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Shepherd Care:
How the Discipline of Spiritual Direction Facilitates Pastors' Relationships with
God, their sense of Call, and their Relationships with Congregations

A Thesis
submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree of
Doctor of Ministry
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by

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Toronto, Canada

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DEDICATION

For Rob, who is a pastor.

For the pastors in this study who so readily spoke of their thoughts, doubts,
and discoveries.

And in memory of Justina, who wanted to be a pastor

ABSTRACT

Pastors' relationships with God, their calls, and their congregations are integral to their ministries. When any one of these relationships is damaged or left untended, it can cause difficulties in a pastor's spiritual life and even lead to isolation, as pastors don't always have pastors with whom to share their challenges. This study shows how the discipline of spiritual direction can facilitate pastors' relationships with God, their sense of calls, and their perceptions of and interactions with their congregations.

In this project I, as a spiritual director, met with six evangelical Protestant pastors, in Toronto, Canada, for an initial interview, six spiritual direction sessions, and a final interview. The narratives emerging from the interviews and reflection forms, completed after each session, demonstrated the value for pastors, even those in relatively healthy churches, of being in spiritual direction with a spiritual director who was sensitive to their role as pastors. The pastors identified spending time with God, hearing His word, engaging in theological reflection, questioning and evaluating their calls, and processing the emotional and spiritual issues in their congregations as some of the ways in which they found spiritual direction particularly helpful.

This project provides pastors, church leaders and denominational leaders, particularly in the evangelical Protestant tradition, with examples, including those listed above, of the efficacy of spiritual direction in providing spiritual care for pastors.

Our Stories

It is our stories
our sacred, chaotic, blessed stories,
our awe-drenched, doubting, joyous stories:
it is our stories
that are the stones
of God's language
on the rocky, jagged, radiant
path of life.
It is the holy listener
who helps arrange these stones
into cairns
which point the way to God's desire for our lives
and
God's desire for our every moment.
The cairns, if carefully balanced,
uneven though they be,
if patiently balanced,
can point the way to heaven.
Heaven, after all,
is making God-serving meaning of our stories
on this rocky, jagged, radiant
path of life.

Jennifer Hoffman
From *Listen*, 3.1 (January 2009)

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CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

Pastors spend their working lives caring for the soul needs of others. In doing so their own soul needs can be neglected. Pastors are expected to lead from a place of spiritual knowledge and confidence yet their very experiences as pastors can erode that knowledge and confidence. Pastors can become isolated as they attempt to function under the spoken and unspoken expectations placed on them as public spiritual leaders.

As a spiritual director giving spiritual direction to a small number of pastors, the question of who pastors the pastor began to arise frequently, especially as I thought of those who are not aware of the practice of spiritual direction, one of the viable ways in which pastors can be pastored. Ruth Haley Barton, a pastor, spiritual director and founder of the Transforming Center, asks the same question in an article entitled *Spiritual Direction with Pastoral and Corporate Leaders* (Barton 2010, 20).

Ministry Context

Over the last five years I've been a spiritual director, I have gained an awareness of the need for pastors to be pastored. Spiritual direction is a spiritual discipline where one person sets aside his own needs, emotional, social, and

spiritual, to listen with God to another person about his relationship with God. Spiritual direction is a discipline based on discernment, listening and encouragement. It is also a story-based discipline as the work of a spiritual director is to help connect a directee's story to God's story. Nearly half of my present directees are pastors, from the evangelical Protestant tradition, and it was because of them that I came to understand just how well spiritual direction could provide pastoral care for pastors.

In giving spiritual direction to pastors I began to see a number of them become more deeply aware of the ways in which their spiritual lives were affected by being a pastor. Spiritual direction became a safe and confidential place for these pastors to articulate the questions and issues that were arising in their congregations. These situations revealed their deep sense of responsibility for their parishioners, especially as they experienced suffering, their entanglement in some of their lives, as well as their frustration with many of them and the guilt that came with feeling frustrated. There were few other places where they could express these things. Over time the effects of being a pastor were seen primarily in their relationships with God, their call and their congregation, as these were the three themes that arose most frequently. These three themes were affirmed in conversations with other spiritual directors and in my reading (e.g., Barton 2010, 24-25).

The Research Question

In identifying the three specific themes that were consistently emerging from pastors' stories in spiritual direction, relationships with God, call and congregation, my research question became: How does the discipline of spiritual direction facilitate pastors' relationship with God, as it is affected by being a pastor, call and congregation? Secondly, what are some of the distinctive elements of giving spiritual direction to pastors?

Who Will Benefit

Pastors, churches, denominations, and spiritual directors, including myself, could benefit from this study.

This project is providing an exploration of six pastors' experiences in spiritual direction. The duration of this exploration was close to a year, which included six sessions of spiritual direction, and the pastor's individual narratives that are, in my mind, the most important contribution this project may make to the field of spiritual direction. Presently there's very little information available about spiritual direction and evangelical Protestant pastors. Though the scope of this study is not wide, its depth, seen in the narratives in particular, can make a contribution to what is already known about this subject.

Research Methodologies

Broadly speaking, an action research approach informed this ministry project with elements of narrative inquiry providing a second dimension in keeping with the narrative nature of spiritual direction.

Action research (defined in Chapter 4) provides for the iterative nature of this project as I met with the pastors eight times, two interviews and six sessions, for close to a year. Each spiritual direction session, an iteration of the project, became an intentional learning experience for me, as the pastors completed a form after each session, which then informed how I interacted with them during the following session. Action research also allows for the researcher to be acted upon, to be changed, by engaging in the research, which has been my experience. The methodology of narrative inquiry lends itself to a qualitative research project with a small sample size, especially in a project that includes numerous interviews, and shares some congruence with the discipline of spiritual direction, as described in Chapter 3.

I invited six pastors from evangelical Protestant traditions to participate in my project, to which they all agreed. Three were already in spiritual direction with me and three were not. They are from different generations, have varied backgrounds, serve in very different churches, and two are women. The pastors are further described in Chapter 5. These pastors also live in or near Toronto, where I live and minister. Given the size and diversity of the city, I thought that evangelical Protestant pastors who have not yet experienced spiritual direction might have had more opportunity to hear about it before being asked to participate in this project. And should the pastor-directees wish to find another spiritual director after the completion of the project, or recommend spiritual direction to other people or pastors, they would be able to find a spiritual director much more readily in or near Toronto. Going forward I will refer to the six pastors as pastor-

directees, as they are more than project participants yet they need to be differentiated from other pastors mentioned in the project

The aforementioned interviews occurred before and after the six sessions. The forms completed after each session comprised the pastor-directees' narratives about how spiritual direction facilitated their relationships with God, call and congregation are the core data of this project, which was analyzed through adopting elements of narrative inquiry, specifically five lenses described in Chapter 3 and 4.

Limitations of the Project

The limitations of the project include the small number of participants and the fact that all the participants are from the evangelical Protestant tradition, which is my own background. This limitation provides some theological congruence between the pastor-directees and myself as the spiritual director that allows for a focused exploration of the research question. Further limitations of the project include my being the only director, thereby limiting the experience of spiritual direction for the pastor-directees, and that I was only looking at three aspects of their spiritual lives – their relationships with God, call and congregation.

Key Terms

Below are some of the most frequently used terms including their definitions for the purpose of this thesis.

Evangelical

For the purposes of this project I include David Bebbington's Quadrilateral (Bebbington 1989, 5-17) to indicate what I mean when using the word "evangelical":

1. Conversionism: The conviction that each person must turn from their sin, believe in the saving work of Christ, and commit themselves to a life of discipleship and service
2. Activism: Cooperating in the mission of God through evangelism and charitable works
3. Biblicism: Devotion to the Bible as God's word
4. Crucicentrism: The centrality of the cross of Christ in evangelical teaching and preaching

Spiritual Direction and Spiritual Director

In the spiritual discipline of spiritual direction one person puts aside his or her own spiritual, emotional and social needs to prayerfully prepare to listen to where God is present in a person's life. A director is "one who points or directs a person's attention to the presence and guidance of the Spirit of God," says Wendy Miller (Miller 2004, 22).

Call

A call is an invitation from God to work alongside Him in caring for His people and the world. In this call, God provides the gifts, capabilities and the capacity to minister. This call is affirmed by a church or Christian organization.

Gendered Language and Bible Version

I refer to pastors as both "she" and "he", and "her" and "him", throughout the project as I give spiritual direction to both female and male pastors. I attempt

to be consistent with the use of the pronouns, using one throughout a paragraph or a section.

All Scripture references are taken from *The Message*, as this is the version I most commonly use when reading Scripture to pastor-directees. It is the version one of them refers to in the narratives.

Chapter Outlines

The following chapter descriptions will indicate the flow and direction of this thesis.

Chapter One: Ministry Context and Project Description

This chapter outlines how I came to the research question for this project: how spiritual direction facilitates pastors' relationships' with God, as affected by being a pastor, call and congregation. I describe my ministry context, define key terms, include a short description of the project and the methodologies used, and note the limitations of the project.

Chapter Two: Theological Rationale

Spiritual direction is defined and a short history of the discipline is provided in this chapter. The importance of pastors' relationship with God is primarily explored through Jesus' spiritual disciplines. Call is defined, and some of the reasons why it can be difficult to discern a call are explored. Congregations are viewed biblically through the lens of systems theory, particularly the elements of triangulation, anxiety, and self-differentiation.

Chapter Three: Social Science and Precedent Literature

In this chapter books, articles, and studies about pastors' well-being and the stresses they experience are interpreted to create a description of pastoral realities. The importance of pastors' relationships with God, call and congregation is explored. Literature that has informed me as a spiritual director in giving spiritual direction to pastors is presented, literature regarding giving spiritual direction to pastors is interpreted, and some elements of narrative inquiry, especially as they relate to the discipline of spiritual direction through five lenses, active listening, narrative processes, language, context and moments, are explained.

Chapter Four: Methodology

In the spirit of action research methodology, I utilized elements of narrative inquiry, described above, in creating the interview protocol and evaluation/reflection form as well as in analyzing the data. The chronology, design and ethical considerations of the project are presented and the application of the five lenses is explained.

