter presents the findings of the expert reviewers, with my interpretation, and discusses the reception of the curriculum by the participants of the project–thesis presentation, November 25, 2014.

Parent Education Expert Review

Lu Watson, Adlerian parent educator and counsellor, reviewed the curriculum content and pedagogy as an expert in parent education, counselling, and Adlerian psychology. She reviewed the facilitator's guide: *Parenting with Heart: A Program Based upon the Call To Love as We Are Loved* (referred to as

the “program”) that contained the curriculum. She used as criteria the concepts and principles of parent education consistent with those outlined in Chapter Four. She reviewed the curriculum in terms of pedagogy and content. The comments and quotations presented below are from her review.

She found that the curriculum was “structured and very well organized.” The content to be covered was clearly stated. She noted that “Parenting concepts are made real and understandable through the use of examples to which parents can easily relate.” The curriculum communicated the “value and dignity to the parenting task by describing parents as ‘the first teachers of love.’” In terms of the on-going evaluation and reflection process, she had this to say, “I like the effective and realistic Post-Session Evaluation questions [Appendix A of the Facilitator’s Guide]. The questions depict an attitude of being open to input and show the desire to continually improve the program.”

In terms of content, the reviewer noted that “All of the key points that I believe to be necessary for effective parenting are covered in the program . . .” Understanding our children’s behaviour and knowing our children was a key concept included in the curriculum. Watson acknowledged this in her review, “The inclusion of the Adlerian concept of the Four Goals of Misbehaviour, in my opinion, makes a parenting program unique and powerful. A knowledge of these goals helps parents to gain an insight as to what is going on between them and the child, and will give the parents confidence in changing their own behaviour.”

Even today parents resort to methods of persuasion and coercion to have their children behave well. These methods were addressed in curriculum and were noted by the reviewer in this observation, “You have also included the topic of rewards and punishment and how neither strategy is effective. I was glad to see this inclusion, as there are many programs that take solely a reward and punishment approach, an approach I feel is not effective and creates a disrespectful dynamic between parent and child.”

Watson recommended the inclusion of role-playing, “I found that parents could oftentimes understand the parenting concepts as presented but often had difficulty in actually applying concepts. Role Playing . . . seemed to be an effective tool in helping parents to employ the concepts being learned.” She also underlined the importance of “using statements rather than questions. (Questions are often perceived as a potential attack and can put children on the defensive).” Another helpful suggestion had to do with teaching parents to disengage from being overly protective and trying to fix behaviour. Watson proposed the use of the technique of “Declaring Bankruptcy,” in this way, the parent turns “over a situation to the child to decide how best to handle it, and shows faith in the child’s ability to solve and deal with the matter.” These recommendations were implemented as discussed in Chapter Four.

Roman Catholic Expert Review

To see whether the content and pedagogy of the curriculum would be in keeping with Catholic Church teachings and would be appropriate and acceptable

for use in Family Life programs in Catholic parishes, schools, agencies, and organizations, Professor Maureen McDonnell was asked to be an expert reviewer. She reviewed the facilitator's guide: *Parenting with Heart: A Program Based upon the Call To Love as We Are Loved* (referred to as the "program").

Throughout this section all comments and quotations are from MacDonnell's review, unless indicated otherwise. In her review McDonnell began with this pastoral principle taken from the Preface of the Roman Catechism:

The whole concern of doctrine and its teaching must be directed to the love that never ends. Whether something is proposed for belief, for hope or for action, the love of our Lord must always be made accessible, so that anyone can see that all the works of perfect Christian virtue spring from love and have no other objective than to arrive at love. (CCCB 1994, 15)

She formulated these three questions:

1. Is this program faithful to the pastoral principle quoted above?
2. Can this program be used with participants who are from other faith traditions or have no professed faith?
3. How accessible is the process and the content of the program for participants?

Faithful to the Pastoral Principle

Parenting with Heart, looked upon the love of God as the model for parents in loving and raising their children. McDonnell noted that "The pastoral principle that life arises from love, is drawn to love so as to be love in the world is consistent throughout the program." In all the sessions, each topic "is rooted in Scripture and followed by a period of prayer for the participants. The scripture

passages highlight the centrality of love in the relationships within the family.” She appreciated the process that invited parents to be aware and appreciative of the love of God that is ever present in the midst of our everyday life. “Parents are guided to consider the depth of their love and the responses of their children to them in everyday life situations.”

The curriculum encouraged parents and children to have the “courage to be imperfect” (Dreikurs 1990, 56) and to recognize the need of forgiveness and reconciliation in their daily lives. McDonnell acknowledged this important aspect, “There is also consideration of the reality of human imperfection and the need for forgiveness in this program, which is central to building the family as a community of love.” She expressed her overall assessment in these words, “The program *Parenting with Heart* in my opinion is consistent with Roman Catholic teaching on the family. It is a pastoral program that offers real support to parents as they reflect on their role as parents in today’s world.”

Participants from Other Faith Traditions

McDonnell also reviewed the curriculum in light of her experience as an official representative of the Catholic Church in a dialogue with the United Church in Canada:

The second area of comment for me is on the potential of this program to be used with parents who may not be Roman Catholic, or Christian or have a faith tradition. My comments arise from my experience of serving on an official dialogue between the Roman Catholic Church in Canada with the United Church of Canada. At that time our focus of the dialogue was on marriage. What became evident throughout our talks were the complex nature of marriages and the many ‘mixed-marriages’ in Canada.

We cannot assume that all parents have the same religious commitments or desires about bringing up their children in a particular Christian community. Yet I find that the emphasis on love in all the relationships within the family is the key foundational building block of this *Parenting with Heart* program.

This recognition of the potential of the curriculum to reach participants from other denominations and faith traditions underscores the importance of the theme of Call and Response that invites us to respond to the call of the Source of Love to love as we are loved. McDonnell also made reference to the work of the Scarborough Missions on the “Golden Rule Across the World’s Religions” (Scarboro Missions 2014a). She suggested that “The program does make itself available to other faith traditions when the emphasis is on building loving relationships in the family.” The suggestion is discussed in “Next Steps” in Chapter Six.

McDonnell reviewed *Parenting with Heart* not only from the perspective of a theologian and educator but also as a grandparent:

My third comment is on the process and content of the program as formative for adults seeking a deeper understanding of parenting and some skill development to use within their family context. As I read through the content of the Facilitator’s Guide I am reminded that I have much to learn as a grandparent. The topics throughout the sessions opened me to a deeper awareness of my patterns of grandparenting and called me to conversion.

The program presents a series of approaches to understand our children and ourselves in order to foster self-awareness, awareness of the other, and to develop skills in order to live together in loving communion. Together we encourage one another to a change of heart, *metanoia*, or conversion. On this subject, McDonnell had this to say, “The topics throughout the sessions opened

me to a deeper awareness of my patterns of grandparenting and called me to conversion.”

McDonnell suggested a possible mode of offering the curriculum to grandparents, “I wonder if *Parenting with Heart* could also be a basis for discussion groups with grandparents now facing a very different world from their youth. In the context of today’s family the support of loving grandparents is paramount for children.” This idea is taken up in “Next Steps” in Chapter Six.

The intention of the curriculum is not to offer a short-term or “quick fix” solution to the challenging vocation of parenting and grand parenting but rather to develop an approach that becomes a way of living together as a communion of life, of love, and of grace. McDonnell put it well, “This program offers all adults a time to step back and consider their own formation and to realize that we can be open to growth and awareness of the profound basis of love in family relationships.”

Protestant Expert Review

Shelley Campagnola, former professor at Heritage College and Seminary, researcher, pastor, and authority on children’s ministry, was asked to be an expert reviewer. She assessed the curriculum in light of the Biblical principles and teachings consistent with the Evangelical tradition. She reviewed the facilitator’s guide: *Parenting with Heart: A Program Based upon the Call To Love as We Are Loved* (referred to as the “program”). The comments and quotations in the following sections are from Campagnola’s expert review unless otherwise noted.

Initially two versions of the facilitator's guide to *Parenting with Heart* were considered in order to recognize some of the differences between the Catholic tradition and the Protestant denominations for which the curriculum was intended. Campagnola, however, recommended one version only and suggested that a brief introduction be provided, "That explains the comprehensive exposure including quotes from Catholic sources as an effort to reflect the depth and history of the church from its beginnings, redeeming the holy words and ways of life prior to the Reformation that have too often been ignored but are foundational to where we are today." The underlying theme of *Parenting with Heart*, Call and Response, with the understanding that we, all of us, children and parents are the "Beloved" of God was very well received by Campagnola:

Your program has a Nouwenish nuance . . . with the emphasis on the beloved. . . . The theme of the beloved is without equal when one considers the NT depictions of Jesus' relationship with his disciples of which John was the one most able to embrace it. Perhaps one of the greatest challenges I hear parents having is to "enjoy" their children and see them as their beloved, especially during years when children are not so easy to walk with. I think parents will have opportunity to explore their own thoughts on this in relationship to the Father.

She also suggested beginning the introduction of *Parenting with Heart* with the inclusion of John 15:9, "As the Father has loved me, so I have loved you; abide in my love" and to have the parents place themselves in the position of the disciples in order to take time to reflect on Jesus' words and what the call means to them as parents and as disciples. This was done.

In the *Parenting with Heart*, a number of traditional prayers had been included as helps along the way. One of them was the prayer of Ignatius of

Loyola, “Take, Lord receive . . .” Campagnola suggested that this prayer be incorporated as part of the reflection that concludes the second session:

You may want to consider taking the prayer of Ignatius of Loyola . . . and moving it to the reflections at the end of session [2]. It seems fitting to help parents, who have been reflecting on their families of origin and present and give them opportunity to entrust that remembering and how they carry it to the Father. My thought is, that as they work through this session, they might quickly be exposed to patterns they are carrying and/or experienced that are not helpful and will need some way to put these things into perspective; to prepare them for a journey of healing and overflow of that healing to their children.

What Campagnola saw clearly in the pedagogy was the understanding, that as parents and caregivers seek to change the children, they, too, find that they must first change some of their own patterns and attitudes that they carry from their past. Through self awareness and awareness of the other, we can have the courage to make changes in the way we love and accept our self and the other, our beloved child. All this requires each of us to surrender and give to our Loving God, as Ignatius of Loyola reminds us, “My liberty, memory, my understanding, and my entire will. All I have and call my own” (Ignatius of Loyola 2014). By giving over our mistaken beliefs and unhelpful behaviours to our God, we can join together with our children to seek wholeness in order to become and to be a communion of life, of love, and of grace. Campagnola’s suggestions were implemented in the facilitator’s guide.

In conclusion, Campagnola indicated her satisfaction with the content and pedagogy: “I really liked this program you have designed and I am not thinking anything too divergent. I would actually like to try and lead a group through this;

that is where we could most glean helpful revisions . . . it has stuck with me; that is, for me, a good sign that it had a meaningful impact that [was] sustained which is what is wanted.” She continued, “I like the basic outline/movements through the material i.e. Heart Warming, Heart Feeding, Heart Work, etc. Simple rhythms that allow some gentle yet directed movement to a helpful close in conversation, first with one another and then with God.” The recommendations she made were implemented in the *Facilitator’s Guide and Participant’s Materials* as noted in Chapter Four.

Presentation of Parenting with Heart

The project-thesis presentation was held on November 25, 2014. The participants included the co-directors of Jericho House, members of the Jericho House ministry team, and clergy members of the local interdenominational ministerial group. Dr. Tim Jacobson, my thesis advisor, chaired the event. I found the participants attentive and supportive. A lively discussion followed the presentation. There seemed to be general agreement that the curriculum was useful and could be of benefit to parents and families. The participants appeared eager to offer suggestions and raise questions that would aid in implementing and promoting the curriculum. Some expressed the need for a train-the-trainers component. It was suggested that retired teachers, experienced parents, and grandparents be considered as potential facilitators and trainers.

The role of grandparents in the parenting of children was also raised and a sequel: *Grand Parenting with Heart* was suggested. Because the curriculum

seemed to focus on young, school aged children, it was suggested that consideration be given to addressing parenting through the different stages of development. My overall impression was that the curriculum was well received and would be a helpful resource for families and those involved in family ministry.

Summary

In this chapter, the findings of the three expert reviewers were presented. The first reviewer examined the content and pedagogy for *Parenting with Heart* and found that they followed the principles and concepts of parent education as outlined by Rasmussen (Rasmussen 2014, 93).

The second reviewer examined the curriculum materials from the perspective of the Catholic tradition and teachings regarding family and family life education. Using the Pastoral Principle from the Preface of the Roman Catechism (CCCB 1994, 15) as the overarching guideline, she noted that the curriculum pedagogy and content were consistent with Catholic teaching on the family and would be a support to families. She also pointed to the possibility of offering the program to other faith traditions as Scarborough Missions have done with their “Golden Rule Across the World’s Religions” program (Scarboro Missions 2014a).

The third reviewer, from the Evangelical tradition, assessed the content and pedagogy of the curriculum and found that it would be appropriate for use with families in Evangelical churches (associated with the Evangelical Fellowship of Canada). Finally, there was also a discussion about the reception of the

curriculum by the participants of the project-thesis presentation. The implications of the expert reviews and suggestions from the participants are discussed in Chapter Six.

CHAPTER 6:

CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

The purpose of this project was to develop and evaluate a Christian parenting curriculum, *Parenting with Heart* that can then be used to support families in responding to their call to be communities of life, of love, and of grace.