Chapter Five: Findings

The pastors' narratives are an invaluable resource in understanding pastors' relationships with God, call and congregation. The findings that emerged from the narratives indicate how important it is for pastors to have a safe and confidential place to verbally process their relationship with God, especially their theological

questions and doubts. The pastors found that spiritual direction was a way to be reminded of God's love and care of them and to re-affirm their identities in Him.

The pastoral narratives also revealed the pastors' need to question, doubt, explore and re-affirm their calls, especially while experiencing conflict in their congregations. Spiritual direction provided a place for them to do this outside of their congregations. In terms of the pastors' relationships with their congregations, the findings reveal how complex congregational systems can be, especially when there is triangulation, anxiety and a lack of self-differentiation. Spiritual direction allowed pastors space and time away from their congregations to discern its health and what and who were causing stress within the system.

In this chapter I also summarize the ways in which the pastor-directees' narratives confirm many of the pastoral realities presented in Chapter 3 and how they add some distinctive realities of their own to the list.

Chapter Six: Conclusion

In this chapter I outline the implications of this project for spiritual directors, churches and denominations

CHAPTER TWO: THEOLOGICAL RATIONALE

In establishing a theological rationale for providing spiritual direction to pastors, I start by defining spiritual direction, recounting a short history of the practice of the discipline, and explore the spiritual disciplines of Jesus who, like pastors, had his relationship with God affected by his ministry, as was his relationship with his call and his congregation.

Defining Spiritual Direction

Spiritual direction is a spiritual discipline, like praying, fasting, and studying, which is experienced with another. In spiritual direction, one person puts aside his or her own spiritual, emotional and social needs to listen to God, specifically with the guidance of the Holy Spirit, discerning the ways in which that person is relating to God in an ongoing transformative way. Spiritual directors hear stories, note patterns, serve as a reminding force in directees lives but, contrary to the title, should never forcefully direct anyone to take a specific course of action.

In *The Art of Spiritual Direction*, Margaret Guenther says,

spiritual direction is unashamedly hierarchical. Not because the director is somehow “better” or “holier” than the directee, but because, in this covenanted relationship the director has agreed to put himself aside so that

his total attention can be focused on the person sitting in the other chair. What a gift to bring to another, the gift of disinterested, loving attention! (Guenther 1992, 3)

This covenanted relationship can be characterized by some of the elements of the discipline - listening to Scripture, praying, listening to each other and God, and by the nurturing that occurs through these, as well as its frequency, often monthly, and its longevity, sometimes for years.

A Short History of Spiritual Direction

There are numerous examples of spiritual direction in the Bible. Samuel recognizes that God is calling Eli (1 Samuel 3:8) and Paul's letters to Timothy and Titus are encouraging and full of reminders of God's character. John McNeill, author of *A History of the Cure of Souls*, refers to a number of passages in Paul's letters where he encourages the Christians to encourage each other, such as 1 Thessalonians 5:11. "In such passages we cannot fail to see the Apostle's design to create an atmosphere in which the intimate exchange of spiritual help, the mutual guidance of souls, would be a normal feature of Christian behavior" (McNeill 1951, 85).

F. Gregory Rogers, in *Spiritual Direction and the Care of Souls*, suggests that the roots of monasticism and the discipline of spiritual direction are visible in John the Baptist's ministry. He withdrew to the desert, lived an ascetic life, called others to repentance, gave instruction regarding how to live a godly life and served as one who pointed the way. He also received confession and baptized those who repented (Matthew 3:6, Mark 1:5) (Rogers 2004, 33). John's ministry

has many of the characteristics of spiritual direction today – specifically withdrawing to a quiet place and pointing the way.

Not all spiritual directors are older than their directees but there must be something within the director that the directee discerns as trustworthy, be it experience or wisdom. Paul urges people to imitate him (1 Corinthians 4:15-16) and emphasizes that disciples can know Christ by following the examples of older Christians. Peter encourages spiritual elders to be willing examples to those they lead remembering to whom they are accountable (1 Peter 5:2-4) (Rogers 2004, 34). Spiritual directors, no matter their age, must be worthy of imitation, recognizing that they are leading, though usually just one person at a time, and must remember to whom they are primarily accountable - God.

Roger continues: “In the postapostolic era, spiritual direction most frequently came in the context of confession or penance” (Roger 2004, 34). These confessions were often formal and public as sin was seen to separate people from the church and so a public reconciliation restored a sinner’s relationship with the church. Shepherd of Hermas and Tertullian, early Christian teachers, indicated, “that this formal reconciliation is like a second baptism which cannot be repeated” (Roger 2004, 34). Eventually, a priest, who represented the church community, heard confession and the act was privatized. Confession is no longer a formal element of spiritual direction though it still naturally occurs within sessions.

In the first three centuries after Jesus died Christians were persecuted and martyred. Many went to the desert to be with God in reaction to a perceived lack of spiritual standards in the church (Roger 2004, 34). It was in the dry and barren

wilderness that the rich traditions and customs of spiritual direction – the orthodoxy of the discipline - were shaped. In the desert “the method of Orthodox spiritual direction and the deepening of the Orthodox understanding of the nature of spiritual growth and development took place” (Rogers 2004, 34-35). People seeking holiness went to “the desert to find an experienced spiritual guide to lead them on the path to God. The seeker established a personal relationship with an *abba* or an *amma* (a spiritual father or mother) and would submit to their instruction and direction” (Rogers 2004, 35). The letters of some the early church fathers, Tertullian, Cyprian, Ambrose, and Jerome in particular, demonstrated “the direction of particular individuals under their care” (Dirks 2013, 31). The fourth century theologian, Saint Augustine, “...emphasized that ‘no one can walk without a guide’” (Dirks 2013, 31).

The monastic tradition grew out of the desert and many would seek a spiritual director at monasteries and convents (Rogers 2004, 34). Janet Ruffing writes, in *To Tell the Sacred Tale*: “The desert tradition of spiritual direction emerged in the fourth and fifth centuries in Egypt, Palestine and Syria as a model of spiritual guidance distinct from the ordinary pastoral care of Christians” (Ruffing 2011, 3). Ruffing notes this became important because of the “casualties” among those who attempted a “solitary search for God in the depths of their hearts” (Ruffing 2011, 3). Historically, John Cassian (350-435) has been credited with developing “an intentional process of spiritual care by placing every novice under the guidance of an older monk” (Dirks 2013, 32). Spiritual direction remained in the monasteries for the next 400 years or more until the Dominicans, who were

itinerant friars, took the practice outside the monastery walls. Ignatius of Loyola, the founder of the Jesuits, developed his famous “spiritual exercises,” which remain the foundation for the Roman Catholic practice of spiritual direction (Armstrong and Gertz, 2010).

The Protestant emphasis on a personal, unmediated relationship with God through Christ has long caused a suspicion of spiritual direction in the Protestant tradition. Ben Johnson, in *Spiritual Direction and the Care of Souls*, speculates it may have been a victim in the “effort to cut away all the barnacles acquired by the church for fifteen centuries” (Johnson 2004, 96) but now there is also a growing dissatisfaction with busyness, programs and a lack of moral vigilance amongst Protestants, and Evangelicals in particular (Armstrong and Gertz 2010). Spiritual direction is one way to mitigate this dissatisfaction. And as Dirks adds:

For too long the Christian church has failed to embrace the self-revealing nature of God. We have feared experiential spirituality and the concept that God reveals anything outside that which has been given in the written Word. Yet, when the apostles speak of ‘knowing’ God, they are moving beyond intellectual understanding (something assumed within the Greek culture) toward the Hebrew concept, which is relational. A closer look at the biblical texts will reveal an obvious invitation to ‘know’ the self-communicating God experientially. (Dirks 2013, 58,59).

Dirks suggests that this experiential knowledge is at the center of both New Testament Christianity and spiritual direction (Dirks 2013, 59) and I’ve certainly seen the evidence of this in spiritual direction with pastors, especially those who are walking out of wildernesses caused by an over-intellectualizing of faith and ministry, which was the experience of one of the pastor-directees in this project. For pastors, it becomes a vitally formative question as to whether or not they have

moved beyond an intellectual understanding of God to actually being in a relationship with Him, as it would be very difficult for them to nurture or lead anyone else through that formative process if they have not yet done so themselves. Another vitally important question to ask pastors is: What is your operative image of God? As Venetia Lorraine-Poirier, writes, also in *Spiritual Direction and the care of Souls*, “The basic premise is that how persons perceive God is integrally connected with their perceptions of themselves, their value as a human being and their valuing of others” (Moon and Benner 2004, 221). This has been an illuminating question to ask pastors, as their operative images of God can be very telling regarding their experiential knowledge of God. Is He near, a warm and trusted presence, or is He far away, somewhat cold and not always trustworthy? Pastors’ operative images of God affect the way they minister and can even shape a whole congregation’s operative image of God.

Dirks’ suggestion that the Church has failed to embrace experiential spirituality points to one of the reasons why Christian pastors, ministers, and leaders have needed assistance in doing so for centuries. Below I point to how crucial Jesus’ own relationship with God is, especially while in this world, and how important it is for a pastor.

Relationship with God

Jesus’ public ministry ironically began in solitude. Immediately after his baptism, the Holy Spirit sent him into the wilderness for forty days where he was tempted by Satan and stayed true to His call (Mark 1:12-13). Just a few verses

later we find Jesus choosing to seek solitude so he could pray (Mark 1:35) and be with God. Jesus knew the demands of ministry, of teaching and healing, and the limitations of a human body and heart. He knew the realities of tiredness, of speaking the truth and not being heard, and, of course, he knew betrayal. Pastors share these same experiences with Jesus.

In 1 Peter 5:2 – 3, the apostle says: “Here’s my concern: that you care for God’s flock with all the diligence of a shepherd. Not calculating what you can get out of it, but acting spontaneously. Not bossily telling others what to do, but tenderly showing the way.” These verses speak to Dirks’ observation that “Without realizing it, the pursuit of successful ministries became more important than relational union with God and transformed lives” (Dirks 2013, 84) and furthermore, “When leaders function from places of motivation that are twisted, they put themselves at risk” (Dirks 2013, 88).

The disciplines Jesus practiced to gain intimacy with the Trinity are not hidden from our view. We see Him seeking solitude and silence, praying, fasting, living simply, serving people, and worshipping, to name a few. Instead, the gospels show us just how consistently he sought out God, his own Shepherd. As Michael Todd Wilson and Brad Hoffman note in *Preventing Ministry Failure*, “The level of intimacy for any given relationship is only as deep as its least invested partner” (Wilson and Hoffman 2007, 60) and Jesus, even as a member of the Trinity, invested in his relationship with God. Spiritual direction is one way of many for pastors to do the same.

At the end of his time in the wilderness Jesus, as seen in Mark 1:12-13 and Luke 4:1-13, is tempted by Satan with ways to prove his power. Jesus is able to resist. Jesus was in both a physical and metaphysical wilderness. As Wendy Miller observes in *Jesus, Our Spiritual Director*, in the “quiet of wilderness solitude, he has learned to be present to the inner space of his soul. There he discerns the Spirit drawing his attention to the evil intent of the devil’s offer...” (Miller 2004, 63). The physical wilderness is quiet, free from the distractions of every day life. Being in it means being with our selves. Sadly, in this age of superficial over-communicating, most people have a diminished capacity to be alone, to sit in the quiet, to hear what is actually going on in their internal wildernesses. Jesus spent forty days in the wilderness. “The invitation of the wilderness is to wait, to allow the various parts of our selves to wear themselves out arguing, debating, and figuring out ways to escape. In time they tire and sit down on the ground” (Miller 2004, 65). It is at this point that authentic listening can occur and, because of the difficulty many people have in being alone with God and to listen, spiritual direction can serve as an entry discipline to this discipline and others.

When Christians lose their intimacy with God, their capacity to listen to God diminishes. Miller uses the parable of the Sower to illuminate some of the things that stop us from hearing God. First of all, Jesus points to “surface listening and hardness of heart” (Miller 2004, 98). Miller explains that, in the time of Jesus, “the heart is not regarded as the seat of the emotions but as the interior of who we are as persons – our soul and source of being” (Miller 2004, 98). So when Jesus

speaks of “calloused hearts” and people hardly hearing with their ears (quoting Isaiah in Matthew 13:15), Miller sees this as “The interior of who we are is enclosed and insulated against God. Jesus reveals that Satan can snatch away what God is saying to persons with hardened hearts” (Miller 2004, 98- 99). Anything that God says essentially hits a hard surface and Satan can come and sweep it away.

Then there’s the rocky ground. “Persons hear and receive what is given them, but something blocks their attention,” says Miller (Miller 2004, 99). What God is saying neither sinks deep into the interior of their soul nor takes root within them. Much can impede this rooting: fear of authority figures, a distorted image of God, discomfort with one’s self-image and fear of God’s seeing it, unhealed memories, false teaching, abuse – spiritual, emotional or physical. When their Christian faith brings troubles and trials, these persons tend to get discouraged and withdraw. Some may turn back and no longer follow Christ. (Miller 2004, 99)

A third condition is the thorns. Here Jesus “points to the anxieties of the world, the lure of wealth, and the desires that push into our interior space, misdirecting our attention and choking off desire for God’s voice and God’s way,” says Miller (Miller 2004, 99). When the thorns are thick enough the world’s voice is amplified and the voices of our insecurities and our fears rob us of authenticity – we become false. Miller continues: “The underlying assumption of always needing more things in order to be somebody taps into the desires of our false self. Attaining security and satisfaction replaces seeking God; in fact, people feel no

need for God – other than regarding God or religion as one more thing to accumulate” (Miller 2004, 99). On the thorny ground we can easily lose sight of the source of our true security, Jesus, and live out of a false self-identity, one mired in worldly desires.

Because of the nature of ministry, pastors traverse the hard ground, the rocky ground and the thorny ground continually as they companion those they tend through life’s challenges. It can be difficult enough to do this when a pastor is living on good soil where “the word is received and listened to carefully and deeply; it takes root within the soul, bearing fruit in all of one’s life and work” (Miller 2004, 99) but if a pastor is camped out on hard, rocky, or thorny ground herself then caring for those whose challenges mirror her own isn’t just hard but can also be painful and even spiritually and emotionally detrimental. A pastor’s personal grief can make it difficult to accompany a congregant through his own grief and her grief may even be delayed or impeded. A pastor’s own spiritual crisis can make it difficult to support a congregant through his own. A pastor can begin to experience dissonance in helping another believe something that he himself doubts. It can take an enormous amount of emotional, physical and spiritual energy to manage any of these scenarios and they can occur in multiple ways at one time, taking a huge toll on a pastor.

Spiritual direction can serve as a soil-sampler. In spiritual direction a pastor can gain the awareness that she is herself hardened, rocky or thorny soil and, in identifying the soil, the things needed to change it can be discovered.

Miller cites Walter Brueggemann, the theologian, who has traced a helpful pattern within the Psalms regarding the experiences of those who prayed.

First, they are securely oriented, settled. Life makes sense and is safe enough. Second, often quite suddenly, they become painfully disoriented... The psalms offer us voice for our fears... The psalms of lament within the Hebrew tradition are prayers of disorientation. They offer permission to voice complaint and need, and they provide words that give expression to whatever we are experiencing. The third movement is toward rest, reorientation. (Miller 2004,101)

Brueggemann and Miller don't offer a timeline for this pattern and it would be too prescriptive to suggest there should be one. However, I would suggest that an awareness of the pattern and the embracing of lament would move someone from disorientation to reorientation faster and perhaps help people discern what hardened, rocky, soil needs to be experienced for growth and maturity and what needs to be avoided as a derailing distraction.

A pastor has to continually manage his or her own personal disorientations while also supporting others in the midst of theirs. True lamenting in a pastor's own devotional life and in spiritual direction may increase a pastor's capacity for disorientation and also provide the way out of it.

To summarize this section, much can happen in the wilderness - it is both dangerous and beneficial. It is dangerous when it is characterized by our own fears and insecurities, when the voices of the world and our own desires are louder than God's, and the importance of ministry success overrides the importance of our relationships with God. It is beneficial in preparing for ministry, distancing pastors from ministry, and it can be the place where clarity is gained,

where knowledge of God can be experienced, indeed felt, and it is where soil can be sampled.

While in this world, Jesus modeled ways to seek God, listen to God, speak with God, prioritize his relationship with God, heed the invitation of the wilderness, and He even provided the language of soil that describes the state of our souls and how well we are able to listen. Spiritual direction can be a beneficial kind of a wilderness for pastors where they can, for a short time, retreat from the world, do some soil sampling, notice their disorientations and listen, with the help of another, to what God is saying. Listening is essential in hearing God's call, the subject of the next section.

Sense of Call

Below I define call, explore the theological importance of call, who places the call and how a call is authenticated. I also explore how questioning a call is helpful and how spiritual direction provides a safe place to do this, as well as to discern and authenticate a call.

Defining Call

Defining a call, or calling, is not easy. Below are some of the reasons why, as asked by Anne R. Cullinan in *Sorting it Out: Discerning God's Call to*

Ministry:

What is ministry? What is a call? Aren't all Christians called to minister? Does the call come only to those who enter vocational ministry? What exactly is vocational ministry? Is the call to ministry always a call to the pastorate? Does the call to ministry always mean serving on a church staff? Is a call to preach different from a call to other vocational

ministries? Is a call to the mission field different from the initial call to vocational ministry? Are there calls that are different from vocational calls? What about bi-vocational ministry? Does a call from God ever change? (Cullinan 1999, loc 45)

Thankfully, Cullinan has some answers, some of which can be seen in her own life as she served as a pastor, a denominational staff member, and a professor at a Baptist university (Cullinan 1999, loc 240). Cullinan deals with call from both biblical and historical perspectives. She says, “Like the biblical understanding of calling, biblical reference to ministry involves the responsibility and work of all believers and the particular apostolic ministry of specific persons” and readily admits there is inherent ambiguity in both the original Greek and in English (Cullinan 1999, loc 57). Cullinan then speaks of the “special” call, the one that seems beyond the call of others, people like Billy Graham and Charles Wesley (Cullinan 1999, loc 86). She cites H. Richard Niebuhr, a theologian, who identified four elements as essential characteristics of a call to ministry:

- 1) the call to be a Christian, meaning to become a disciple of Jesus
- 2) the secret call, defined as the experience of feeling ‘summoned or invited by God to take up the work of the ministry
- 3) *the providential call, which is apparent when an individual’s aptitudes, abilities, circumstances, and inner spiritual drive match the need*
- 4) the ecclesiastical call, which comes from a specific church or institution, inviting an individual to serve there. (Cullinan 1999, loc 92)

Both John Calvin and Oswald Chambers agreed there is such a thing as a “secret call”, as Chambers put it, “At any moment the sudden awareness of this incalculable, supernatural, surprising call that has taken hold of your life may break through – ‘I chose you’”(Cullinan 1999, loc 98).

My definition of a call to ministry, for the purposes of this project, which has been carried out in an evangelical Protestant environment, is that special or secret call, upheld by the providential and ecclesiastical calls. It is that un-ignorable invitation from God to work alongside Him in caring for his people and the world. I would add that I believe the call, though ecclesiastically affirmed, doesn't necessarily have to be lived out within the walls of a local church but can be lived out, as Cullinan exemplifies, in a denominational position, the academy, the mission field, locally and internationally, and even in spiritual direction. I also believe a call can be heard in a moment, almost immediately sending the one called in a new direction, or gradually, over time. Cullinan's own research upholds this as she developed a survey of 365 participants specifically for her book, where they were asked whether their call was gradual or a specific call at a place and time they could remember. Sixty-six percent said their calls were gradual (Cullinan 1999, loc 211).

The authors of *Preventing Ministry Failure*, Michael Todd Wilson and Brad Hoffman, suggest there are three types of callings. The first is the call to faith, the second is the call to minister, which all Christians receive and are given spiritual gifts to use to minister through a local church and the third is the call to ministry where "God appoints certain individuals to serve him in specific vocations of service. A call to ministry is God's invitation to be set apart by God for surrendered vocational service (Romans 1:1)"(Wilson and Hoffman 2007, 69). Wilson and Hoffman's definitions are in alignment with Cullinan's and Niebuhr's. The authors go on to say "We must be in intimate relationship with God and free

from the pressure to conform to traditional models to rightly discern the specifics of our call” (Wilson and Hoffman 2007, 70). This statement, in my mind, leaves room for the possibility that God can call people to live out his calling somewhere other than the local church though the called person would always be connected and accountable to a local church. Spiritual direction can be a place where people are free from the pressure to conform and to discern not just the specifics of their calls, but if they have been called at all. Wilson and Hoffman also firmly state, “A man or woman truly called of God into the ministry will never be at peace pursuing anything other than what God has called them to do” (Wilson and Hoffman 2007, 71). Spiritual direction can also be a place where a person can articulate her lack of peace and wonder aloud what it might mean.