Four Areas of Focus

This chapter has four areas of focus. The first is on the research questions that guided the inquiry and direction of the project. The second considers the conclusions drawn from the expert reviews and the implications of their assessments and recommendations. The third looks at the next steps for the implementation of *Parenting with Heart*. The fourth is a personal reflection on leadership development for the vocation of parenthood.

The Research Questions

The overarching question developed was: How can I support parents to fulfill their call to be family? This generated the following questions:

1. What is the Biblical, theological, and Catholic Church's teaching regarding the family in relationship to the Church?
2. What does psychology, particularly Adlerian psychology, contribute to our understanding of the family as a healthy community?

3. What are some contributions from the field of leadership development to a healthy family?
4. What are some pedagogical theories to undergird the notion of a healthy family and a communion of life, of love, and of grace?
5. What is an example of instructional support that can be given to a family that wants to be healthy and to be a communion of life, of love, and of grace?
6. What are some responses from selected experts in the field to assess and modify such a curriculum?

Biblical, Theological, and Catholic Church Teaching

What is the Biblical, theological, and Catholic Church's teaching regarding the family in relationship to the Church? Drawing on the lessons from Scripture, theology, and Church teachings as outlined in Chapter Two, it was noted that as God's beloved we are called to be family. Wives and husbands by virtue of the covenant of marriage are called to be co-operators with God's plan of creation and salvation (FC, 14). They are the primary (though not the sole) educators and evangelizers of their children (John Paul II 1981, 17, Paul VI 2015a, 2). The family is the reflection of the Divine Communion of Persons, the Trinity, and is called to be a communion of life, of love, and of grace (OCCB 1983, 2).

The four tasks of the family as they participate in God's mission are enumerated by John Paul II in *Familiaris Consortio*:

1. forming a community of persons
2. serving life [respect for all human life from conception to natural death]
3. participating in the development of society
4. sharing in the life and mission of the Church (John Paul II 1981, 17)

The model of God's love, as proposed by Daigeler (Diageler 1983), guided the integration of parent education theory and practice with lessons drawn from Scripture and the Catholic faith tradition in *Parenting with Heart*. The model of God's love calls for an openness and discernment of God's call and a willingness and desire to respond with love. For parents and family members, an awareness of the presence of God's love in the everyday events of family living serves as guidance and inspiration in making the choices and decisions that shape us and direct our actions.

Contributions of Adlerian Psychology

What does psychology, particularly Adlerian psychology, contribute to our understanding of the family as a healthy community? In Chapter Two it is noted that the work of Adler and Dreikurs in the field of psychology, counselling and parent education provided a practical approach to building healthy families. The curriculum of *Parenting with Heart* is based upon the principles and practices developed by Adler and Dreikurs and other Adlerian psychologists and parent educators (Dreikurs 1990, Dinkmeyer et al. 1997, Leman 2000, Nelsen 2006).

Contributions from the Field of Leadership Development

What are some contributions from the field of leadership development to a healthy family? In Chapter Three, the use of parenting as an example of complex activity and the family as a system is noted. The vocation and task of parents and those who take on the role of parenting is that of leaders in a complex system. The

leadership concepts discussed (Lowney 2003, Roxburgh and Romanuk 2006) affirmed the principles and practices that were applied to *Parenting with Heart*.

Although leadership development and formation is considered to be a priority for churches and faith communities (Malphurs and Mancini 2004, Pue 2005), many organizations, including faith-based organizations, churches, and institutions place very little emphasis on this essential component of ministry and service. This highlights the need to recognize the important leadership role of parents, who are called to be the first educators of their children and nurturers of a community of life, of love, and of grace.

The development of the curriculum also benefitted from the theories and practices presented in Appreciative Inquiry (Cooperrider, Whitney, and Stavros 2008), Asset Based Community Development (McKnight 2013), and Emotional Intelligence (Bradberry and Greaves 2009) as discussed in Chapter Three.

Pedagogical Theories

What are some pedagogical theories to undergird the notion of a healthy family and a communion of life, of love, and of grace?

Religious Education and Spiritual Formation

Practical religious education and spiritual formation are an integral part of *Parenting with Heart*. A spirituality of parenting and family life, as embodied in *Parenting with Heart*, is based upon the call to love as we are loved (Jn 15:9-12).

In Chapter Three, Ford identifies the two following elements that inform and form a Spirit-filled life. It is a way of life that “(a) seeks to discern and respond to the presence of God in the experiences of daily life, and (b) leads to transformation of the personal, familial, and social dimensions of human existence . . .” (Ford 2006, 177).

A spirituality of parenting and family life may be seen as the art and science of Christian living within the context of the first community, the little church of the home, the family. Groome described the family as “the primary agent of an *incarnate* transmission of faith” (Groome 2011, 205). The family members participate in the transmission of faith as they “bring their lives to Faith, and their Faith to their lives” (Groome 2011, 13). They create a community of welcome, witness, shared worship, and wellbeing (Groome 2011, 206).

In many cases parents seem to be unaware of the their innate spirituality and holiness in the ordinariness of daily living. They do not see themselves as being holy and spiritual persons. Garland commented on how, through the centuries, the commitment of some Christians to devote their lives to “a solitary life of prayer and contemplation” has contributed to a sense that those who do not practice this way of living are somehow not spiritual (Garland 2012, 236).

In their busy world, parents and those who take the role of parents are engaged in the ongoing process of spiritual formation and the practice of contemplation in action. Garland made this very clear, “Yet I believe that as we form families, live in covenant with one another, care for and are cared for by one

another, we are also formed as Christians” (Garland 2012, 236-7). Married couples, parents, those who take on the role of parents, and families must be reminded that by their baptism and covenant of marriage they are called to holiness and participation in God’s mission (Rochon and McCarthy 1983, 7, 9).

The Spiritual Exercises of Ignatius of Loyola (Ignatius of Loyola 2013) and the characteristics of Ignatian Spirituality (Traub 2013) provided a model for an approach to spiritual formation that could be applied to the vocation of parenthood as noted in Chapter Three.

Adult Education Theory and Practice

The work of Caffarella (Caffarella 2002) and Vella (Vella 2002, Vella 2008) were used to develop a pedagogical approach in *Parenting with Heart* that: The approach to learning in the parent education curriculum is one that:

- Shows respect for self and others.
- Fosters the gifts and talents of each person.
- Encourages dialogue, partnership, cooperation, and collaboration.
- Focuses on the process of continuous growth and learning rather than on the achievement of perfection.
- Works to bring transformation of the self and others for the wellbeing of all.

Instructional Support

What is an example of instructional support that can be given to a family that wants to be healthy and to be a communion of life, of love, and of grace? After a review of the Biblical, theological, and Church teaching regarding the

family and a review of the social science literature related to the building of healthy families, *Parenting with Heart* was developed in response to this question. In Chapter Four the format and essential content of curriculum are outlined. The complete curriculum is presented in the Facilitator's Guide (Appendix 1).

Implications of the Assessments and Recommendations of the Expert Reviewers

What are some responses from selected experts in the field to assess and modify such a curriculum? The Assessments of the expert reviewers were presented in Chapter Five. Presented here is a discussion of the implications of their conclusions and recommendations.

Parent Education Review

Watson, the expert reviewer in parent education, found the curriculum "structured and very well organized." She noted that the parenting concepts were "made real and understandable through the use of examples to which parents can easily relate." The content covered the key points necessary for a parenting education program. She appreciated the realistic Post-Session Evaluation questions (Appendix A of the Facilitator's Guide) and how the "questions depict an attitude of being open to input and show the desire to continually improve the program."

Parenting is a dynamic process that calls for new insights and understandings that create opportunities for growth and change. This process is modeled in the program to enable participants and facilitators to teach and learn

from one another. The process is open-ended and seeks new inputs and information. My first inclination was to produce a printed copy of the Facilitator's Guide and Participant's Materials. The material will now be made available in digital format. In this way, feedback and new learnings and insights gathered as the curriculum is implemented and developed will be continually added to update the resource materials. This will also make it possible to tailor the curriculum to meet the needs of other denominations by adding prayers, activities, readings and resource materials from their respective traditions.

Roman Catholic Theological and Pastoral Review

McDonnell affirmed the appropriateness of the material that was consistent with the Pastoral Principle (CCCB 1994, 15), "The program *Parenting with Heart* in my opinion is consistent with Roman Catholic teaching on the family. It is a pastoral program that offers real support to parents as they reflect on their role as parents in today's world." McDonnell also suggested that consideration be given to making the curriculum available to other faith traditions. This recommendation is well beyond the scope of this project and will be considered in "Next Steps."

Pedagogy and Content

Both experts, who reviewed the curriculum materials from the theological and pastoral perspective, saw the curriculum as being appropriate for use with the

congregations and faith communities of their respective traditions. They each focused on the predominant theme of the Beloved.

McDonnell remarked on the pedagogy and content:

In *Parenting with Heart* each topic is rooted in Scripture and followed by a prayer period for the participants. The scripture passages highlight the centrality of love in relationships within the family. Parents are guided to consider the depth of their love and their responses of their children to them in everyday life situations. Likewise parents are guided to be reflective on each of the topics presented in each session.

Campagnola noted:

The theme of the beloved is without equal when one considers the NT depictions of Jesus' relationship with his disciples of which John was the one most able to embrace it. . . .I think parents will have opportunity to explore their own thoughts on this in relationship to the Father.

With respect to the pedagogy, Campagnola stated that “I like the basic outline/movements through the material i.e. Heart Warming, Heart Feeding, Heart Work, etc. Simple rhythms that allow some gentle yet directed movement to a helpful close in conversation, first with one another and then with God.” The above comments affirm that the pedagogy and content developed and employed in the curriculum are sound and appropriate for use with congregations, parishes, and faith communities from the Evangelical and Catholic traditions.

Next Steps

Regarding out reach to other faith traditions, the development of an intercultural and interfaith dialogue that would be integrated into *Parenting with Heart* is seen as a long-term project. Real interfaith dialogue would call for an approach that respects our Christian faith tradition, while at the same time

respecting the faith traditions of the other, and would seek to share with them how Christ's love informs and guides us in our role and vocation as parents. It requires that we be firmly rooted in our faith tradition so we may enter into authentic encounters with friends of other faith traditions.

At this time the focus will be on the implementation of *Parenting with Heart* in churches and parishes within the Christian faith tradition. As experience and mastery of the pedagogy and content are acquired and as qualified parent facilitators are trained and equipped, then outreach to other faith traditions will be considered. It is essential that parents have a firm grasp of the principles and foundations drawn from their own tradition in order to enter into an informed and meaningful dialogue with parents from other faith traditions.

At that time, the following works and resources will be helpful in exploring the possibility of intercultural and interfaith awareness, competencies and dialogue: an overview of world religions (Noss and Noss 1990, Smith 2009), wisdom and sacred writings (Chittister 2007, Mabry 2006, Novak 1996, Scarboro Missions 2014a, Scarboro Missions 2014c), intercultural and interfaith awareness and dialogue (Cousins 2014, Scarboro Missions 2014b, Scarboro Missions 2014d), toward an interfaith/interreligious concept of hospitality (Bushcart 2005).

Implementing *Parenting with Heart*

The observations and recommendations of two pastors who expressed a desire to pilot *Parenting with Heart: A Program Based upon the Call To Love as We Are Loved* (referred to as the "program") were gathered through

correspondence on July 23, 2014 and in follow up telephone conversations, July 24 and August 26, 2014 (For reasons of confidentiality, their names are withheld by mutual agreement). One pastor was from a Protestant sacramental tradition (Pastor A) and the other from a conservative Protestant tradition (Pastor B). Their responses touched on these three areas: contacts and connections, program, and needs of families.

Connections and Contacts

In terms of connections and contacts, Pastor B saw that the meetings and presentations held with members of their ministerial group to introduce myself, and the program, were useful and helped to build trust. This approach should be continued with pastors and churches (Pastor B July 23, 2014 e-mail). Pastor A suggested an informal “Come and See” session, similar to those used in the Alpha courses (Alpha Canada 2015).

In implementing or starting up the parenting education program there is need for preparation of pastors and family members of the congregation. This is especially true if the facilitator is an outsider. First contacts and initiation of the program may take time to build up an atmosphere of trust, confidence and comfort. It is difficult to run a parenting education program as a ministry in isolation. A community of trust and welcome needs to be created to allow such a program to grow and to thrive. A process to build such a community would involve an orientation and awareness raising of pastors, family ministers, potential leaders and facilitators, and finally the parents themselves. A “come and see

approach” such as used in the Alpha program, smaller “kitchen table” meetings with parents and one to one meetings with all those who would be essential for the development and fostering a parent education program would be an ideal. This, however, would require a considerable commitment of time, energy, and good will on the part of the community.

Program

Pastor B noted that the content of the program “tried to cover too much” (Pastor B July 23, 2014, e-mail). Pastor B suggested that shorter, individual blocks, that cover specific topics be offered. It was suggested that the discretionary time available to parents is limited and that the number of sessions and length of duration proposed “was not a realistic commitment that couples could keep” (Pastor B, July 23, 2014 e-mail). A one or two hour session offered on a Saturday, or after Sunday service was suggested. The method of delivery, which is informal, interactive, and relational, is a positive characteristic of the program that was seen as a strength (Pastor A 2014, August 26, telephone conversation).