Who Calls and the Nature of Calls

Who makes the call that might disrupt our peace? “All callings into the ministry are *initiated by God*,” say Michael Todd Wilson and Brad Hoffman in *Preventing Ministry Failure* (2007, 72). Discerning a call can be a somewhat mystifying experience and is further obfuscated by people using call and vocation interchangeably, which is allowable given that they mean the same thing (Oxford Dictionary). This is further complicated by the fact that the two words also both mean “a strong urge towards a particular way of life or career” and “a profession or occupation” (Oxford Dictionary). Another complication is that in Evangelical Protestant parlance, and in other traditions, we speak of “vocational call” which is actually redundant. A final complication is that many companies have co-opted

the word “call”, or “calling,” as they have the phrase “mission statement,” to describe how they view what they do.

Scripture, thankfully, does provide some guidance in discerning a call even while affirming its mysterious nature. As Gordon MacDonald says, “The concept of *call* is one of the most profound of all biblical ideas. The Bible is riddled with stories about calls to men and women who, when summoned to service, went out and marked their generation in a particular way” (Gordon MacDonald 2003, 1). MacDonald says there are at least three commonalities to biblical calls. First, “they all originated out of the Godhead” (MacDonald 2003, 1) – God the Father called Abraham, Moses and others, Jesus called the disciples, and the Holy Spirit called Saul and Barnabas and others. “No one in the Bible anointed himself or herself,” says MacDonald (MacDonald 2003,1). Second, MacDonald suggests that biblical calls were unpredictable and cites the examples of Gideon, David, Jeremiah, Simon Peter and Saul. Third, “biblical calls usually focus on mind-boggling, seeming impossible objectives,” says MacDonald, like Noah building the ark, and adds that “the call was so compelling that it gave courage to the one called” (MacDonald 2003,1). Finally, MacDonald makes this observation: “If we have lost our faith in the idea that such calls continue today, then perhaps we have lost touch with the supernatural element that ministry desperately needs” (MacDonald 2003, 2). MacDonald’s word harken back to Dirk’s concern about the Church failing “to embrace the self-revealing nature of God’, that knowledge we can only gain in relationship with Him, and the Holy Spirit, which I would suggest is the supernatural element that MacDonald may be

alluding to. Spiritual direction can provide a place to explore what a person truly believes about call within the parameters of their relationship with God.

Authenticating a Call

Gordon MacDonald suggests that there are several ways to authenticate a call. First, “Heaven does speak!” (MacDonald 2003, 3). The ways heaven speaks are many and varied but then “there is a moment of certainty that God has put His hand upon you and nudged you toward a particular people, theme, or function” (MacDonald 2003, 3). Second, “the genuineness of a call is usually (not always but usually) confirmed by others who discern the unique work of the Holy Spirit in a particular person” (MacDonald 2003, 3). He cites the example of the prophets and teachers at Antioch who heard the Holy Spirit’s call to Saul and Barnabas. Third, with a call comes giftedness, “that mysterious empowerment of capacity and spirit that God visits upon the ‘call-ee’. When such people are in alignment with their call, something powerful happens, and we, the observers, are all left in amazement” (MacDonald 2003, 3). Finally, there are results. MacDonald suggests that these questions need to be asked: “Are people impacted by the person supposedly called? Are they drawn to Jesus? Do they grow in Christlikeness? Are they motivated to greater commitment and vision?” (MacDonald 2003, 3). These are profound questions to ask in spiritual direction sessions. Finally, MacDonald claims that it is “the indelible memory of a moment when they became very sure that Heaven had spoken and they were under divine appointment” that helps

people through difficulties (MacDonald 2003, 5). This is explored in the next section.

The Importance of Calls and Questioning Calls

“Pastors need to hear and know the veracity of their call to be able to persevere in ministry,” say Wilson and Hoffman (Wilson and Hoffman 2007, 66). When ministry gets really difficult, as has been the case for a number of the pastor-directees in my project, pastors often start to question their call and some have been able to discern, with help, that they still have a call to ministry or, conversely, that they never did in the first place. This is a much-needed discipline in churches where so many pastors are physically and spiritually tired (Herrington, Creech and Taylor 2003, 3)

We don't have to be ashamed of ourselves or discount our worth if we discover that we've been operating under a false calling. If God in his sovereignty allows it to happen, it may be part of the painful process for discovering God's true calling for our lives. For those attempting to discern the validity of their call into the ministry, changes should be made slowly, deliberately and with much godly counsel and prayer. Decisions made during such a time of reevaluation will change everything. (Wilson and Hoffman 2007, 76)

Spiritual direction can provide godly counsel and prayer for someone discerning the validity of his call.

It is, of course, well within the realm of God's sovereignty that He may only call people to a ministry or place for a season. Spiritual direction provides a safe place to revisit and re-evaluate God's call on a pastor's life, to even imagine the possibility that a pastor is functioning under a false call, or a temporary one, and perhaps to even question the nature of the call. There are few places where a

pastor can authentically question his call without it destabilizing family, friends or congregants. It is perhaps a sad commentary on our churches that it has become inappropriate for pastors to appear uncertain or hesitant. There are very few churches that could manage a pastor publically processing his questions about call. A pastor's family is a system, as is a church, and they often become intertwined, something I will be addressing later. When one person questions their place in a system that can cause others to question their own. This isn't necessarily a bad thing. However, if the system isn't healthy, if there are pre-existing power struggles within the system, then the whole system can become vulnerable. Even if a pastor just tells his wife that he has questions about his calling, that confession can affect how his wife sees him and his and her roles in the church. She can become hyper-aware of how others treat him in the church, changing the way she interacts with people, and becoming protectively inauthentic as she wonders how her husband's questions are going to affect her family and church family.

Spiritual direction sessions, which generally occur on a regular basis, can serve as consistent reminders of a pastor's call, especially during difficult times. Pastors can also be reminded "If we're called to do something, there are other things by definition we're not called to do" (Wilson and Hoffman 2007, 82). So many of pastors' difficulties start because there's too much to do and too many expectations placed on them to do it all. Spiritual direction can help a pastor prioritize and do so according to his calling and gifting, increasing his capacity to let things go that aren't realistic or that he actually isn't gifted to do or be. "Spiritual direction can help us to view ourselves more objectively as well as

discern more clearly where God is leading us,” says Michael Gemignani in *Spiritual Formation for Pastors* (Gemignani 2002, 46).

Gil W. Stafford, author of *When Leadership and Spiritual Direction Meet*, refers to call as purpose. “Purpose is holy and sacred and could be as mysterious as a sacrament. Purpose is how one ‘lives, moves and has his being’ in the world. Purpose may not be definable but it is observable” and

The leader’s purpose must also be intertwined with her personal work. The leader’s personal work must be differentiated from the functions or tasks of her job. My purpose is to be present in my spirit to God, who is present in my work and me. My work, then, is to be a window for others to see the same potentiality and possibility of connection with God in their lives. (Stafford 2014, 19, 20)

In knowing his calling, a pastor firmly aligns himself with “the best shepherd of all” (1Peter 5:4), therefore hopefully caring for God’s flock “with all the diligence of a shepherd” (1Peter 5:2), finding contentment in who he is (1 Peter 5:6) knowing that God’s strong hand is on him (1 Peter 5:60) and being a window for others to find a similar contentment with God.

In summary, a call to ministry was defined as secret, providential and ecclesiastical. Gordon MacDonald provides some ways to authenticate a call, including the confirmation of others, and Wilson and Hoffman say there is no shame in a pastor discovering she might be operating under a false call and that pastors need to know they are truly called to ministry to stay in ministry.

I suggested that spiritual direction could serve a person considering ministry to discern and authenticate a call or help someone already in ministry to question or evaluate a call.

Relationship with Congregation

The call for many pastors is lived out in the local church – a complex system often accompanied by a long history. All pastors are part of numerous systems including family, church, and society. Following, I discuss how systems theory can help pastors understand congregations, how healthy self-differentiation from systems was modeled by Jesus, and explain how spiritual direction can help a pastor discern the systemic emotional and spiritual issues in a congregation and discern their impact on her.

Systems Theory and Churches

Much has been written about systems theory and churches. As already mentioned, I narrowed the focus of this project by choosing three themes that come up frequently in the narratives of pastors to whom I give spiritual direction. Though pastors' relationships with God and their calls are important they are perhaps not as demanding, or as loud, as a pastor's relationship with his congregation. They are also complicated, as we shall see.

A number of the pastor-directees in my practice have identified their relationships with their congregations as confusing, disheartening and stressful. Some of them are very aware that when they are relating to their congregations, they are relating to a complex system. *In Creating a Healthier Church* Ronald W. Richardson states, "Within the church system are a variety of other systems and subsystems" (Richardson 1996, 29). These are described as cultural, structural (offices, jobs), communication, decision-making, economic, and the most difficult

to understand or change, the emotional system (Richardson 1996, 29). “The health of the emotional system determines how well the other systems work,” says Richardson (Richardson 1996, 29). And when the emotional system is hijacked by a polarizing situation the balance within the whole system, “a delicately balanced mobile” says Richardson (Richardson 1996, 30), is affected. Though this is normal, it can become a great challenge for both the pastor and others leaders, especially if the imbalance in the system is left unchecked, if gossip is feeding it, and if it affects the unity of the leadership. God can use these times in a congregation’s life to reveal brokenness in the emotional system, like unreconciled differences, and depending on the emotional health of the leaders, the church can actually become emotionally healthier after a difficult situation, says Richardson (Richardson 1996, 30).