Pastor A noted that the program seems to address, what is in some communities a narrow and limited demographic, parents of young children; therefore, a more inclusive understanding of the parenting role and definition of parent could be expanded to include all those who care for children such as grand parents, caregivers, educators, family ministers (Pastor A 2014, August 26 telephone conversation). In this regard, I found very helpful a more inclusive

definition of “parents” proposed by PEN, “We use the word “parents” to refer to all adults who contribute to the teaching, care, and raising of children. This includes guardians, teachers, coaches, grandparents, stepparents, caregivers, tutors, babysitters, lunchroom assistants, etc.” (PEN 2014). Because some faith communities have a resident population of older adults with grown children, and fewer young families, this is an important consideration.

With respect to location for the program, Pastor B recommended that a neutral venue, such as Jericho House, an ecumenical retreat centre, might be more attractive to those interested in participating, rather than hosting the event in their home church or parish. This would offer a certain amount of anonymity and enable participants to engage one another with greater sense of safety, and freedom. Participants might be more inclined to sign up for the program (Pastor B, July 23, 2014 e-mail).

In implementing the curriculum, in addition to offering the eight-session program, a number of different modalities of curriculum delivery and presentation that are family oriented and user-friendly will be considered. Sessions, in blocks of two or three, with time in between for practice, reflection, and application will be offered as an option. The intent is not to dilute the curriculum or process but rather to preserve the content and process by sequenced-learning and time for “real-life,” at home application. This could take the form of workshops, group discussions, coaching sessions, or parent retreats. They could be offered at

different times, such as evening, daytime, or weekends to accommodate the schedules of the participants.

The sessions would be designed to address specific topics of parenting education, such as, Understanding our Child's Behaviour, Why Punishment and Rewards Don't Work, Cooperation: Winning Together. All the essential content and experiential components would be maintained. All topics are interrelated and necessary for a comprehensive approach to parenting. *Parenting with Heart* does not offer a "one-size fits all" approach but recognizes complexity of raising, mentoring, and coaching children. Each parent education program will by nature have to be flexible, open ended, respectful, and responsive to the needs of those who minister to the children and family.

The curriculum is meant to encourage and nurture families and should not place undue demands upon them. As noted in Chapter Three, it follows the principles of adult learning (Caffarella 2002, Vella 2002). *Parenting with Heart* is but a start in the development of a comprehensive family ministry program that will address the needs of parents and families as they progress through the family life cycle, ranging from infancy, adolescence, and young adulthood through to the wisdom years. Such a program, along the lines of the blueprint for leadership development proposed by Malphurs and Mancini (Malphurs and Mancini 2004), would require ongoing formation, practice, mentoring, coaching, leadership development, and service to the family and the greater community.

Needs of Families

Both pastors recognized the benefits *Parenting with Heart* could offer the families in their congregations. What became evident in our discussions was the difficulty in communicating to parents and those taking the role of parents, the need for the preparation and formation that a parent education curriculum could offer them in facing the challenging task of raising their children (Pastor B, July 23, 2014 e-mail).

Pastor B noted that families are faced with the many stresses and demands such as work, both inside and outside of the home, busy schedules, children's schooling and activities, and participation in a community of worship (Pastor B July 23, 2014, e-mail).

All families need preparation and ongoing mentoring and companionship as they journey together to form a community of life, of love, and of grace. Parenting education is for all families and not directed solely towards families experiencing difficulties. The role of parents and those taking the role parents is ever more challenging in today's society than it was a generation or two ago. In an ever-changing world of unpredictability and uncertainty, the models and paradigms of parenting and family life have by necessity become more challenging.

The rapid pace of technology, the pressures of the workplace, the uncertainties of economic stability, and global insecurity add to the stresses and strains placed upon the "normal" family. The parenting models, that were once

tried and true for our parents and grandparents, may no longer provide the answers to the challenges and questions that arise in our daily family living. Given these circumstances, how do we as church journey with parents and families to live out their call as the domestic church and to participate in God's mission?

Grandparenting

In McDonnell's review, and in the discussion following the project presentation as noted in Chapter Five, there seems to be an opportunity for a sequel to *Parenting with Heart* and that is *Grandparenting with Heart*. Grandparents have much to offer their grandchildren, young parents, and families. In many cases they take on the role of parent's of their grandchildren when their parents have to be working outside the home. They can take on the role of mentor to parents and "adopted" grandparents for some families. They may also be trainers and facilitators for *Parenting with Heart*. These opportunities are worthy of consideration for the next steps of program development and implementation.

It Takes a Whole Village

An Igbo and Yoruba (Nigeria) proverb tells us, "It takes a whole village to raise a child" (Afriprov 2014). Parents are the first educators of their children but they are not alone. Many others support them in the task. They include, among others, all those who already take on the role of parenting such as, extended family members, caregivers, teachers, counsellors, Sunday school teachers,

pastors, youth ministers, youth group leaders, health care workers, coaches and mentors (PEN 2014). The curriculum title *Parenting with Heart* could be expanded to *Parenting with Heart: It Takes a Whole Village*. It would raise an awareness of the contribution the extended family makes to fostering and nurturing the first community, the family, as an essential cornerstone of our global and extended family.

Summary and Conclusion

Within the Catholic tradition, there is provision for marriage preparation for all engaged couples. Marriage preparation courses range in duration from sixteen to twenty hours and are conducted through a series of evening or weekend meetings. Within the course there is a discussion of the vocation of marriage, parenting, and family life. It is a very good beginning that would benefit from ongoing formation and support in this important vocation. The need for continued education for married couples and parents becomes evident when compared to the preparation of ordained clergy and ministers for their vocation of service. That preparation and formation process takes many years of formal study, training, and practical experience, through placements and internships.

In the area of parenting education, it is often assumed that the skills, knowledge and experience necessary for guiding, nurturing, and mentoring our children as their first educators is acquired through our own experiences in our families of origin and the practices handed down to us by our parents. As noted in Chapter Two, within the Catholic tradition, much is done to prepare children for

celebrating the sacraments of initiation, this could be complemented with continued education, spiritual formation, and support for parents to respond to the call to be the first educators and nurturers of their children, especially in their formative years and teen years.

In this Doctor of Ministry program the focus has been on leadership. The contributions made to leadership theory and practice, and to leadership and organizational development, in the light of findings from the human and social sciences, as well as from complexity science provide valuable insights for ministry at all levels. The lessons drawn from the Bible and the Catholic tradition helped to integrate the lessons learned from these sciences and disciplines in responding to the call to minister with parents and families and to encourage and equip them to actively participate in God's mission.

As the project-thesis progressed, it became very clear to me, as shown in Chapter Three, that the family is a complex social system and that parents and those called to take on the role of parents have a crucial role to play as leaders and ministers, in the little church of the home, or the domestic church.

Leadership development and a practical spiritual formation are important for parents because they are called to leadership and ministry. They are called to participate in the priesthood of all believers. Those who parent and those who take the role of parents are lay ministers. They serve and care for the first church and the first community, the family. It would be beneficial if the insights from the social sciences and complexity science regarding leadership and leadership

development could be made accessible to parents and families. It would help them face the challenges of uncertainty and complexity of living together as family. It is my desire that *Parenting with Heart* will make a contribution in supporting parents and all who take on the role of parents to build a healthy family, that is a communion of life, of love, and of grace: the domestic church.

A Return to the Central Theme

In conclusion, the project-thesis process has brought us full circle. A parenting education curriculum is not to be considered in isolation but rather part of the process of call and response. All God's people are called to respond in love and to participate in the mission of The One Who First Loves Us. Throughout the process of developing *Parenting with Heart* I have been guided by the theme of Call and Response that invites us to take to heart The Great Commandment (Mk 12:28-34) and Jesus' New Commandment (Jn 15:9-12). The process follows this pattern:

1. Called To Respond: God Calls Us First and We Respond.
2. Called To Be Whole.
3. Called To Be the Beloved: By Our Baptism We Become Daughters and Sons of God. We Are Sisters and Brothers of Jesus.
4. Called To Be Family: We Are Church, God's Family.
5. Called To Be a Communion of Life, of Love, and of Grace: The Family Is a Reflection, Image, of the Trinity.

Through the means of a parenting curriculum, parents and all those who take the role of parent are invited to “re-call” their awareness, or perhaps be made aware for the very first time, of God’s calling us to be God’s beloved. Through the Incarnation, our God “re-minds” us and calls us to become mindful of who we are as we live out our call. In the re-calling of who we are and being re-minded of the call to love and to live life fully (Jn 10:10), we are “re-membered.” We are reconnected as members of the Body of Christ, God’s family. We are in communion. In this way, the vocation of parents and all who take the role of parents as the First Educators of our children and Nurturers of hope, faith, and love can be recognized, valued, and supported by the “whole village” of all God’s people, God’s Family.

APPENDIX 1:
FACILITATOR'S GUIDE

PARENTING WITH HEART

A Program

Based upon the Call To Love as We Are Loved

Facilitator's Guide

PARENTING WITH HEART

A Program

Based upon the Call To Love as We Are Loved

Facilitator's Guide

By Paul Miki

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NOTES TO FACILITATORS

1. In this program, all the necessary content and materials are provided in the guide. You may wish to consult the references and the additional resources.
2. The Session Discussion Format is in Appendix A. The sessions are approximately two hours in length. You and your group can decide on the times and frequency of meetings.
3. A suggested approach to developing Our Learning Covenant is provided in Appendix A.
4. A list of “Getting Started” questions is provided in Appendix A.
5. You will find a suggested post- session reflection that will help you and the participants to see how things are going in Appendix A.
6. Facilitators may wish to use a Lectio Divina approach to the Scripture readings or have participants reflect on the reading in pairs. Prayers are a suggestion only. All may be invited to join in the prayer.
7. Participant Materials are included in Appendix B. They contain the essential content and handouts.

REMEMBER

As a facilitator you are not required to be “the expert.” The materials and examples are meant to promote a discussion about how we can all learn together to be the parents and caregivers God asks us to be. Each participant brings a wealth of knowledge and experiences. The essential content and principles are provided in this guide.

Your task is to create a safe and enjoyable climate to promote the learning process and present short content inputs, *Heart Feeding* and to invite the participants to reflect, share, and apply their learning to make our families a home where the heart is.

May the Holy Family of Nazareth inspire and guide us as we seek to be family, a communion of life, love and grace.

SESSION 1

INTRODUCTION:

Our Expectations
A View of The Human Person
To Love as We Are Loved
The Family: Three Communion

PARENTING WITH HEART MEANS CARING: TO LOVE AS WE ARE LOVED

The Power of Encouragement
Why not Praise?
The Flip Side: Negative Criticism and Fault Finding
How Do We Encourage?

SESSION 1

Introduction

Heart Warming:

What is one thing that you are thankful for in your family?

Open Up Your Hearts:

Let us take a time of quiet as we let Our Loving God speak to us.

I am the vine, you are the branches. Those who abide in me and I in them bear much fruit, because apart from me you can do nothing. If you abide in me, and my words abide in you, ask for whatever you wish, and it will be done for you. As the Father has loved me, so I have loved you; abide in my love. I have said these things to you so that my joy may be in you, and that your joy may be complete.

This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you. You did not choose me but I chose you. And I appointed you to go and bear fruit, fruit that will last, so that the Father will give you whatever you ask him in my name. I am giving you these commands so that you may love one another.

John 15: 5, 7, 9, 12, 16-17

(Note: See “Lectio Divina” in Helps Along the Way, as an approach to Scripture Readings.)

Reflection

Please take some time to place yourself in the position of disciples and to reflect on Jesus’ words. What does his call mean to you as disciples and as parents.

Gathering Prayer

*Loving God,
For this gathering of Moms and Dads and
All who take the role of parents we thank you.
Open our hearts and our minds
To be attentive to your presence here now
And in the everyday situations we experience
as families called to be a communion of life,
of love, and of grace.*

In Jesus’ name we pray. Amen

INTRODUCTION

Our Expectations

In this program we will be reflecting on God's love for us and how God's love can guide us in our role as parents. We will be exploring the characteristics of God's love from the work of Hans Daigeler (20-23) and principles of parent education from Alfred Adler and Rudolf Dreikurs, *Children the Challenge*. They form the basis of our program, Parenting with Heart.

- Parenting with heart means caring: To love as we are loved
- Parenting with heart means knowing: Understanding our child's behaviour
- Parenting with heart means guiding and instructing: Natural and reasonable outcomes
- Parenting with heart means respecting: Mutual respect
- Parenting with heart means forgiving: Resolving conflicts
- Parenting with heart means: Creating a home with heart.

Before we begin our discussions, let us take time to develop Our Learning Covenant. See: Appendix A.

To help us get to know one another a little better we invite you to tell us about yourself and what you hope to gain from our work together.

See: Program Discussion Starter

A View of The Human Person

From the Scriptures and Church teaching, we learn of the dignity of the human person.

- We are created in the image and likeness of Our Creator God (Gen 1:26).
- We are created to be in relationship with one another (Gen 1:27).
- We are created good (Gen 1:31).
- We are embodied spirits. Body and soul are one. We are the temple of the Holy Spirit (1Cor 6:19).
- We are gifted with intellect and reason (GS, 15)
- We are endowed with a conscience. We are capable of doing good and avoiding evil. The Law of God is written on our hearts (Rom 2:15-16).
- We have freedom of choice (Sir 15:14).

Heart Work, We Respond:

How does our understanding of who we are created to be influence the way we see our children and choose to raise them? Can you give one example?