Peter L. Steinke, a Lutheran pastor and a student of Dr. Edwin Friedman in the area of family emotional process, includes an observation made by his teacher in his book *How Your Church Family Works*:

Actually religious institutions are the worst offenders at encouraging immaturity and irresponsibility. In church after church, some member is passively-aggressively holding the whole system hostage, and no one wants to fire him or force her to leave because it wouldn’t be ‘the Christian thing to do’. It has nothing to do with Christianity. Synagogues also tolerate abusers because it wouldn’t be the Christian thing to do. (Steinke 1993, 59)

Friedman, who was both a family therapist and a Rabbi, seems to be suggesting that there is general lack of courage across religious institutions regarding relating to passive aggressive members. This is a serious indictment of religious institutions and points to the lack of emotional and spiritual health that can exist

in a congregation. It also points to the power of one unhealthy person in an emotional system made up of many people.

This lack of health in a congregation can only be compounded by the lack of health in other systems represented in congregations. Every person in a congregation is a product of the family system she or he was raised in. Steinke observes, “We are who we are because of our history...take away our history and not much is left of us” (Steinke 1993, 33). I have seen this reality played out over and over again in spiritual direction sessions with pastors, especially when they realize that their family history is either colliding with their congregation’s or the histories are converging. This reality can add even more layers to an already difficult situation in a congregation, especially if a pastor isn’t sure of his or her position in the congregation. Arthur Boers, in *Never Call Them Jerks*, maintains “A pastor is almost always an outsider to the system and may misread the seriousness of a situation; i.e. overreact” (Boers 1999, 25) or, as I have seen, under-react or not react at all depending on the pastor’s own history and family system.

A number of the pastor-directess in this project described their position in their congregation as being akin to that of a resident alien. Boers struggled with this concept in his own ministry and recognized, “My role does set me apart...we are in a different category” (Boers 1999, 93). However, a pastor’s identity or self-worth can still become tied up with the identity and success of a church. This can be seen and named in spiritual direction sessions.

Boers, Richardson and Steinke apply systems theory to churches in their own unique ways but there are three overlapping themes in their books that serve my purposes well in terms of developing a theological rationale for pastors' relationships with their congregations. The themes are triangulation, anxiety, and differentiation.

First, triangulation: as Richardson puts it, "When A is at odds with B, the most anxious of the pair introduces C (third party) to reduce anxiety between A and B. For example, God confronts Adam about his disobedience. Anxious, Adam shifts the burden to Eve. When she encounters God, Eve blames the snake" (Richardson 1996, 47). Pastors triangulate as much as they are triangulated – they can, at any given time in multiple situations, be A, B and C. Both Boers and Steinke note that Jesus refuses to be triangulated (Boers, 45 and Steinke, 48). Boers cites the story found in Luke 12:13-15 where Jesus resists being drawn into an inheritance issue between two brothers. Instead he uses a question, "Who set me to be a judge or arbitrator over you?" to ensure he doesn't become C in the conversation (Boers 1999, 45). He also doesn't "catch" the anxiety of the brother asking him to arbitrate the situation. As you may have noticed, anxiety is the fuel of triangulation, the second theme.

"Triangles are created more frequently and cause greater damage when anxiety increases in a system," says Richardson (Richardson 1996, 115). I have heard many times in spiritual direction sessions how anxiety feeds the smallest of misunderstandings and blows them up into seemingly insurmountable ones, both in families and churches. Anxiety loves company and people often speak before

they pray, sharing their anxiety under the guise of Christian concern. Anxiety is normal and serves as a warning signal within our bodies, both physically and emotionally, but when anxiety becomes chronic, rather than acute, it keeps “crying wolf,” says Boers (Boers 1999, 51).

Pastors often become anxiety sponges in a church system becoming less and less resilient and finding it harder to avoid being triangulated. The emotional state of the pastor affects the whole church, as Richardson observes, “The more threatened and unsafe the leaders feel generally (chronic anxiety), the more the whole congregation can be disrupted” (Richardson 1996, 43). And Steinke adds, “When anxiety is high, resilience is low” (Steinke 1993, 43).

If a pastor can manage her anxiety well the whole church benefits. The idea of being a non-anxious presence originated with Steinke’s mentor Dr. Edwin Friedman (Boers 1999, 103). Boers cites church consultant John A. Coil regarding how one can achieve this state: understand the system you are in and do so in consultation with others, examine and understand your own anxiety in the situation – this may require some reflection on similar anxieties in your life with the help of counselling, spiritual direction or consultation, and when these two steps are completed well you will be self-differentiated but still connected (Boers, 105).

Being or becoming a non-anxious presence in conflict situations takes time, awareness and effort. Jesus, as already mentioned in the story with the brother who was anxious about his inheritance, didn’t take on the man’s anxiety. He instead asked a question. This perhaps helped him to remain non-anxious. It

also, as Boers mentioned above, helped him be self-differentiated. It is worth noting that questions play a significant role in spiritual direction.

Differentiation should first happen in our family of origin and we see Jesus begin to differentiate as a 12-year-old in Luke 2:41-52. Unbeknownst to his parents, Jesus stays behind in Jerusalem after the Passover feast. When faced with his parents' anxiety over his disappearance he again uses a question to deal with the situation: "Did you not know that I must be in my Father's house?" (Luke 2:49). "Differentiated leaders realize that their primary and ultimate responsibility is taking charge of self and not changing, motivating, or shifting others" (Boers 1999, 95).

In spiritual direction sessions with pastors I have learned to pay attention to the ways in which they speak about themselves and their churches, as remarks about "they" or "them" can be telling as can statements that begin with the phrase "As the pastor." The frequency of this phrase can reveal much about how pastors see themselves in relation to the churches they are serving. It was helpful for me to learn about the concept of "total institutions" (Boers 1999, 49). Boers cites the work of Donald Capps who took the idea of total institutions from a sociologist's 1961 work and creatively used it to liken a pastor's relationship to a church to that of an inmate's to a prison. The institution becomes "total", a pastor's or an inmate's complete reality. Capps explains, "When pastors experience parishes as total institutions, they feel powerless, and their capacity to resist a parishioner's sexual advances, for example, is diminished" (Boers 1999, 50). Boers speaks about his own experience as a pastor and how church wasn't just his work but

also his social life. “If we feel a threat of losing our position, it is not just our job that hangs in the balance but our whole world, our ‘total institution’” (Boers 1999, 50). This has been a very helpful construct when helping pastors identify how well differentiated they are from their congregations. When a pastor is well differentiated he or she potentially has a greater capacity to relate to people in a congregation in healthy ways with realistic expectations, without seeking approval and engaging in difficult situations, including conflict, without loss of self or relationship with the other. Differentiation is a gift of distance that actually, over time, allows for more closeness. As Richardson observes, “Differentiation also allows people to be more comfortably connected and intimate with one another” (Richardson 1996, 87).

The authors of *The Practice of Adaptive Leadership* provide another helpful construct in terms of becoming differentiated:

To diagnose a system or yourself while in the midst of action requires the ability to achieve some distance from those on-the-ground events. We use the metaphor of ‘getting on the balcony’ above the ‘dance floor’ to depict what it means to gain the distanced perspective you need to see what is really happening. (Heifetz, Grashow and Linsky 2009, 7)

Mark 1:35-37 provides us with a short glimpse into Jesus’ relationship with his “congregation” and his stepping out onto the balcony. After spending the Sabbath day and night in Capernaum teaching, exorcising an evil spirit and demons, and healing many people, Jesus wakes early and goes off by himself to pray. Luke tells us that Jesus went out at daybreak to be by himself and that “the people” (Luke 4:42) were looking for Jesus. When they found him they tried to persuade him not to leave them. Miller points out that “Jesus is also a follower but not of

the crowd or of popular opinion. Jesus knows how to listen to God” (Miller 2004, 76). In the midst of people looking for him and not wanting him to leave, Jesus was able to state his purpose, his call: to go and preach.

The balcony is usually a place of solitude. “In spirituality, differentiation is closely connected to *solitude*, the alone place where we encounter the truth about ourselves by being confronted by the truth and reality of God,” says Boers (Boers 1999, 97). We can only speculate on how Jesus’s deity and humanity interacted while he was on earth but we do know he sought solitude, and God, in the various “wildernesses”, whether it is at the Sea of Galilee or the Garden of Gethsemane, around him. When a pastor heeds the invitation of the wilderness, “the grips of the powers and structures of this world’s system begin to loosen as we – like Jesus- see them for what they are in this place beyond structures” (Miller 2004, 65). Spiritual direction can be a balcony, a wilderness and a type of solitude for pastors where the grip of the world is loosened and a helpful distance is achieved so that what is really going on can be properly discerned.

As mentioned earlier, most of the pastors I see recognize the complex systems that comprise a church. System’s theory provides us with the understanding going forward that churches are emotional systems and each person in a church comes from another emotional system. Some of the pastors I see have spoken about feeling like a resident alien within the churches they serve. Boers experienced this as a pastor as being and he spoke of the danger of pastors experiencing the church as a “total institution.” Boers, Richardson and Steinke all agreed that if pastors can come to an understanding of the system they are in, they

can avoid being triangulated, anxious and non-differentiated. Jesus provides examples of how not to be triangulated and anxious while also achieving self-differentiation from the various systems he lived in. Spiritual direction was described as a discipline where triangulation and anxiety can be recognized and where self-differentiation could begin to happen as it serves pastors as way of stepping onto the balcony, entering into a helpful wilderness, to gain perspective and understanding.

Conclusion

At the beginning of this chapter spiritual direction was defined as a spiritual discipline where one person puts aside his or her own needs to listen with God on behalf of another. In a short history of spiritual direction, which was borne out of the desert monasteries in the third and fourth centuries, I provided some reasons for evangelical Protestant's suspicion of the practice, including our belief in an individual personal, unmediated relationship with God. Dirks pointed to one of the reasons why spiritual direction is needed as being the Church's failure to embrace an experiential, indeed a relational, knowledge of God. This led to an exploration of the three themes, pastors' relationships with God, their sense of call and their relationships with congregations.

We see in Jesus' own relationship with God his need to be with God and his own spiritual disciplines are not hidden from us but are modeled for us. Jesus, in his parable of the Sower, provides us with a way of discerning how well we are able to hear God by naming whether we are hard, rocky or thorny ground, or

perhaps even good ground, and how pastors are often dealing with their own times or being hard, rocky or thorny soil while accompanying others through their own difficulties. Spiritual direction can become a soil sampler for pastors, further helping them discern what they are experiencing and how God is speaking to them in it.