Heart Feeding:

To Love as We Are Loved

The future of humanity passes by way of the family. John Paul II

It is through the family that the child first experiences love. In this parenting program it is essential that the parents and caregivers be aware of the role they play in being the first teachers of love for the children the children God has entrusted to their care. This program has as its foundation The Great Commandment of love (Mk 12:28-34). It focuses on the theme of how parents respond to The Call to Love as We Are Loved (Jn15: 9), in order to foster loving family relationships.

The Family: Three Communions

The family is called to be a communion of life, a communion of love and a communion of grace. The family is the child's first school. Through the family children learn how to share with family members and one another, how to become aware of their own worth and how to recognize the worth and dignity of all persons (OCCB, 3).

To become a communion of life, the family is first called to be a communion of love:

A human person cannot live without love. If love is not revealed to someone; if a person does not encounter love and experience it and take it to heart, if a person does not participate intimately in love, then that person's own being remains to himself or to herself incomprehensible; her life, his life is senseless. (OCCB, 9)

Scottie May and her colleagues tell us:

Through our relationships with very young children we participate in their spiritual formation. God desires that in the arms of their parents children first experience unconditional love and grace . . . Parents have the awesome privilege of being "God's love with skin on" for their children. The way parents love and relate to their children, day in and day out, in good times and bad, is the most powerful influence on their formation. (May et al. 2005, 153)

The Domestic Church

Throughout the history of the Christian church, the role of the family has been recognized as central to the faith formation of children and building up a community where we learn to love as we are loved. John Chrysostom reminded families that the household is the "the little church." John Calvin saw the families as "little churches." Martin Luther emphasized the important role parents play in teaching their children "to serve God, to praise and honour him" (Cahill 65-71).

A term that has been used to describe the little church is the "domestic church." The family, the domestic Church, is called to:

- Form a community of persons.
- Serve life.
- Participate in the development of Society.
- Share in the mission of the Church. (John Paul II, 32)

References:

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OCCB. 1983. *Family Life Education*. Toronto, ON: Ontario Conference of Catholic Bishops.

Second Vatican Council. 1964. "Dogmatic Constitution on the Church, Lumen Gentium." (LG)

Heart Work, We Respond:

What a wonderful vocation we have as parents and those who take the role of parent. Consider these questions for a few moments:

- What does it mean for you and your family to be the domestic church?
- How does your family reflect the call to be a communion of life, of love and of grace?

PARENTING WITH HEART MEANS CARING: TO LOVE AS WE ARE LOVED

Heart Feeding:

The Power of Encouragement

When we are encouraged. We take heart. We have courage. We see ourselves as we are: Beloved daughters and sons of Our Generous and Loving Creator who has created us from love to love and to be loved. This same Creator calls us to be fully alive!

Encouragement is more important than any other aspect of child raising. It is so basic that it's absence can be considered the basic cause of misbehaviour. *A misbehaving child is a discouraged child* (36).

An Example: *Me Can Do It!*

One morning Miguel's Mom brought him his clothes fresh from the dryer. His pants, shirt, socks and underwear were still warm. She said to the two year old, "Come here and Mommy will dress you." Miguel replied, "It's OK Mommy, "Me can do it!" Little by little he wrestled to get his clothes on. He grunted and groaned but he was getting dressed all by himself.

Mom smiled as she watched in silent wonder and delight as he pulled his shirt over his head and wriggled his arms into the sleeves. When Miguel was all dressed, she gave him a big hug. "Yes! You can do it!" she exclaimed. Miguel grinned from ear to ear. "Yes!" he said, "Me did it!"

Mom affirmed to Miguel that he was her beloved, courageous, and capable. He was being fully alive as he was facing the challenges of being a two year old.

Heart Work, We Respond:

Think of a time when you were encouraged as a child.

- Describe the situation.
- Who was the person who encouraged you?
- How did they encourage you?
- How did you respond? What was the outcome?
- How did you feel?

Heart Feeding: Why not Praise?

When we praise our children, they can mistakenly believe that their worth and love are dependent upon how well they perform and meet the expectations of their parents. This is never our intent as parents.

- We love our children for who they are: beloved daughters and sons of Our Gracious and Compassionate God.
- Praise tells the child that she is being assessed and evaluated by an external source over which she has little control.
- The child must constantly be perfect, good, and right to be loved or suffer the disapproval and loss of love of the parents.
- This of course is not the case but this is what the child, with limited life experience, perceives and believes.

The Flip Side: Negative Criticism and Fault Finding

Oftentimes we as parents think that by focusing on our children's mistakes and failures we can help them to shape up. This is the flip side of praise: negative criticism.

When we criticize and find fault and when we seek to correct even the tiniest mistakes, children may mistakenly believe that we doubt their capability and self-worth. How can they possibly be the beloved if they can't do anything right? We are called to help our children to have the "courage to be imperfect" (Dreikurs, 38).

It is only by trial an error and learning from our mistakes that we grow in courage and gain a better knowledge of the talents and gifts that we have been given to be fully alive. This process takes a lifetime. If we as adults are still a work in progress, is it reasonable to expect more of our children? Imagine what would happen if children standing up on their own and trying to walk for the very first time fell down and decided to never try again!

Heart Work, We Respond:

Think of a time when you were praised or criticized as a child.

- Describe the situation.
- Who was the person who praised or discouraged you?
- How did they say or do?
- How did you respond? What was the outcome?
- How did you feel?

Heart Feeding: How Do We Encourage?

We let our children know that: WE BELIEVE IN YOU!

When we help our children see themselves as loved, valued, accepted, and able, they are encouraged and seek to belong and contribute to the family in positive ways.

Introduce the encouragement meeting. See: *Taking Time for Encouragement* at the end of this section. Invite parents to begin the practice and continue it throughout the program.

We are Encouragers:

- When we build our children up instead of tearing them down.
- When we show our children that they are an important member of our family and our community.
- When we appreciate our children for who they are.
- When we help our children to give their best.
- When we show our children respect and listen carefully to their ideas and suggestions.
- When we focus on our children's efforts and contributions,

We Are Creating A Community Of Encouragement!

See: *Encouraging Parents* at the end of this section

Home Is Where The Heart Is:

If you feel comfortable please share with us your story about a time you were encouraged or praised or criticized.

Heart Talk:

- We encourage each other and see the positives (heart strengths) of the parents and children in their situation.
- What is it we appreciate in the moms and dads and their children?
- How can they build and grow from their heart strengths to make the situation even better?

A Grateful Heart:

After our discussions and sharing, what is one thing for which you are grateful?

Closing Prayer

Loving Creator God,

*You have loved us into being.
You call us to be a reflection of your love
as we become a communion of life, of love and grace.*

*Through your Holy Spirit
give us the courage to be fully alive
and the courage to be imperfect
as we face the daily challenges of being parents.*

*Help us to grow in our love for others
and for ourselves.*

Let your love be our love and your heart be our heart.

We ask this in Jesus' name. Amen

Session Reflection:

Please take a few moments to complete the session reflection form.

TAKING TIME FOR ENCOURAGEMENT

Encourage yourselves daily while it is still “today” . . . Heb. 3:13 (NAB)

The Encouragement Meeting

This can be an informal gathering around the table, in the car, whenever the family are all together. Make it short and sweet (5-10 minutes).

How to Do It:

Begin with a short prayer inviting God to be with us.

Invite each family member to take part.

Here are some sample questions to get things going:

- What is one thing that is going well in our family?
- What is one thing I am thankful for?
- What’s one thing I would like to thank Mom, Dad, and siblings for?
- What’s one thing I appreciate about you Mom, Dad, siblings?

A Prayer of Gratitude for our family and all the ways we have been encouraged and appreciated.

Celebration: What is something we can do together for fun?

This outline is just one example. Feel free to develop a “ritual” that will become your own. One your children will remember and can carry on with their families much later on.

Encouraging Parents:

- Develop a climate of trust, respect and cooperation within the family.
- Are community builders. By building up your children, you build up the family.
- Recognize the talents and skills of the children as contributing members of the family.
- Involve the whole family in the decision making process through family meetings.
- Listen to the ideas and suggestions and the feelings of the children and all members of the family.
- Empower all members of the family including themselves.
- Have a sense of humour and can laugh at themselves and with others.
- Have the courage to be imperfect and learn from mistakes.
- Guide the family to develop realistic and achievable goals.

SESSION 2

PARENTING WITH HEART MEANS UNDERSTANDING OUR CHILD'S BEHAVIOUR

A Desire To Belong and To Be in Community
The Child as an Observer
The Influence of Environment
The Family Constellation
Mistaken Goals of Behaviour

SESSION 2

PARENTING WITH HEART MEANS UNDERSTANDING OUR CHILD'S BEHAVIOUR

Heart Warming:

How are we all doing? What has been going on since we last met?

What is one thing that is going well?

Open Up Your Hearts:

Let us take a time of quiet as we let Our Loving God speak to us.

O LORD, you have searched me and known me.
You know when I sit down and when I rise up;
you discern my thoughts from far away.
You search out my path and my lying down,
and are acquainted with all my ways.

For it was you who formed my inward parts;
you knit me together in my mother's womb.
I praise you, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made.
Wonderful are your works;
that I know very well.
My frame was not hidden from you,
when I was being made in secret,
intricately woven in the depths of the earth.
Your eyes beheld my unformed substance.
Psalm 139: 1-3, 13-16

Gathering Prayer

Loving God, You know us through and through.

*As we reflect on your love and knowledge of each one of us,
help us to grow in our love and understanding
of our precious children.*

Help us to know and love them as you do.

In Jesus name we pray. Amen

Heart Feeding:

A Desire to Belong and To Be in Community

We have been created by a loving God who has made us to be in relationship.

- Children seek to find their place in the first community, the family.
- Children ask, “How do I fit in?”
- “What do I have to do to be a somebody?”

Dreikurs tells us, “Since the child is a social being, his strongest motivation is the desire to belong. His security or lack of it depends upon his feeling of belonging within the group” (14).

An Example: *Make Room for Me*

In one family, Mom and Dad would leave their shoes on the mat next to the door. They would take their two-year-old Sarah’s shoes off and leave them in her room. One day much to their surprise, mom and dad saw Sarah had neatly placed her shoes on the mat next to theirs. The message was loud and clear. Sarah was saying, “I am a part of this family too!”

Heart Work, We Respond:

What examples can you recall of the importance of belonging in your family?

Heart Feeding:

The Child as an Observer

Children are expert observers but make many mistakes in interpreting what they see (Dreikurs, 15).

Children seem to see everything and hear everything that is going on around them but because of their age and life experience at the time they may arrive at mistaken interpretations of what is actually happening or intended.

An Example: *The Ring Bearer*

It was a beautiful wedding celebration. Tommy, age four, was the ring bearer. He proudly held the ring but every few moments he would turn around, hold up his hand like a claw, and growl. After the ceremony, Tommy's Mom said to him, "Tommy you did great! But could you tell me why you turned around and growled?" Tommy answered, "Well, I was just growling like a Ring Bear would."

Heart Work, We Respond:

- Has this ever happened with you and your children?
- Can you describe a time when they surprised you with their interpretation of what they saw and heard?

The Influence of Environment

As children observe everything happening around them, they begin to develop their own conclusions about the world (family setting), others, (family members), themselves, and God.

- They make choices about how they will behave in their environment as they see and understand it.
- The children are influenced by the ways of acting, attitudes, beliefs, and values they experience in the family.
- Through the family they can come to know and experience what it is to be a *communion of life, of love and of grace*.

All this contributes to what Dreikurs calls *family atmosphere* (18-20).

Heart Work, We Respond:

- How would you describe your family atmosphere?
- What are some of the values, beliefs, and ways of acting that are important for you?
- If you were to create a slogan or motto for your family, what would it be?

Use the following questions as a guide. You are invited to share some answers with the group.

1. Family Values: What are the rules written or unwritten?

- What are some of the expectations?
- What is the work ethic?
- How are health matters handled?
- How do we pray and worship?
- What matters stay in house?

2. What are some of the rules from your family?

3. What are some rituals and customs?

4. How do we celebrate or observe:

- Birthdays
- Christmas and Easter
- Rites of Passage
- Vacation and holidays
- Birth and death

5. What rituals and customs do you bring from your family of origin?

6. What is the family atmosphere like?

- Do we like a lot of activity and noise?
- Are silence and calm preferred?
- How do we welcome guests?
- Is there a quiet space?
- Are we an open or closed family?
- How important are traditions?

7. How would you describe your family atmosphere?

8. What is Love? How is it demonstrated?

- How do we know we are loved?
- What does loving look like?
- How do we express love?
- How do we communicate?

Thinking back to your days growing up what would your responses be?

Heart Feeding: The Family Constellation

We have been created to be in relationship with one another. In our families we are all interconnected. What one member does affects the whole family system. Nothing happens in isolation, even if we think it does. We are all affected.

Just think of the adjustments we make when we start a family and move into our first home together.

- What happens when we prepare for the arrival of our first child and the next?
- Not only do we re-arrange the furniture.
- We all make adjustments to our place and roles in the family constellation.
- We have to figure out how we belong and have a place.
- Our position in the family, birth order, influences the way we see our self in relation to the other family members.
- With the addition of every new member, everyone must readjust to find a place.

An Example: *Who's the Boss?*

At a family restaurant, a family of six took their places at the table: Mom, Dad and four children ages twelve, ten, six and the one-year-old. The older children, well mannered and polite, were carefully looking over the menu to choose their meal. Whenever the one-year-old would make a sound, everyone would look up to see what she needed. Did she need her teddy? Was she OK in her high chair? Did she drop her soother? She kept everybody busy. She was the centre of attention.

Heart Work, We Respond:

Let's take a look at our families of origin. What was it like to be:

- The first-born (male or female)?
- The second of two?
- The middle of three?
- The only child?
- Other positions that describe you.

See: *Some Birth Order Characteristics* at the end of this section.

Heart Feeding: Mistaken Goals of Behaviour

- When children are encouraged and believe they belong, are loved and capable, they behave in ways that are loving and life giving to self and others.
- When children are discouraged, they are unable to see that they are loved, have gifts and talents that contribute to the well being of their family, their first society and community.
- They mistakenly believe that they must act in ways that are less than loving and prevent them from being fully alive.

Dreikurs identifies these four mistaken goals of behaviour:

- Undue Attention
- Struggle for Power
- Retaliation and Revenge
- Complete Inadequacy (58-63)

When children are discouraged, they do not see themselves as God's beloved. They take these gifts and talents:

- Desire to Belong and To Be Appreciated
- Ability or Power to Contribute and To make a Positive Contribution
- Sense of Fairness and Justice
- Conscientious Desire To Give of Their Best

and use them to act in ways that are not helpful in building a community of life, of love and grace. As parents we react to these signs of discouragement. We may experience feeling of annoyance and irritation, anger, hurt, hopelessness, and helplessness.

See Chart: *Encouragement: Build on Strengths* at the end of this section.

Heart Work, We Respond:

Can you think of an incident with your children when you felt: annoyed, angry, hurt or helpless?

- What was going on? What did you do?
- What did your child say or do?
- How did you respond?
- What was the outcome?

Role-play Activity: Discuss the incident with a partner. If you feel comfortable, please role-play the incident with a partner. You take the role of your child and your partner will take the parent role.

Home Is Where The Heart Is:

How does this discussion of the mistaken goals of behaviour apply to us and our families?

Looking back at the situation you described:

- How did you feel? What is really going on?
- What was the mistaken goal of behaviour?
- What would you do differently?

Heart Talk

We encourage each other and see the positives (heart strengths) of the parents and children in their situation.

- What is it we appreciate about the Moms and Dads and their children?
- How can they build upon and grow from their heart strengths to make the situation even better?

A Grateful Heart:

After our discussions, what is one thing for which you are grateful?

Closing Prayer:

Take, Lord, . . .
*Take, Lord, and receive
all my liberty, my memory,
my understanding, and my entire will,
all that I have and possess.*

*You have given all to me.
To You, Lord, I return it.*

*All is Yours;
do with it what You will.
Give me only Your love and Your grace,
that is enough for me.*

Ignatius of Loyola

(Prayers or intentions of participants)

We ask this in Jesus name. Amen

Session Reflection: Please take a few moments to complete the session reflection form.

ENCOURAGEMENT: BUILD ON OUR STRENGTHS

Encouraged, children:	When discouraged, children:	Child's Mistaken Belief/Goal	How we react:	We can help children refocus:	When encouraged, children:
Can seek appropriate attention, motivate and communicate.	Use gifts and talents to get attention and be disruptive. Undue Attention	I have to be noticed to be important.	We feel annoyed. We ignore, but may give in.	By giving attention for positive contributions to the whole family.	Make helpful contributions appreciated by all.
Can use power to influence support, organize and contribute.	Use power to control or dominate in non-helpful ways. Power Struggle	I have to be the boss or let no one be the boss of me.	We feel angry and dominated.	By using their gifts and talents to be a helpful, cooperative family member.	Realize they have gifts and talents to support and build up the family.
Can seek justice, fairness, and equality.	Feel hurt and unfairly treated. They want to get even and hurt back. Revenge	I have to get even and hurt back.	We feel hurt and wish to retaliate.	By building trust and showing, understanding, compassion, & acceptance.	Realize they can work for respect and fairness for all members of the family.
Have a conscientious desire to achieve and to succeed.	Feel like giving up and not trying or taking risks. Apparent Helplessness	I have to be perfect and not make mistakes. It is better not to even try.	We feel helpless. We feel like giving up.	By building their confidence & being part of a family that is positive and supportive.	Realize they can make mistakes, learn from them and help the family.

Some Birth Order Characteristics

- First-borns are often over-achievers and feel entitled. Gender may have an influence depending on family, culture, and values.
- Second-born (younger of two) often tries harder and may surpass number one. Think of Jacob and Esau.
- Middle of three may feel squeezed out and be a justice seeker.
- Youngest of three, gender may make a difference. May be considered the baby and not have to grow up. May turn out to be the boss and trailblazer.
- Only children may be seen and see themselves as a “little adult” and prefer to be with adults rather than other children.
- If there is a wide age gap, more than five years, the child may be seen as an only child or first-born, who has two or more mother and father figures.

SESSION 3

PARENTING WITH HEART MEANS INSTRUCTING AND GUIDING

To parent with heart and not to parent with hurt.

Why punishment doesn't work.

Why rewards don't work.

Encouraging Response-Ability

Guiding and Instructing

What does the situation demand?

Natural outcomes

Reasonable outcomes

SESSION 3

PARENTING WITH HEART MEANS INSTRUCTING AND GUIDING

Heart Warming:

- How are we all doing? What has been going on since we last met?
- What is one thing that is going well?

Open Up Your Hearts:

Let us take a time of quiet as we let Our Loving God speak to us.

We Are God's Beloved

Can a woman forget her nursing-child,
or show no compassion for the child of her womb?
Even these may forget,
yet I will not forget you.
See, I have inscribed you on the palms of my hands;

Isaiah 49:15-16

Gathering Prayer

Loving God,

*You have created us to love and to be loved.
Help us always to see our children as your beloved,
your precious gifts to us.
Help us to model for them life-giving
and loving ways to respond to the everyday challenges
we face together as a family called to be
a communion of life, of love, and of grace.*

We ask this in Jesus' name. Amen

Heart Feeding:

We are called to parent with heart and not to parent with hurt.

- From the very beginning God has created us out of God's infinite love. God calls us to love: God, our neighbour, and our self.
- "Response-ability" is our ability to respond to the call to love in loving and life-giving ways.
- We can instruct and guide our children to be "response-able" by focusing on their strengths and showing we have confidence in them.
- We show we have confidence by helping them to take responsibility for their decisions and actions in a loving and non-judgmental way.

Why punishment doesn't work.

- Children misbehave when they mistakenly believe that they are not worthy, respected, capable, or loved.
- We, as adults, mistakenly believe that nagging, and telling them to "shape up or else" will get them to behave.
- Both punishment and reward send a message to children that they are unable to take responsibility for their own choices, actions and behaviour.
- When we punish our children, the disapproval of who they are and what they do comes from a source outside of themselves. They see it as a judgment coming from one who is bigger and stronger.
- Children feel small, powerless, and helpless. They feel they are being judged and even condemned.
- Punishment leads to further discouragement and a breakdown in relationships. "You are no longer worthy to be the beloved."
- Children begin to mistakenly believe that:
"I am a nobody. I am only loved when I measure up to other's expectations of me. If I can't be the good child they want me to be, I'll show them. I'll be the worst child they have ever seen!"

Why punishment doesn't work. (cont'd)

What does this do to their feelings of self worth and dignity? Think about it. As adults, we seldom move forward and grow in a positive direction when we are being reprimanded and punished.

- It diminishes us and all those around us.
- It leads to a breakdown of community and relationships.
- Punishment can lead to power struggles where no one wins.
- In our family aren't we all on the same team?
- How can we, as family, lift up our hearts and be encouragers?

Why rewards don't work.

Have you ever heard parents saying, "I won't punish the children I don't want to get into arguments. But if I promise to buy them a new smart phone, a new car, their favorite snack, maybe they will behave better and do what we ask."

- This may work once or twice. But what happens when the children raise the ante or refuse to do anything unless there is a reward attached?
- Who is in control? Who's responsible? How are we helping our children to be response-able so they are able to respond to life's challenges in a loving and life-giving way?
- If children are being constantly told how to behave and act or suffer the consequences, how will they learn to take responsibility for their own decisions and actions?
- We can't watch over them forever, although some parents still try.
- As parents how do we work ourselves out of the job and encourage our children to live fully and courageously? Is there a better way?

Heart Work, We Respond:

Comments, questions, and clarification

For a moment think about the Christian understanding of human dignity and respect for persons and our call to be family, the domestic church. Now consider these questions:

- How does punishment affect our becoming a communion of life, love and grace?
- We are created to be in relationships. How does punishment impact our relationships with our children?
- Punishment is derived from the Latin word *poena* meaning pain. To exact punishment is to inflict pain and suffering. Is this what we want to teach our children? How can we show them they are the beloved?

Home Is Where The Heart Is:

- What experiences have you had with the use of punishment and reward?
(It may be from own your family or family of origin)
- Are there things you would do differently?

If you feel comfortable please share your story with us.

Heart Feeding:

Encouraging Response-Ability

What is it we ask for our children? Who are they called to be as God's beloved daughters and sons? I would like to suggest that we, as parents, are called to be Nurturers of the heart and Teachers of love. We are called to reflect the unconditional love of Our Generous Creator who says:

A new heart I will give you, and a new spirit I will put within you; and I will remove from your body the heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh. Ezekiel 36:2

In this way our children may see and experience in the flesh a sign of God's infinite, faithful and everlasting love for us. This is not an easy task. We cannot do it alone. It is God's Love that empowers us. We are called, not to do love but to be a sign of God's love in all we are, in all we say, think, and do.

Encouraging Response-Ability (cont'd)

For this is how our children will know that we and they are disciples of the Beloved: by our love.

Let us consider this in light of some positive goals of behaviour.
See chart: *Positive Goals of Behaviour* at the end of this section.

Introduce the Practice of Family Meetings in Appendix A. Encourage parents to make this a part of their family practices.

Guiding and Instructing

Guiding and instructing our children is not easy. It takes time, patience, an open heart that sees what is going on and determines what the situation demands. Is the approach we take:

- Loving: In this situation can we see our child as God's beloved?
- Life giving: How can we encourage our children to grow more fully?
- Respectful: How do we look again at this situation through the eyes of Jesus?
- Reasonable: Do we make sense?
- Encouraging response-ability: Do we show our children we have confidence in them?
- Fostering and strengthening relationships: Do we let our children know they are always the beloved?
- Separating the deed from the doer: Can we see our children as the beloved in the situation?

What does the situation demand?

When we focus on our children as the beloved and response-able:

- We can look at the situation through different eyes.
- We are not the "bad ones" who come down hard on them.
- We have confidence in our children.
- We believe that children can learn through experience.

What does the situation demand? (cont'd)

- Yes! Children have choices.
- They can choose to act in ways that are life giving, loving and helpful to self and others.
- They can learn from the outcomes of their decisions

Natural outcomes

We ask ourselves, “What is the natural outcome of the children’s decision and action?” Some examples:

- If we don’t eat, we will be hungry.
- If we don’t get enough sleep we will be tired and grumpy.
- If we dawdle we will be late.
- If we don’t wear our mitts, our hands will get cold.

Provided that the outcome keeps the children safe and does not harm the children or others, we allow the children to experience the natural outcome and to learn from it. We do this without any ill will or sense of superiority: “I told you so! If only you had listened to me!”

See: *Li’s Story* at the end of this section.

Reasonable outcomes

There are some situations where the outcomes may not be so obvious. There may be more than one or two possibilities. Some examples are:

- Constantly forgetting to take their lunch to school.
- Leaving toys scattered around the floors of the house.
- Not having clean gym clothes on gym day.

Heart Work, We Respond:

Choose one of these examples or one from your family.

- What would your reactions be? Sometimes it is difficult when we are put on the spot and have to think on our feet.
- How could we act in a response-able way?

What are some ideas you have for guiding and instructing your children to act in a response-able manner next time?

Some tips to be a response-able parent.

We can ask ourselves:

- How do we feel? Annoyed, angry, hurt, or helpless?
- What is going on with the children? What is their mistaken goal?
- Are we asking our self if we are being a “Good Parent”?
- What does the situation require?
- What are some ideas that you have come up with?
- How can these ideas be put to work in your family?

If you feel comfortable please share with us.

Heart Talk:

We encourage each other and see the positives (heart strengths) of the parents and children in their situation.

- What is it we appreciate in the Moms and Dads and their children?
- How can they build and grow from their heart strengths to make the situation even better?

A Grateful Heart:

After our discussions and sharing, what is one thing for which you are grateful?

Closing Prayer

Loving Creator God,

*We thank you for our gathering
We thank you for the heart sharing
and heart stories that help us to see
how much we depend on you
to become a communion
of love, life and grace.*

*Be with us as we return to our families
and stay close by us and our loved ones
until we meet again.*

(Prayers or intentions of participants)

We ask this in Jesus' name. Amen

Session Reflection: Please take a few moments to complete the session reflection form.

POSITIVE GOALS OF BEHAVIOUR

- TO BE LOVED
- TO BE LOVING
- TO BELONG
- TO BE ABLE
- TO BE UNIQUE
- TO CONTRIBUTE
- TO BE RESPECTFUL
- TO CO-OPERATE
- TO BE JOYFUL
- TO BE FULLY ALIVE
- TO BE ACCEPTED
- TO BE ACCEPTING AND WELCOMING
- TO BE COMPASSIONATE
- TO BE FORGIVING
- TO SEEK FORGIVENESS
- TO HAVE THE COURAGE TO BE IMPERFECT
- TO BE GRATEFUL

This list is just a start. Please add to it!