Regarding call, it was defined as that “secret” or “special” call that is both providential and ecclesiastical. MacDonald saw at least three scriptural commonalities to call – they originate in the Godhead, they can be unpredictable, and they can seem impossible. Wilson and Hoffman suggested there are three types of calling – a call for all to come to faith, for all who have faith to minister and for a few to be in ministry. And regarding authenticating a call, MacDonald provided three ways to know – heaven speaks to the individual, the community around the individual speaks, and the individual’s giftedness speaks.

Spiritual direction can play a role in helping those who are trying to discern a call but it can also help those who are wondering if they misheard their call. In spiritual direction a pastor can safely explore her call by questioning it, re-imagining it, or even articulating that she is functioning under a false call. Spiritual direction can also be a place where a pastor is reminded of the veracity of her call despite the circumstances she finds herself in within in her congregation.

And it is within congregations that most pastors live out their callings. Many pastors understand their congregations are complex emotional systems made up of people from complex emotional systems. In spiritual direction a

pastor can name the ways in which he is being triangulated or causing triangulation and feeling anxious. These situations can be explored and prayed over and self-differentiation can begin or be aided in continuing.

Over time pastors can be too separate from their congregations, feeling like residents aliens, or too enmeshed and the dangers of church being a “total institution” can become more real. Spiritual direction can be a balcony that provides pastors perspective on their congregations and themselves.

CHAPTER THREE:
SOCIAL SCIENCE AND PRECEDENT
LITERATURE

Much has been written about the practice of spiritual direction over the last 1700 years or so. Evangelical Protestants such as Ruth Haley Barton, Larry Crabb and Jeanette Bakke have added their work to the body of classics but there is still very little written specifically about spiritual direction and pastors. In this chapter I recount what I could find on this subject, including Canadian studies, while first utilizing related literature about evangelical Protestant pastors realities to create a context for how spiritual direction may help pastors facilitate their relationships with God, as it is affected by being pastors, call and congregation as these are recurring themes in my practice of spiritual direction with pastors.

Regarding my own formation as a spiritual director giving spiritual direction to pastors, I provide a short review of some literature that has been very helpful. The literature particularly related to pastors receiving spiritual direction is discussed as well as the literature about giving spiritual direction to pastors. Finally, some of the literature regarding the chosen research methodology of this project is reviewed.

Pastoral Realities

Focus on the Family's H. B. London and his co-author, Neil B. Wiseman, a church consultant, in *Pastors at Greater Risk* state that pastors "most pressing problems relate to time, money and family" (London and Wiseman 2003, 23). Time management, financial concerns, and the care of their families are some of the main concerns of many pastors-directees I have seen for spiritual direction. The two authors largely depend on research done by the Barna Group and statistics taken from a range of studies and questionnaires from 1997-2002. The authors touch on numerous modern issues including "the burden of unfinished work," the pressure on pastors to create megachurches even though most of them will never pastor churches with more than 100 members, the difficulties caused by constantly moving (London and Wiseman 2003, 23, 26-27), overwhelming expectations (London and Wiseman 2003, 66) and, amongst many others, the easy accessibility of internet pornography and the snare of sexual addiction (London and Wiseman 2003, 240). Again, these are issues and concerns most of the pastor-directees I see have spoken about in sessions.

To give the aforementioned issues some historical context, I turn to *Pastors in Transition: Why Clergy Leave Local Church Ministry*, a study done by the Pulpit and Pew Project at Duke University Divinity School. The researchers analyzed local church minister's lives and attempted to discover why men and women are leaving local church ministry (Hoge and Wenger 2005, xi).

The Duke research team did not assume that life for local church ministers is harder today than it was in the past, and it did not assume that conditions are inherently unfair to those ministers. But it did make these

two assumptions: that conditions of ministry have changed in the last three or four decades, and that too many local church ministers leave. This situation is not new; the number leaving has always been too high. The Duke team believes that the outflow is partly preventable and that reducing it would be good for the God-given ministries of all American denominations. (Hoge and Wenger 2005, xi)

Though the conditions of ministry over the last few decades may have changed I agree with Hoge and Wenger that the number of ministers leaving local churches has always been too high. I too believe this is partially preventable and that's one of the reasons why I chose to do this project. Pastors are leaving the churches they once felt called to and though the reasons are many, one result is that both pastors and churches are being hurt. Following are some of the reasons why pastors are leaving churches.

Pastors Leaving Ministry

Charles Stone, a pastor in Chicago and author of *5 Ministry Killers and How to Defeat Them*, cites a Focus on the Family study that estimates “ ‘1,500 pastors leave their assignments each month, due to moral failure, spiritual burnout or contention within their local congregations’ “ (Stone 2010, 43). Though this is simplistic, moral failure can occur when a pastor's relationship with God is off track, spiritual burnout can occur when a pastor is trying to minister outside his or her calling, and contention within congregations occurs when a pastor doesn't have a healthy relationship with the congregation. Herein are the three guiding themes of this project, mentioned above, that were chosen through the experience of giving spiritual direction to pastors.

The Duke University researchers identified seven main motivations for pastors to leave their ministries – they preferred another kind of ministry, needed to care for children or family, had conflict in the congregation, had conflict with denominational leaders, were burned out or discouraged, or left due to sexual conduct or divorce or marital problems (Hoge and Wenger 2005, v). A Canadian study, which I mention in more detail below, found the three main reasons why pastors are leaving the Mennonite Church of Canada are to have a “less demanding/stressful” profession, financial issues, and that they received a call to serve in a different way (e.g. social work, teaching, counselling) (Schonwetter 2008, 92). These motivations for leaving ministry echo London and Wiseman’s findings regarding why pastors find ministry so challenging.

A number of the pastor-directees in my practice, and even two in this project, have recently graduated from seminary. They have already had those “Seminary didn’t prepare me for this” moments, while realizing that seminary could never fully prepare anyone for ministry. Denominations, some trying harder than others, can’t always pick up where the seminary leaves off and this often places an inexperienced pastor in a precarious position unless he is receiving support from within his congregation. However, the efforts of the seminary and the denomination can make a difference in whether or not pastors stay in ministry. The Duke University research team gathered questionnaire data from five denominations – the Assemblies of God, the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod, the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), and the United Methodist Church. They had a control group made up of active

pastors from three of the denominations and they also conducted interviews with ninety ex-pastors by phone. One of the Presbyterian executives who participated in the project believes their pastors leave because of “a changing context that they’re ill prepared to address, whether by seminary or continuing education” (Hoge and Wenger 2005, 160). London and Wiseman found that “90 percent of pastors feel inadequately trained to cope with ministry demands” (London and Wiseman 2005, 163). This harkens back to one of the Duke University research team’s assumptions made before they started their study: that conditions for ministry have changed in the last three to four decades. I would suggest that not only have they changed but that they are changing faster than ever before.

In the same study, a group of Presbyterian executives say, “committees supervising candidates are not doing a good job of weeding out persons with psychological problems” (Hoge and Wenger 2005, 163) that emerge as anger-control issues, destructive behaviour, or inappropriate sexual behaviour (Hoge and Wenger 2005, 163). London and Wiseman concur, stating that supervisors may not be prepared to identify and deal with the mental health issues of pastors (London and Wiseman 2003, 20). Regarding mental health issues within pastors’ families, Stone states “80 percent of pastors and 84 percent of their spouses are discouraged or are dealing with depression (Stone 2010, 33).

The mental health of pastors is not a subject I can sufficiently address here though it is an important issue. Over the last few years I have had the experience of witnessing pastor-directees identify their own need to find a counsellor or see their doctor as well as identifying people in their congregations as having mental

health issues. Amy Simpson, author of *Troubled Minds: Mental Illness and the Church's Mission*, states that 1 in 4 Americans “suffers from a diagnosable mental disorder in a given year” (Simpson 2013, 33) and there’s no doubt that pastors are part of that statistic, either in the States or here in Canada, where 1 in 5 people will experience a mental health issue in their lifetime (Canadian Mental Health Association). In a Focus on the Family online article, the work of Archibald Hart, *Coping with Depression in the Ministry and other Helping Professions*, is cited and the key contributors to depression for people in ministry are outlined including serving others, funerals, low pay, “bearing the hurts and heartaches of others, loneliness, isolation, being put on a pedestal, criticism, betrayal of trusted friends – all of these take a serious toll on one’s psyche.” It’s an irony that medicating “these pains with workaholism, pornography, alcohol, or other addictive behaviours only intensifies and exacerbates one’s original depression. The real solution is to reach out for understanding and support” (Focus on the Family). Sadly, however, London and Wiseman found in one study that 20.5 percent of pastors surveyed would go to “*no one*” (italics theirs) if they felt the need for personal counselling.

Though mental health issues are surfacing as a reason pastors might find ministry difficult, Hoge and Wenger summarize the specific factors contributing to pastors leaving churches in their study as being organizational and interpersonal, as pastors being under-supported, especially in the midst of conflicts, and as a number of stresses or issues that cause pastors to leave, never just one (Hoge and Wenger 2005, 198).

In this section both Duke University's and Schonwetter's studies show that pastors are leaving ministry because of conflict in congregations and with denominational leaders, and because of burnout, discouragement, sexual misconduct, marital problems and financial issues or because they want a less demanding, stressful job or have been called to serve in a different way.

Ministry Stresses

In citing London and Wiseman earlier, I touched on a number of stresses, including the burden of unfinished work, pressure to create megachurches, and overwhelming expectations. In Sam Reimer's work more stresses were identified. Reimer, a Sociology professor at Crandall University in Moncton, NB, is the author of a 2009 study entitled *Pastoral Well-being: Findings from the Canadian Evangelical Churches Study*. The study is comprised of approximately 475 interviews with randomly selected pastors from five major denominations – the Pentecostal Assemblies of Canada, Convention Baptists, Christian and Missionary Alliance, Christian Reformed, and Mennonite Brethren. The study was funded by the Centre for Research on Canadian Evangelicalism (CRCE) (Reimer 2010, 1). Full-time pastors in the survey average 51.7 work hours a week and, since they are always on call, find it difficult to balance work and family (Reimer 2010, 1). This echoes London and Wiseman's observation about pastors being stressed most by time, money and family issues. Regarding stress generally, on a scale of 1-10, with 1 indicating no stress and 10 being extremely stressful “nearly a

quarter of the pastors (23.8%) rated their stress at 8 or more, and another 20% rated it at 7” (Reimer 2010, 3).