An Example: Li's Story

Three-year-old Li and her Mommy went for a walk to the park. They joined hands and walked along the sidewalk. Once they were at the park, Li wanted to go on her own way. "Alright," Mommy said to Li, "But stay close where you can see me."

"I will, Mommy," Li said and she hurried on ahead.

The path took some turns and twists. Mom kept her eye on Li all the time while following close behind. Mom slipped behind a bush to see what Li would do. When Li realized that she had wandered quite a way, she stopped and turned around to look for her mother. Mom waited a moment and came out from behind the bush. "Here I am Li," she called out.

Li came running back to her and said, "Li went too far. No Mommy."

Rather than nagging or scolding, Mom helped Li to be aware of her situation and to know why Mom said, "Stay close where you can see me."

SESSION 4

PARENTING WITH HEART MEANS RESPECTING

Re-spect: looking again through the eyes of Jesus

Respect for our self

But how do I show respect?

Seeing with the eyes and heart of Jesus.

Fostering respect-ability

SESSION 4

PARENTING WITH HEART MEANS RESPECTING

Heart Warming:

How are we all doing? What has been going on since we last met?

What is one thing that is going well?

Open Up Your Hearts:

Let us take a time of quiet as we let Our Loving God speak to us.

One Body with Many Members

For just as the body is one and has many members, and all the members of the body, though many, are one body, so it is with Christ. For in the one Spirit we were all baptized into one body—Jews or Greeks, slaves or free—and we were all made to drink of one Spirit. Indeed, the body does not consist of one member but of many. . . . If one member suffers, all suffer together with it; if one member is honoured, all rejoice together with it.

1Corinthians 12: 12-14,24-26

Gathering Prayer

Loving God,

*You sent your Son to live among us as one of us.
He came to show us how to look upon
the other as you see us and to love one another
as you love us. We are all one.*

*No one is greater or lesser in your eyes.
We are your beloved and precious in your sight.
Help us to see our children as you do
and to be a reflection of your love for them.*

In Jesus' name we pray.

Amen

Heart Feeding:

Re-spect: looking again through the eyes of Jesus

Julia Ahlers (1992, 198) helps us to better understand what respect is. She reminds us that respect comes from the Latin word which means to look again or to take a second look. We are called to look at our children again through the eyes of Jesus who sees each one of us as God's beloved daughter or son.

Heart Work, We Respond:

What does this mean for us as parents?

- Take sometime to look again at your children.
- How does Jesus look at them? Who does Jesus see?
- Take some time to write down your responses.

Heart Work, We Respond:

- If you feel comfortable, please share some of your responses with us.
- When you go home, share your responses with your family.

Heart Feeding:

Respect for our self

When we are respectful, we become aware that we are all members of the Body of Christ. We all have dignity and worth. We are each unique and precious to God. We wish to be treated with love and not used. We wish to be treated with compassion and not mistreated or harmed (Ahlers, 201).

Heart Work, We Respond:

- How do you know that you are respected?
- Think of a person who has shown you respect. What did they say and do to let you know you had their respect?
- How does this help us to have respect for our self?

Home is Where the Heart is:

If you feel comfortable, please share some of your heart work with us.

Heart Feeding:

But how do I show respect? Seeing with the eyes and heart of Jesus.

How does Jesus help us to learn what it is to be respectful?

By his life, words, and deeds, and through his passion, death, and resurrection Jesus shows us what it means to be loving and fully alive. We are called to be for God and for others.

Take some time to think of Gospel passages where Jesus shows us how to look again at our self and others through the loving eyes of God.

Here are some examples:

- Jesus knows he is God's beloved. Jesus' Baptism, Matthew 3:17
- Jesus knows what it is to be human. He becomes one of us. John 1:14
- Jesus is loving. Love one another as I have loved you. John 15:12

What other examples can you suggest?

See: *Jesus Teaches Us To Re-Spect* at the end of this section.

Heart Work, We Respond:

Select one or two of the qualities of Jesus that you find helpful for your family situation now.

- How do they help you be more respectful of yourself and your children?

Home Is Where The Heart Is:

If you feel comfortable please share with us the qualities you chose and tells us how they will help you to be respectful.

Heart Feeding:

Fostering respect-ability

We cannot demand respect from our children but we can nurture and foster respect by living our lives with respect-ability: being able to look again and see the other as Jesus does.

Fostering respect-ability (cont'd)

We can focus not only on what we do in our relationship with our self and our children but more so on who we are becoming and the person our children are becoming.

- As we look at our lives and deeds, are we the person God is calling us to be?
- Are our children becoming the person God calls each one to be? Are we response-able?
- Are we able to respond to God's call to love in a caring and life giving way? Are we respect-able?
- Can we look again at our self and others through the loving eyes and heart of Jesus?
- Response-ability and respect-ability do not come overnight. It is a life-long process which finds its beginning in the family.

These "abilities" develop and are nurtured by God's Holy Spirit as we live together as family called to be a communion of life, love, and grace.

Heart Work, We Respond:

- How can we follow Jesus' example?
- How can we put Jesus' teachings and life lessons into practice?
- What would it be like if Jesus lived in our house?

Home Is Where The Heart Is:

- Activity (See: *Our Family Covenant* at the end of this section.)
- Application of principles to our home situations:
A time to look at some situations where we have questions and would like to discuss them with the group.

Heart Talk:

We encourage each other and see the positives (heart strengths) of the parents and children in their situation.

A Grateful Heart:

After our discussions and sharing, what is one thing for which you are grateful?

Closing Prayer

Gracious and Generous God,

*Who are we that you should love us so?
Open our hearts and eyes to see our children
as your loving gift to us.*

*Increase our ability to respond to your call
to love and to see your loving presence
in the faces of all our sisters and brothers.*

For the blessings of this gathering we give you thanks.

*We place ourselves in your safekeeping
until we gather together once again.*

(Prayers or intentions of participants)

We ask this in Jesus' name. Amen

Session Reflection: Please take a few moments to complete the session reflection form.

JESUS TEACHES US TO RE-SPECT:

How to look again through the heart and eyes of Jesus

- Jesus knows who he is: God's beloved. The Baptism of Jesus, Matthew 3:17
- Jesus knows what it is to be human. He becomes one of us. He walks in our shoes. John 1:14
- Jesus is loving. "Love one another as I have loved you." John 15:12
- Jesus welcomes those considered the least. Let the little children come to me. Mark 10:14
- Jesus has come to bring fullness of life. John 10:10
- Jesus reminds us we are God's beloved. John 15:9-11
- Jesus is accepting. Matthew 9:9-13 Jesus calls Matthew.
- Jesus is non-judgmental and sees us for who we truly are. John 8:1-11 "Woman where are those who condemn you?"
- Jesus is forgiving. Luke 23:34 "Father, forgive them . . ."
- Jesus asks permission for before acting. "I stand at the door and knock." Revelations 3:2
- Jesus asks what we need. Mark 10: 46- 52, the blind Bartimaeus.
- Jesus comes to heal and to set us free. Luke 4:18

By his life, words, and deeds, and through his passion, death, and resurrection Jesus shows us what it means to be loving and fully alive. We are called to be for God and for others.

Activity: Our Family Covenant

God has made covenants: holy and everlasting bonds of faithfulness and love with us. God promises to be our God and we will be God's people. God made a covenant with Noah (Genesis 9: 8-17), with Abraham (Genesis 17:8-10), with Moses and the people of Israel (Exodus 34). Jesus came to establish the new and everlasting covenant to set us free and to bring us back to Our Loving God.

What would a family covenant look like? You may start off like this:

We have invited you, Jesus, to live in our family and in our hearts. You ask us to love one another as you love us.

So in this family:

❖ We will love and care for one another and treat each other with kindness.

❖ _____

❖ _____

❖ _____

❖ _____

❖ _____

If you feel comfortable, please share some of the ideas you have written and how they will nurture the response-ability and respect-ability of your family.

SESSION 5

PARENTING WITH HEART MEANS FORGIVING

How do we resolve our problems with love and respect?

When we disagree and tempers flare

Tummy Barometer: Gut Feelings

Who is responsible for how I feel?

Being proactive

Creating a respectful and positive climate where we have the
courage to be imperfect.

OK but we still got into a fight! What to do?

What happens when we blow it?

Reconciliation and Re-remembering

So why do I get so angry?

Marilee's Story

SESSION 5

PARENTING WITH HEART MEANS FORGIVING

How do we resolve our problems with love and respect?

Heart Warming:

How are we all doing? What has been going on since we last met?

What is one thing that is going well?

Open Up Your Hearts:

Let us take a time of quiet as we let Our Loving God speak to us.

As God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience. Bear with one another and, if anyone has a complaint against another, forgive each other; just as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive. Above all, clothe yourselves with love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony.

Colossians 3:12-14

Gathering Prayer

Good and Compassionate God,

You call us to be your holy and beloved ones.

As Moms and Dads and those who care for your children,

help us to be instruments of your love and peace.

Help us to listen to our children with kindness and respect.

When we face disagreements and struggles within our family,

help us to work together to learn to reach solutions

that are loving, respectful and life giving.

We ask this in Jesus' name. Amen

Heart Feeding:

When we disagree and tempers flare

Lets just take time to review the four goals of misbehavior.

- Undue Attention
- Power
- Revenge
- Helplessness

Tummy Barometer: Gut Feelings

Rather than try to figure out the reasons for misbehaviour "head work," ask yourself how you feel:

- When do we feel annoyed? Could it be because our children want undue attention?
- When do we feel angry? Could it be because our children are engaging in a power struggle?
- When do we feel hurt? Could it be our children feel hurt and want to hurt back?
- When do we feel helpless? Could it be our children want us to give up on them?

See: *So Why do I get so angry?* Found at the end of this section.

Who is responsible for how I feel?

- It is not so much the event that makes us feel a certain way e.g. angry, sad or hurt. It is the way we choose to respond.
- Have you ever been in a situation where you kept asking yourself, "Why are we fighting all the time?"

What is going on?

- Our children know how to get "under our skin" and "push our buttons"
- It might be more about us and our mistaken beliefs and the "shoulds" and "should nots" we carry with us.

See: *Why do I get so angry?*

Signs of discouragement

Remember our children misbehave when they are discouraged. They are not bad kids! They are and will always be the beloved!

We are called to re-spect them. That is look at them again through the loving eyes of Jesus.

See: *The Power of Encouragement Chart*

Heart Work, We Respond:

Think of a time when you had a disagreement with your children.

- What was going on?
- How did you feel?
- What did you say and do?
- How did your child respond?

If you feel comfortable, please share your situation with us.

Heart Feeding:

Being proactive

Creating a respectful and positive climate where we have the courage to be imperfect.

When we are encouraged, there is little need to engage in “useless” behavior. Many conflicts and disagreements can be avoided by:

- Treating each other with kindness and respect.
- Listening carefully to each other.
- Establishing a set of “family rules” we can all agree with.
- Helping each other understand our positions.
- Looking at how we can all be “winners.” We are on the same team!
- Rather than questioning or interrogating we can state what we see and describe the situation, rather than lay blame.

Heart Work, We Respond:

What are some suggestions you would add to this list?

If you feel comfortable, please share some of your suggestions with us.

Heart Feeding:

OK but we still got into a fight! What to do?

Some things to consider:

- Whose problem is it? Is there danger to the child or others?
- What is my gut saying? If I feel angry: It is a power struggle.
- Side step the power struggle. I don't engage and I back off.
- "Declare Bankruptcy." I disengage. No need to be the "fixer." I turn the situation over to the child. For example, "I don't know what you want to do to solve and deal with this. But I have faith that you will be able to work it out."

OK but we still got into a fight! What to do?

- Encourage. "It's a tough situation but you can work it out."
- "I'm sorry, but I can't allow you to do this." It is disrespectful and hurtful.
- "What is our rule?" What did we agree as a family?
- Take a break. You know what? I need some time to think about it.

We work to encourage, show confidence in our children. We help them to be response-able, respect-able, and self-guiding.

Heart Feeding:

What happens when we blow it? See: Marilee's Story

Understanding our Anger

Anger is an emotion. It can have a negative or positive impact. What is more important is how we choose to respond to our own feelings of anger and the anger of another.

In our parenting course we consider our children's behaviour and recall times when our children misbehave.

- We can ask these questions:
- What did my child(ren) do?
- How did I feel? What did I do?
- What happened then?
- What could we do to make things better next time?

Reconciliation and Re-membering

In forgiveness and reconciliation the Body of Christ is made whole. In the family, the domestic church, the call to be people of forgiveness and reconciliation is ongoing. It is who we are called to be as members of the Body of Christ.

- When we are truly present to our children, especially in times of conflict and anger, we become aware of the gift that emerges. It is the gift of presence.
- We give our full attention and mindfulness to our children and to our responsiveness to the presence of God's Spirit who calls us to be reconciled and reconnected.
- As we re-member, we put back together the Body of Christ in remembrance of him.
- Often times in our amnesia, we become dis-membered. We forget that from all eternity God calls each one of us to be the beloved daughter, the beloved son, in whom God takes such pleasure and delight.
- As we take time to receive and to welcome the gift of God's presence, and to offer the gift of presence to one another, we are re-membered, reconnected, and become whole and holy once again.