In 2008 Dieter J. Schonwetter, a social psychologist, completed a pastoral report for the Mennonite Church of Canada and its leadership. Schonwetter had 201 valid responses to his survey (Schonwetter 2008, 8). Twenty-seven of the respondents identified balancing time between family and congregations as their greatest challenge (Schonwetter 2008, 14). Six of the top seven responses regarding challenges were related to the pastors’ families. This is similar to the findings of the studies previously cited.

Schonwetter noted some of the “ red flags ” the study revealed: 9.6 percent of the respondents “felt strongly that their work was their life”, 16.9 percent indicated that being “on call 24 hours” was a stressor, the author sees this as a harbinger of burnout, and 9.7 percent “scored very high on “Omni-competent – having to be good at too many roles.” Schonwetter also notes a number of times that whether or not the high expectations or demands placed on a pastor by a congregation are real or perceived, they can lead to potential burnout (Schonwetter 2008, 54). Stress is a distinct reality for pastors.

Another reality is that some pastors are happy in ministry. Stone cites a Barna Group survey of pastors which revealed that “only one third of [pastors] said the amount of fulfillment they get from their job is right where it should be” (Stone 2010, 33) and in another study, out of the University of Chicago, Stone found that 89 percent of pastors were satisfied with their jobs (Stone 2010, 48). Stone acknowledges that compared to other studies, like the Barna Group survey,

this number seems high and wonders if it's because "pastors tend to put on a grin when face-to-face with others" (Stone 2010, 48). London and Wiseman cite a study where "86 percent of pastors said they'd choose ministry as their career if they had to do it over again" (London and Wiseman 2003, 62). A writer for *Leadership Journal*, Kevin Miller says, "Conventional wisdom bemoans crisis proportions of pastors discouraged and depressed, stressed and burned out. With due respect, our research consistently shows otherwise," (Miller 2000). However, he doesn't attempt to explain the discrepancy nor do any of the researchers or authors I read, except Stone. Reimer says this about pastors in his study: "The good news is that the Canadian evangelical pastors who participated in this study have high job satisfaction" (Reimer 2010, 11). However, he readily admits, "Job satisfaction may be inflated because of the weakness of survey research, where those with low job satisfaction are more likely to have quit the pastorate, or not respond to the survey" (Reimer 2010,11).

To summarize ministry stressors, Reimer identified long workweeks, 51.7 hours, being on call, and balancing work and family as being the major stressors. Pastors in his study rated their stress as 8 or more on a scale of 1-10. Schonwetter's work revealed some "red flags" – work is pastors' lives, being on call, and having to be omni-competent. There are some pastors who are satisfied in their work – 89% percent in a University of Chicago study said they were satisfied in their jobs.

Pastors' Longevity and Health

Regarding the longevity of pastorates, Stone cites a 2001 survey that discovered the average tenure of pastors in the United States is 3.8 years. Schonwetter, in his work with the Mennonite Church of Canada, found that the average tenure of pastors participating in his study was 6.16 years – exactly twice that of the American statistic. These numbers give some credence to London and Wiseman's finding that constantly moving is one of the stresses of modern ministry – another reality of pastoral life.

Russ Veenker, who directs the Mountain Learning Center in California for clergy in crisis asserts, “Clergy health *is* the issue at the beginning of the twenty-first century” and “If we in leadership can model healthy physical, emotional, and spiritual formation – Jesus wins, His church wins, His followers win, and we live abundantly in His joy!” (Stone 2010, 41). The Church is facing many issues at the beginning of this century, consumerism, technology, and a lack of Biblical literacy to name a few, but I do agree with Veenker that the healthy formation of pastors physically, emotionally and spiritually is essential to the Church, especially if it is to exist at the end of this century.

Below I look specifically at the realities of pastors' relationships with God, especially as it is affected by being a pastor, call and congregation, and how these relationships affect pastors' health and longevity.

God

There's nothing as poignant as a pastor's own words to give some depth to the all-encompassing importance of a pastor's relationship with God:

“Professional pastoring has me weary to the bone. When I allow so many expectations from many different directions to crowd Christ out of my ministry, I feel devoid of His life-changing power that should flow through me into my work for God,” said one pastor at an interdenominational pastors meeting (London and Wiseman 2003, 63). Below I look at how integral pastors' relationships with God are to their personal well-being and to their ministries.

London and Wiseman state, “86 percent of pastors say their top priority is personal relationship with God” (London and Wiseman 2003, 264). This is good news though it has been my experience in my spiritual direction practice that pastors will say this but their lives don't mean it. Most of their time and energy is spent on things other than their own relationship with God. This in no way means that God isn't present in those other things, that there isn't a sense on behalf of the pastor of working with God and God working through her, but on any given day, faced with all that has to be done, the first thing to often not get done is relating to God in that life-changing powerful way mentioned above.

The Duke research team spoke with a number of denominational leaders regarding why they thought pastors were leaving local church ministry. One Presbyterian leader thought one reason is a disappointment in God: “Somehow their personal relationship with God has suffered in the process of becoming a visible servant leader” (Hoge and Wenger 2005, 163). A pastor in another

denomination, David Horner, ably identifies some of the issues many pastors face in *A Practical Guide for Life and Ministry: Overcoming 7 Challenges Pastors Face*: juggling the demands of their calling, sharpening the focus of their vision, gaining balance by building teams, cultivating genuine humility, learning to grow through troubles, facing inevitability of change, and combating spiritual dryness (Horner 2008, 7-8). Horner writes eloquently of his own spiritual drought and how he came out of it. Spiritual dryness is being devoid of the life-changing power that should flow through pastors into the work they do for God and it is having your relationship with God suffer because you are now, ironically, a “visible servant leader.” Both these writers are pointing to the reality that pastors’ public ministries can affect their private relationships with God.

Horner provides nine symptoms of spiritual dryness including “We have lost the real sense of his presence in our lives” (Horner 2008, 247) and “Our perspective on life leaves out God’s point of view and forgets his sovereign design” (Horner 2008, 248). These are valid but limited symptoms and Horner leaves out the possibility of depression, grief and even the kind of dryness that remains a mystery, that can’t even be articulated.

Horner provides a list of eight cures for the nine symptoms of spiritual dryness. All of them but one, “Share your struggle with someone who will pray for you and hold you accountable to see you through to the fountain again” (Horner 2008, 279), are individual attempts at curing spiritual dryness. These cures would be almost impossible for someone to initiate if they were burnt out

from ministry or their disappointment in God is spiritually and emotionally debilitating.

He starts the section about sharing the struggle with someone with the admonishment, “Don’t get isolated!” (Horner 2008, 279). He suggests establishing a group of accountability partners (Horner 2008, 279). Surprisingly, he doesn’t suggest meeting with other pastors and, perhaps not so surprisingly given the lack of knowledge about spiritual direction in some Evangelical circles, he doesn’t suggest seeing a spiritual director.

One difference in Horner’s experience as a pastor is that he’s the founding pastor of a large church where he’s ministered for 28 years. He hasn’t experienced the upheaval of multiple transitions and moves that are one of the main stressors noted by researchers in the previous section. He has had to build and rebuild teams repeatedly (Horner 2008, 115) but he is the one consistent denominator of every team and he’s been the leader. Horner’s experience is not typical, especially when you consider he’s been in one church for twenty-eight years when the average pastorate in the United States is 3.8 years. However, Horner understands that pastors who are spiritually dry can’t pastor well as do Michael Todd Wilson and Brad Hoffman, authors of *Preventing Ministry Failure* (Wilson and Hoffman 2007, 41). Wilson, a counsellor, and Hoffman, a pastor, co-founded ShepherdCare in 2003 to provide pastors with resources to help them be effective long term and to prevent burnout or moral failure. They state, “Intimacy with God is the real and vibrant relationship each of us has been invited to enjoy with our Creator. It’s only from the context of this relationship that other intimate relationships derive their

meaning” (Wilson and Hoffman 2007, 26). Essentially, none of us can relate well to others if we are not experiencing vibrancy in our relationship with God. When a pastor tends his relationship with God, when he *enjoys* his relationship with God, he can then have meaningful relationships with people be they wife, children, friends, or church members. If he doesn’t have a real and vibrant relationship with God it becomes very difficult to have good relationships with anyone.

Veenker’s previous assertion that clergy health *is* the issue at the beginning of this century is somewhat upheld by the authors of *The Leader’s Journey: Accepting the Call to Personal and Congregational Transformation*. Jim Herrington and R. Robert Creech, both pastors, and Trisha Taylor, a counsellor and pastor’s wife, state in the introduction “people naturally looked to the pastoral community for leadership. But in the face of today’s social and economic challenges, the pastoral community itself is in serious trouble” (Herrington, Creech and Taylor 2003, xv). Veenker also states, as cited above, that if those “in leadership can model healthy physical, emotional and spiritual formation” Jesus and His church will win. The question is, how?

Herrington, Creech and Taylor have some answers. They make a link to Jesus’ own ministry and traditional spiritual disciplines, such as worship, solitude, fasting, prayer, silence, and study, as did many of the authors I cited in the previous chapter. The authors see these disciplines as “essential to the formation of Jesus’ character in our lives” (Herrington, Creech and Taylor 2003, 11). They join other voices, such as Richard Foster and Dallas Willard (Herrington, Creech and Taylor 2003 11), in “acknowledging that our mechanistic worldview has

resulted in the compartmentalization of these disciplines. Marginalizing these practices robs them of power in our lives” (Herrington, Creech and Taylor 2003, 11). I firmly believe that spiritual disciplines have the power, through the Holy Spirit, to help a pastor experience God’s life-changing power in a way that would overflow, not just flow, through his and into his work for God. God is both the reason we work and He’s how we work. As Veenker also asserted, if leaders can model healthy physical, emotional and spiritual formation Jesus, His church, His people, all win and “we live abundantly in His joy” (Stone 2010, 41). There isn’t a sense here of relationship with God being just enough to get us through, it’s actually more than enough, it’s abundant and overflowing.