Home is Where the Heart is:

What is one idea or approach that speaks to you and your situation at home?

Heart Talk:

We encourage each other and see the positives (heart strengths) of the parents and children in their situation.

After our discussions and sharing, what is one thing for which you are grateful?

Closing Prayer

Gracious and Generous God,

Your Son, Jesus, prayed that we may all be one as you and he are one.

*Give us your love to share with our children
Especially in times when we may feel less than loving.*

*Let us see them through your eyes and make
Our hearts "for-giving" so we can all be reconciled
And made whole once again.*

Thank you for the blessings we have shared.

Stay with us as until we meet again.

(Prayers or intentions of participants)

We ask this in Jesus' name. Amen

Session Reflection: Please take a few moments to complete the session reflection form.

So Why Do I Get So Angry?

Remember our family of origin?

Our Lenses:

During the first 7-9 years of our childhood, we develop the lenses through which we see and interpret the world around us. As children we seek to belong, to be loved and to be seen as capable persons. We develop a sense of what we must do and how we must be to be a part of the family, our first society and community. Children are excellent observers but not very good interpreters of what they see and hear.

Our Sometime Mistaken Beliefs about Our Self:

As we find our place in the family, we may believe that in order to belong we must:

- always please our parents and those in authority
- always be perfect, and live up to expectations
- always be a winner, second place is no place
- always be happy even when things go terribly wrong
- always be right: mistakes are not tolerated
- always be powerful: gentleness is a sign of weakness

You could probably add to this list of “shoulds” and “oughts.”

When these beliefs are challenged or upset:

- We may find ourselves becoming frustrated and discouraged.
- We may feel less than who we are expected to be.
- We may act out in unloving and hurtful ways.
- We may feel misunderstood and unloved.
- We may feel insecure and vulnerable.
- We may lash out in anger.
- We may be afraid
- We want things to go our way.

What else could we add to this list?

Remember: We need encouragement. The courage to be imperfect! And so do our children!

Marilee's Story

One day Marilee, age three, drew all over a freshly painted wall with her colourful markers. Dad felt disappointed and angry with her. He had worked very hard to paint the walls to make the home more attractive and thought Marilee should know better. He scolded Marilee and took away the markers. Then Marilee began to cry and said, "I hate you, Daddy."

Dad felt hurt and shouted, "Go to go your room until you stop crying."

As Dad got to think about the situation and what he might do differently, he said to himself:

"I worked really hard on the week-end to get the paint job done and was really proud of my work. I thought Marilee would like it too but instead she went to town drawing all over my hard work.

OK maybe I was a bit too harsh when I scolded her and took away her markers. She's only three. She loves to colour. I didn't even take time to think about what she had in mind or to listen to her side of the story. I was too caught up with my own disappointment.

It turned out that Marilee wanted to help decorate too. She saw me hard at work and wanted to be a part of the project. She thought she had made a great contribution, a masterpiece.

I took her markers and sent her to her room. I really blew it. She means the world to me. How can I show her I am sorry and I always love her?"

What was on Marilee's mind?

"I love my Daddy. I don't know why he got so mad and took away my markers. I really think he made the house look beautiful and I wanted to be like him and do the same with my markers. I did my best.

I was hurt and sad when he got angry. I wanted him to feel sad and hurt like me so I said, 'I hate you, Daddy!' but I don't really. I wish we could be happy again and not be mad at each other."

Marilee's Story (cont'd)

After dad had time to cool down and think about what happened. He realized the paint was washable. Of course! What else when you have little ones in the house. Marilee's markers were washable too.

Dad went to Marilee's room markers in hand. He knocked on the door. She opened it to him.

He knelt down and said, "Marilee, I am so sorry. I love you so much. Will you please forgive your Dad for not even listening to you?"

Marilee hugged her Dad and said, "I forgive you, Daddy. Let's not be angry with each other any more."

Epilogue

Dad told Marilee how much he liked her drawing and the wonderful colours and shapes she used. They agreed that she could decorate the walls with the drawings she made on mural paper. A simple rule: Paper for drawing and painting. Walls for displaying the work like at an art gallery. With some soapy water they both got the wall ready to receive Marilee's next masterpiece.

SESSION 6 – SESSION 8

PARENTING WITH HEART MEANS CREATING A HOME WITH HEART

Creating a Home with Heart: Jesus Lives Here

We can do this by:

Heart Seeing : Appreciation

Heart Listening: Gift of Presence

Heart Caring: Our Own Response-ability

Heart Laughing: Celebration and Rejoicing

Hearts Praying: Grace-filled Gratitude

SESSION 6 –SESSION 8

PARENTING WITH HEART MEANS CREATING A HOME WITH HEART

Heart Warming:

How are we all doing? What has been going on since we last met?

What is one thing that is going well?

Open Up Your Hearts:

Let us take a time of quiet as we let Our Loving God speak to us.

Love is patient; love is kind; love is not envious or boastful or arrogant or rude. It does not insist on its own way; it is not irritable or resentful; it does not rejoice in wrongdoing, but rejoices in the truth. It bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. Love never ends. . . . And now faith, hope, and love abide, these three; and the greatest of these is love.

1 Corinthians 13:4-8, 13

Gathering Prayer

Loving and Faithful God,

*You call us to be your holy and beloved ones.
Help us to build a home where your love is at the center.*

*To all Moms and Dads and all who take the role of parents,
give us your love so that we can respond
to the daily needs of our children.*

*As we gather this evening, send your Holy Spirit
to open our hearts and guide us.*

We ask this in Jesus' name.

Amen

Heart Feeding: Creating a Home with Heart

Throughout this program we have focused on the heart.

- Each day we are called to take heart and to be encouraged.
- As caregivers we are first called by our God to see ourselves as the beloved and to know what it means to be loved unconditionally by Our Creator.
- When we can see ourselves as the beloved, our hearts are lifted up and we are encouraged!
- When we see our children and ourselves as God's beloved, our hearts are open to welcome and receive one another as God's gift to us.

In this way we grow as a communion of life, of love and grace.

Jesus Lives Here

In a home where there is heart, Jesus is at the centre.

*For where two or three are gathered in my name,
I am there among them. Matthew 18:20*

In a home with heart we draw on the loving presence of Jesus to empower us to lift up each other's heart.

It begins with each one of us opening our hearts to welcome Jesus.

We are called to be Jesus for one another. We can do this by:

- Heart Seeing: We see our beloved through the eyes of the One Who Loves us first.
- Heart Listening: We listen as heart speaks to heart.
- Heart Caring: We see, listen and respond to God's call to be loving and life giving.
- Heart Laughing: We create and celebrate events that bring us laughter, joy and gratitude.
- Hearts Praying: We invite Jesus to be the centre of our family so we can be a communion of life, of love and grace.

Jesus Lives Here (cont'd)

Let's look a little closer at each one.

Heart Seeing: Appreciation

- We see our beloved children through the eyes of the One Who Loves us first.
- We see them as beloved and precious daughters and sons of God.
- We see the goodness, the love, the beauty and the gifts they bring to our home.
- We see the joys and the fears, the hopes and dreams to be shared as a family.
- We rejoice and celebrate each child as a precious gift. We welcome each one as Jesus entering our home.

Heart Work, We Respond

Activity:

Take time to recall the way you looked at your children when we first started.

- What has changed?
- What has remained the same?
- Were you able to be respect-full: looking at them again through the eyes of Jesus?

Home is Where the Heart is

If you feel comfortable, please share some of your suggestions with us.

Heart Listening: Gift of Presence

We are called to listen "whole-heartedly"

The gift of presence, our undivided attention to our children is a gift that is "priceless." With so much "communication" taking place through virtual reality and digital technology, very often there is little time for face-to-face, and real one on one encounters.

- We listen as heart speaks to heart.
- We are open to receive what our beloved has to say to us.
- We give the gift of our presence. Time stops. (Smart phones, tablets, TV, off.)

We are called to listen "whole-heartedly" (cont'd)

- We listen to the melody of the heart song. Is it one of joy, sadness, anxiety, or delight?
- We do not judge or criticize. We do not prepare our response. We listen. We are called to listen "whole-heartedly"
- We acknowledge what we hear. We clarify to check for understanding.
- We express gratitude for the confidence and trust of our beloved children who open their hearts to us.
- We offer and receive the gift of heart listening.

Heart Work, We Respond

Activity:

Think of a time when as a child someone listened to you "whole-heartedly."

- What was that like?
- How did you know you were listened to?
- How did you feel?
- How does your experience help you to be able to give your children some "heart listening"?

Home is Where the Heart is

If you feel comfortable, please share some of your suggestions with us.

Heart Caring: Our Own Response-ability

As we open our hearts to God's call to love as God loves us:

- We see, we listen and respond to God's call to be loving and life giving.
- We are called to love as Christ loves us. What kind of parent do our children and partner need us to be in this situation?
- We can all use our gifts and talents to act in a positive, loving, supportive way.

Heart Caring: Our Own Response-ability (cont'd)

- Together with hope and with courage, we face the challenges of life together as a couple and as family.
- *Nothing can separate us from the love of God, Romans 8: 38-39.*
- We seek to share our love and life with our extended family and our community

Heart Work, We Respond

Activity:

Recall a time when you, as a parent, felt you were called to respond to a specific situation in a loving way. (You may not have felt very loving at the time.)

- What did you do?
- How did things turn out?
- What did you learn about your response-ability?

Home is Where the Heart is

If you feel comfortable, please share some of your suggestions with us.

Heart Laughing: Celebration and Rejoicing

If you keep my commandments, you will abide in my love, just as I have kept my Father's commandments and abide in his love. I have said these things to you so that my joy may be in you, and that your joy may be complete.

John 15:10-12

- We can celebrate the joys and happy events we share that are filled with laughter. (It has been said, "Life is too important to be taken seriously.")
- We can take time to laugh at ourselves.
- We need to make time for fun together.
- We remember and recall often those times where we could not help but laugh and be joyful and grateful.
- Do together those things that make our hearts sing with delight and joy?

Heart Work, We Respond

Activity:

When was the last time when laughter rang through your home?

- Describe the event.
- How did you feel?
- How did your children respond?
- How can you create a climate where joy and laughter are welcome?

Home is Where the Heart is

If you feel comfortable, please share some of your suggestions with us.

Hearts Praying: Grace-filled Gratitude

'Again, truly I tell you, if two of you agree on earth about anything you ask, it will be done for you by my Father in heaven. For where two or three are gathered in my name, I am there among them.'

Matthew 18-19-20

- We invite Jesus to be the centre of our home and family.
- We join together to give thanks for God's blessings and grace.
- We open our hearts to God realizing that we are not in control.
- We thank God for the gift of our Beloved family.
- We ask for forgiveness and reconciliation for the times we have been unloving to one another.
- We ask for wisdom and guidance to be open to God's call to live out our covenant of love and of life.

Heart Work, We Respond

Activity:

We are called to pray always, “without ceasing” and in all ways:
Rejoice always, pray without ceasing, give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you.
1 Thessalonians 5:17-18

How would you respond to these questions?

- What is prayer like for us and for our children?
- In our busy days how can we pray always?
- What does it mean for us to pray in all ways?
- What is prayer like in our domestic church?
- How do our children learn to pray?

See: *Pray Always and In All Ways*

Home is Where the Heart is

If you feel comfortable, please share some of your suggestions with us.

Heart Talk:

We encourage each other and see the positives (heart strengths) of the parents and children in their situation.

A Grateful Heart:

After our discussions and sharing, what is one thing for which you are grateful?

Closing Prayer

Loving and Faithful God,

*As we leave this place to return to our families and our children,
Open wide our hearts to receive your love.
Engrave on them your Law that calls us to love you
And our neighbour as we love ourself.*

*Be with us and help us to make our homes
A place where your heart is the centre.*

(Prayers or intentions of participants)

We ask this in Jesus' name.

Amen

Session Reflection: Please take a few moments to complete the session reflection form.

HELPS ALONG THE WAY

WE NEED TO TAKE HEART!

OPENING THE EYES OF OUR HEART: NEW LENSES

How does God see us? What is it like to be seen through the eyes of Love?

We are the Beloved

- Luke 3: 21-22: The Baptism of Jesus
- Isaiah 49: 15: "I will not forget you."
- Jeremiah 31: 3: An everlasting love
- Ezekiel 11:19: A heart of flesh

We are called to love as we are loved

- 1 John 4: 16-21: God is Love
- John 15: 12-17: A New Commandment
- 1 Corinthians 13: 1-13: The Gift of Love
- Matthew 20: 25-28: The Son of Man Came to Serve
- Galatians 3: 25-29: *One in Christ Jesus*
- 1 Thessalonians 5:11: Encourage one another
- Hebrews 3:13-16: Encourage one another
- Ephesians 4:2: Bear with one another
- Colossians 3:13: Forgive each other

WE ARE BEAUTIFULLY AND WONDERFULLY MADE.

Here are some beliefs about us as lovable and capable persons:

- We are created to love and to be loved.
- We are created to be capable.
- We are created for relationships and to belong.
- We are created to contribute to our world.
- We are unique and precious.
- We are created to be response-able and respectful.

When we believe that we lovable and capable we are encouraged. We have heart!

We can take on the world!

It takes a village

- But we don't have to do it all on our own.
- We need each other.
- We are a family.
- We are a team.
- We all take part because we belong and we care.

Where is Home?

- A place where I am accepted for who I am.
- A place where I can be myself.
- A place where I can feel safe.

HOME IS WHERE THE HEART IS

What kind of home would you like to have for your children and for you?

What is going well? What would make things better?

HERE ARE SOME HEART TIPS:

Stop! Look!

And Listen! With all your Heart!

Before you get cross.

Heart Stopping

Catch them doing something right.

Heart Seeing

Give them a hug just because.

Heart Talking to Heart

Take time to laugh.

Heart Smiling

Say thank you.

Heart Feeling

Gratitude and appreciation

Use I Messages

Heart Sharing

“When this happens, I get really
concerned or sad because . . .”

Rather than question and blame,
describe what you see and how
you feel to your child.

I believe in you.

Heart Strengthening

You can do it.

Say sorry when you blow it.

Heart Mending

And you know it.

Just be there for them.

Heart Present

It's your gift to them.

Be patient with yourself. Have a Heart! It will take time.

What is one thing you would like to do to bring a change of heart to your family
and to your life?

THE BEATITUDES

'Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

'Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted.

'Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the earth.

'Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled

'Blessed are the merciful, for they will receive mercy.

'Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God.

'Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God.

'Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

'Blessed are you when people revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on my account. Rejoice and be glad, for your reward is great in heaven, for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you.

Matthew 5: 3-9

LECTIO DIVINA

The ancient practice of *Lectio Divina*, can be used in the reading and reflection of Scripture passages at the beginning of each session. Below is an adaptation of the four main steps for everyday use.

Step One: *Lectio* Holy Reading/Listening

- One person reads the passage aloud.
- We open ourselves (hearts and minds) to the presence of God.
- We listen to God's Word as it is proclaimed.
- We remain silent.

Step Two: *Meditatio* Reflection /What is God's Word for us today?

- The passage is read aloud a second time.
- We reflect on a word or phrase that stands out for us.
- We can share this word or phrase with another person.
- Or we can share with the whole group.

Step Three: *Oratio* Prayer/ Response

- We respond to God's Word.

Step Four: *Contemplatio* Contemplation/Rest

- The passage is read aloud once more.
- We rest in God's presence.

Reference:

Dysinger, Luke 2014 "Accepting the Embrace of God, the Ancient Art of Lectio Divina." Accessed August 31. <http://www.jesuits.ca/orintations/intro2lectio.html>.

PRAY ALWAYS and IN ALL WAYS

Meeting and Finding God in All Things

From Our Rising:

Good Morning, God.

We give thanks for the day. We ask God to walk with us, guide us and protect us. Bless us all and bless this day.

Take Lord, Receive

Through the Day:

Showering and getting dressed

Getting the children up and ready for the day

(Or are they up and raring to go already?)

Getting breakfast

Sending Out: Transportation and “chauffeuring”

Daily chores: Work outside and inside the home

Nurturing Break

Mid-Day:

Grab a quick lunch with the children or on your own?

Afternoon:

Where are you called to be?

Home, Work, After-school activities

Early Evening:

Gathering: Everyone is home

What a day! And how was your day?

We need to be fed! Preparation and Dinnertime

Homework

Getting ready for tomorrow

Night Time:

Bath time /Bedtime

Prayer and Tuck in: Review our day

Lights out (for the children)

Mom’s and Dad’s Time

To Our Lying Down:

Good Night, God. Thank you for our day. Watch over us as we sleep.

Grant all your people a peaceful night.

WORDS OF ENCOURAGEMENT AND WISDOM

Philippians 4:4-9

Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, Rejoice. Let your gentleness be known to everyone. The Lord is near. Do not worry about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God.

Take, Lord, . . .
Take, Lord, and receive
all my liberty, my memory,
my understanding, and my entire will,
all that I have and possess.

You have given all to me.
To You, Lord, I return it.

All is Yours;
do with it what You will.
Give me only Your love and Your grace,
that is enough for me.

Ignatius of Loyola

Lord, Make Me an Instrument . . .
Lord, make me an instrument of your peace.
Where there is hatred, let me sow love;
where there is injury, pardon;
where there is doubt, faith;
where there is despair, hope;
where there is darkness, light;
and where there is sadness, joy.

O Divine Master, grant that I may not so much seek
to be consoled as to console;
to be understood as to understand;
to be loved as to love.
For it is in giving that we receive;
it is in pardoning that we are pardoned;
and it is in dying that we are born to eternal life.
Amen

Francis of Assisi

WORDS OF ENCOURAGEMENT AND WISDOM (cont'd)

Let Nothing Disturb You

Let nothing disturb you,
Let nothing frighten you,
All things are passing;
God only is changeless.
Patience gains all things.
Who has God wants nothing.
God alone suffices.

Teresa of Avila

Christ Has No Body Now . . .

Christ has no body now on earth but yours,
no hands but yours,
no feet but yours,
Yours are the eyes through which to look out
Christ's compassion to the world
Yours are the feet with which he is to go about
doing good;
Yours are the hands with which he is to bless men now.

Teresa of Avila

HELPFUL RESOURCES

Parent Education

Coloroso, Barbara. 2010. *Kids Are Worth It!: Raising Resilient, Responsible, Compassionate Kids*. Toronto, ON: Penguin Group

Coloroso, an international authority in parent education, presents her practical approach to raising response-able children.

Dinkmeyer, Don Sr., Gary D. McKay, and Don Jr. Dinkmeyer. 1997. *The Parent's Handbook: Systematic Training for Effective Parenting*. STEPublishers.

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Helpful for anyone wishing to get a better idea about spirituality and the way Ignatius helps us to see God in all things.

Groome, Thomas H. 2011. *Will There Be Faith? A New Vision for Educating and Growing Disciples.* New York: HarperCollins Publishers.

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May, Scottie, Beth Posterski, Catherine Stonehouse, and Linda Cannell. 2005. *Children Matter: Celebrating Their Place in the Church, Family, and Community.* Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing.

A very thorough guide for parents and all those involved in ministry to children and families, their spiritual formation, and religious education.

Nouwen, Henri J.M. 2011. *A Spirituality of Caregiving.* Nashville, TN: Upper Room Books.

A helpful book for all who take on the role of "care giver."

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Helpful for understanding how parents, family, and those working with children can take an active and nurturing role in their faith development.

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In both her books, Vella outlines her approach that focuses on dialogue with the adult learner to develop a respectful cooperative climate where all contribute as teachers and learners.

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APPENDIX A

OUR LEARNING COVENANT

We gather together as parents and those who take the place of parents to cooperate with God to be a family, a communion of life, love and grace.

- ❖ In this place we will respect the confidentiality and privacy of all who take part. Anything that is private and confidential will not go beyond these walls.
- ❖ We will treat one another with a respect that is loving and life-giving.
- ❖ We will listen carefully and respectfully to one another and we will give each person an opportunity to express their thoughts and ideas.
- ❖ We are here to listen and to share our ideas rather than to give advice. We will ask questions to make sure we understand what is being said.
- ❖ We will support and encourage each other on the challenging journey of being the parents God calls us to be.
- ❖ We will give others and ourselves permission to have the courage to be imperfect.
- ❖ We will keep a sense of humour in case we become too serious.
- ❖ In all we say, think and do we will ask the Holy Spirit to guide us so that we may be a reflection of God's love, peace, and grace.

(Facilitators, these are suggestions to build a community of learners in an atmosphere of safety, friendship, and respect. This is the atmosphere we would like to see in our families and homes. Your participants may have other things they would like to add.)

PROGRAM DISCUSSION STARTER

To help us to get to know each other, would you please tell us a little bit about you and your family?

(Facilitator will begin to provide a model)

1. INTRODUCING MYSELF:
Your name, partner's name, place of worship, and your favourite dessert.
2. MY CHILDREN:
Names, ages, gender, and one thing you appreciate about each child.
3. Some questions I would like to bring to the discussion.
4. What I would like to take back home from this program.
5. How I see God at work in my family.
6. Something I would like you to know about my family and me. (Something you are comfortable sharing)

SESSION DISCUSSION FORMAT
(To facilitate group discussion and interaction)

1. HEART WARMING:

How are we all doing? What has been going on since we last met? Please take a moment to share one thing that is going well.

2. OPEN UP YOUR HEARTS:

A time of quiet as we let Our Loving God speak to us. Selected Scripture passage. Reflection and Prayer. Everyone is invited to participate in the prayer and in offering prayer intentions.

3. HEART FEEDING: Facilitator input and content. Interactive group discussion and participation.

4. HEART WORK, WE RESPOND:

Comments, questions, and clarification. Group activities, pairs-work, individual tasks, and role-play.

5. HOME IS WHERE THE HEART IS:

How does this heart feeding apply to us and to our families?

A discussion of real-life situations drawn from the every day lives of the participants.

6. HEART TALK:

- We encourage each other and see the positives (heart strengths) of the parents and children in their situation.
- What is it we appreciate in the moms and dads and their children?
- How can they build and grow from their heart strengths to make the situation even better?

7. A GRATEFUL HEART:

After our discussions and sharing, what is one thing for which you are grateful?

8. CLOSING PRAYER

9. SESSION REFLECTION:

Please take a few moments to complete the session reflection form.

POST-SESSION REFLECTION

SESSION # _____ THEMES: _____

1. Please take a few moments to write about what you learned from our session.

2. What did you find useful in our discussions?

3. How have our discussions helped you to see how God is at work in your family?

4. What suggestions would you make to improve the session?

TAKING TIME FOR ENCOURAGEMENT

Encourage yourselves daily while it is still “today” . . . Heb. 3:13 (NAB)

The Encouragement Meeting

This can be an informal gathering around the table, in the car, whenever the family are all together. Make it short and sweet (5-10 minutes).

How to Do It:

Begin with a short prayer inviting God to be with us.

Invite each family member to take part.

Here are some sample questions to get things going:

- What is one thing that is going well in our family?
- What is one thing I am thankful for?
- What’s one thing I would like to thank Mom, Dad, and siblings for?
- What’s one thing I appreciate about you Mom, Dad, siblings?

A Prayer of Gratitude for our family and all the ways we have been encouraged and appreciated.

Celebration: What is something we can do together for fun?

This outline is just one example. Feel free to develop a “ritual” that will become your own. One your children will remember and can carry on with their families much later on.

THE PRACTICE OF HOLDING FAMILY MEETINGS

Having regular family meetings prepares everyone to be able to respond together as a family when challenges arise such as sudden illness, school difficulties, financial burdens, and work overload. We will have a way to face these unforeseen events together with courage, hope and love.

Family meetings provide an opportunity for family members to make the home a place where everyone is:

- respected
- heard
- appreciated
- called to cooperate
- called to be response-able.

Suggested Agenda

Make a list on the fridge for everyone to add items.

Start small (10-15 minutes as is age appropriate). Gather once a week or as needed. Keep it flexible, useful and fun. It's to build up the family and not to be a burden.

Opening Prayer: inviting God to be our centre.

Express Appreciation: What's going well. Express appreciation and thank each member.

What can we do to make things better? One or two items such as, bedtimes, homework, house rules and tasks. Set a simple game plan.

Closing Prayer: thanking God and asking for God's love and support.

Time for Fun: Finish off by planning and doing something fun together.

APPENDIX 2:
PARTICIPANT'S MATERIALS LIST

PARENTING
WITH HEART

A Program
Based upon the Call To Love as We Are Loved

Participant's Materials

PARTICIPANT'S MATERIALS

INTRODUCTION

Our Expectations

The Family: Three Communion

PARENTING WITH HEART MEANS CARING: TO LOVE AS WE ARE
LOVED

PARENTING WITH HEART MEANS UNDERSTANDING OUR CHILD'S BEHAVIOUR

A Desire to Belong and to Be in Community

The Child as an Observer

The Influence of Environment

The Family Constellation

Mistaken Goals of Behaviour

PARENTING WITH HEART MEANS INSTRUCTING AND GUIDING

We are called to parent with heart and not to parent with hurt.

Why punishment doesn't work.

Why rewards don't work.

Encouraging Response-Ability

Guiding and Instructing

What does the situation demand?

Natural outcomes

Reasonable outcomes

PARENTING WITH HEART MEANS RESPECTING

Re-spect: looking again through the eyes of Jesus

Respect for our self

But how do I show respect? Seeing with the eyes and heart of Jesus.

PARENTING WITH HEART MEANS RESPECTING (cont'd)

Fostering respect-ability

How do resolve our problems with love and respect?

Being proactive: Creating a respectful and positive climate where we
have the courage to be imperfect.

What happens when we blow it?

Reconciliation and Re-membering

So why do I get so angry?

Marilee's Story

PARENTING WITH HEART MEANS CREATING A HOME WITH HEART

Creating a Home with Heart

We can do this by:

Heart Seeing: Appreciation

Heart Listening: Gift of Presence

Heart Caring: Our Own Response-ability

Heart Laughing: Celebration and Rejoicing

Hearts Praying: Grace-filled Gratitude

HELPS ALONG THE WAY

OPENING THE EYES OF OUR HEART: NEW LENSES

THE BEATITUDES

PRAY ALWAYS and IN ALL WAYS

THE LITURGY OF OUR HOURS

WORDS OF ENCOURAGEMENT AND WISDOM

APPENDIX A

OUR LEARNING COVENANT

PROGRAM DISCUSSION STARTER

SESSION DISCUSSION FORMAT

TAKING TIME FOR ENCOURAGEMENT

THE PRACTICE OF FAMILY MEETINGS

HELPFUL RESOURCES

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