Herrington, Creech and Taylor suggest that spiritual disciplines bring freedom – freedom from automatic reactions, chronic anxiety, and pleasing others (Herrington, Creech and Taylor 2003, 134, 135) – that they carve out pathways for the Spirit to work (Herrington, Creech and Taylor 2003, 132). The authors do not directly mention spiritual direction as a spiritual discipline for leaders and pastors in the body of the book but they do mention spiritual direction in an appendix of key spiritual disciplines (Herrington, Creech and Taylor, 164).

Pastors need accountability in their relationships with God, as Horner suggests above. They need others to know how it is with them and God otherwise they do get isolated. Stephen Pike, the author of a Briercrest Biblical Seminary master’s thesis entitled *Spiritual Direction for Pastors*, developed a 31- question survey, sent to 193 pastors, representing four evangelical denominations in Western Canada. Ninety-seven pastors completed the survey and the application

component of the project was Pike's own three-day personal spiritual retreat where he saw a spiritual director.

Pike notes that more than half of the respondents didn't answer his survey question regarding "whether or not they have another person who intentionally holds them accountable for their relationship to God" (Pike 2000, 65). Forty-nine percent said they were accountable to a trusted friend and one of the ninety-seven respondents said he was accountable to a denominational supervisor for his relationship with God. It would only be an assumption, but a fairly safe one, that the half who didn't answer that question didn't have anyone holding them accountable for their relationship to God. Until they've come to spiritual direction, that has been the situation for most of the pastor-directees I see.

Pike goes on to say, "If the need in pastoral ministry is for more of the power of God to transform lives it stands to reason that pastors themselves will desire to know Him more intimately, experience His presence, and draw on His power," says Pike (Pike 2000, 80). He also says pastors uniquely "find themselves speaking for God without having heard from God" (Pike 2000, 80). Pike is not alone in identifying this phenomenon. Fil Anderson is the director of Journey Resources, a trained spiritual director, and the author of *Running on Empty: Contemplative Spirituality for Overachievers*. He states the irony of his life fifteen years ago in the opening chapter: "While attempting to enable others to encounter God, I had succumbed to the power of my compulsions and illusions" (Anderson 2009, 3). He was driven to speak more about God than with God (Anderson 2009, 3) and remembers that when he was in the deepest hole he realized that, in the

church, “as long as you appear busy, people rarely question your knowledge or effectiveness” (Anderson 2009, 7). Here is the isolation that can occur when we are not speaking about our relationship to God with another person and the affect of public ministry on a person’s private relationship with God.

Anderson dedicates a chapter to each of these spiritual disciplines: solitude, prayer, scripture, and spiritual direction. In the chapter on spiritual direction, Anderson describes his discomfort and embarrassment at recognizing that he was a person helping others to know God while having such a pathetic relationship with God himself (Anderson 2009, 138). Anderson determined he had to right his view of God, re-experience God’s limitless love, curb his judgmental tendencies, and retrain himself to find his identity in Christ rather than his performance.

I have suggested, along with authors in this section, that spiritual disciplines are the primary way for pastors to relate to God. Even Horner’s suggestions for combatting spiritual dryness allude to the traditional spiritual disciplines of retreats, listening, and reading scripture, without using the specific *traditional language that the other authors I cited used.*

It is in pastors’ relationships with God that they are given His power to bring others into relationship with Him but it seems that being in relationship with a congregation, being a “visible servant leader”, can deeply affect a pastor’s relationship with God. The irony is that those who are bound by calling to nurture other people’s relationships with God can often feel detached from God. Spiritual direction can be a crucial spiritual discipline for a pastor to engage in when she begins to feel isolated from others and distant from God.

Below I discuss how a pastor's relationship with her calling is essential for ministry.

Call

As discussed in the previous chapter, the language we use about call and vocation is confusing as they essentially mean the same thing. Discerning and authenticating a call can also be confusing. There are many questions about calls/callings. Below I have chosen authors who are evangelical Protestants, as this is the milieu in which I minister as a spiritual director and in which the pastor-directees in this project minister. This limitation serves to focus the conversation about call, as it is a vast area of study. I am also limiting the discussion about call to defining what a call is and how to authenticate a call as these two questions have comprised most of the conversations I have had with pastor-directees about call.

One of the strengths of Cullinan's work, cited in the previous chapter, is the historical context she provides for understanding the way God calls His people. The strength of Dave Harvey's book, *Am I Called?*, is the biblical context he provides for his argument, especially in exegeting 1 Timothy 3 and Titus 1. "In 1 Timothy 3 and Titus 1 we see extraordinary evidences of God's activity that precedes any clear sense of calling," says Harvey (Harvey 2012, 74). Harvey was responsible for church planting, church care, and international expansion for Sovereign Grace Ministries, a family of churches, at the time of writing this book. Harvey specifically states that his book is "written for men who may someday be

pastors” (Harvey 2012, 18). Harvey believes the Bible clearly teaches that women cannot receive a pastoral call to ministry (Harvey 2012, 19). Ironically, I have chosen the work of a woman, who obviously believes women are called to ministry, and a man who does not thereby illustrating the complexity of this issue even within Evangelical Protestant circles. Perhaps it would have been easier to not include Harvey’s work but that would not have been an accurate representation of the evangelical Protestant world, especially as it pertains to women discerning a call to ministry, as many have to attempt to hear God’s voice in the midst of naysayers. This can be a complex issue for women in spiritual direction.

Harvey, unlike Cullinan, is adamant that the pastoral call can only be lived out in the church: “If you believe you’re called to pastoral ministry, you must see your potential calling *in the context of the local church*, where ministry is shaped and defined according to Scripture” (Harvey 2012, 52). As mentioned in Chapter 2, I do not agree with this limitation of God’s calling especially as Harvey does not discuss pastoral roles like chaplaincy or parachurch organization leadership - his pastoral feet are firmly planted in being a man in a leadership position in a local church.

Harvey’s exegesis of 1 Timothy 3 and Titus 1 provides the framework for how a man would know he is called to pastoral ministry. A called man is converted and sure of it, he has a Godly character (Harvey 2012, 76-78), is a servant (Harvey 2012, 81), has an exemplary marriage (Harvey 2012, 98), a supportive and accountable wife (Harvey 2012, 101), and has obedient and

faithful children (Harvey 2012, 103). Harvey recognizes this is an intimidating list (Harvey 2012, 73) but he holds to it as the biblical standard for pastors. He also holds to the claim that a called man has to be able to preach: “This is the only nonnegotiable skill or talent listed in the eldership requirements...there are lots of things a pastor *should* be able to do. But there’s clearly one thing that he *must* be able to do to hold the office. He must be able to preach” (Harvey 2012, 116). Harvey argues there is an inseparable link between preaching and pastoring (Harvey 2012, 117). He says, “As I look at scripture, survey a bit of church history...there are three entwined cords that bind a man to his call” (Harvey 2012, 166). The three cords are internal calling, which starts in a man’s call to salvation, and then the desire to shepherd and preach is placed in him by God, which is preparation, and finally, external confirmation (Harvey 2012, 166-167).

No person should discern a calling from God alone. As already mentioned, a number of pastor-directees, both in my practice and my project, have graduated from seminary in the last few years. When they have brought up issues about their calls to ministry I have asked them if their calls were challenged or affirmed during their time in seminary, which included an internship at a church. Most of them have said they weren’t. A number of them had already been in ministry positions before they really tackled the question of whether or not God had called them into ministry.

Cullinan and Harvey both advise their readers to ask others to discern with them if they are hearing God’s call and hearing it correctly. “Since we are all members of the body of Christ, it is not less ‘spiritual’ for God to speak through

someone else who is a member of the body!” says Cullinan (Cullinan 1999, loc 396). However, she does caution that the counsel received from others coincides with what an individual has received from studying God’s Word and praying (Cullinan 1999, loc 396). When Cullinan writes about discerning a call she places an emphasis on the spiritual disciplines of studying and praying as well as paying attention, listening and looking for God in circumstances (Cullinan 1999, loc 390), in opportunities (Cullinan 1999, loc 395), and in our own interests and abilities (Cullinan 1999, loc 408). Prayer permeates her whole book whereas questions permeate Harvey’s book. In the last chapter of his book, Harvey provides a long list of practical things to do to prepare for ministry, such as write to your pastor (Harvey 2012, 188) and start serving (Harvey 2012, 189). Prayer is included: “Schedule regular times of prayer, perhaps even personal retreats, where you’re able to both stoke your sense of call and lay it on the altar before the Lord” (Harvey 2012, 189). He does not suggest that the male reader is to pray with the intention to discern or to pray with others.

Cullinan and Harvey’s books present two views of call – one author is comfortable with ambiguity and one is not. Cullinan leaves room for mystery and the efficacy of spiritual disciplines and Harvey’s, though biblical, is stringent and limiting. I, as a female spiritual director primarily giving spiritual direction to pastors, would have no place in Harvey’s ministry world, and I would hazard a guess that there would be little room for doubting a call either. It has been helpful to find in my reading that some denominational leaders see how hard it is for people to discern a call from God as I see this often in my spiritual direction

practice. In the Duke University study I cited above, one United Methodist official spoke specifically about people who decided to become pastors at a later stage in life. He finds that they

sometimes confuse 'conversion' with 'call', if you will. They have had some kind of revelatory experience, or they go on some faith or spiritual journey where they have a closer walk with God, they encounter the Holy Spirit in some new way that they never had before, and they then see that as a calling to ordained ministry. Then they go into ministry and find that they're not prepared, that the skills they bring and the expectations of their congregation are very, very different. And here are ministers who in many cases were successful in other fields. And probably the worst part of that is, not only do they leave the ministry, but they also leave the church. They become so disillusioned by ordained ministry that they can't stay related to the church. (Hoge and Wenger 2005, 161)

Neither Hoge, Wenger or the United Methodist official indicate how often this happens. However, this United Methodist official's sadness that it has happened and has resulted in people leaving the Church is palpable. This is the kind of attrition of pastors that could be prevented, as mentioned earlier in this chapter, by engaging in spiritual disciplines and inviting others into the discerning process.

The fallout from misheard or misunderstood calls can be brutal. During this project I have often wondered how much of the present state of the Church today has been caused or at least affected by people who were not actually called to ministry. Priests, ministers and pastors change the churches they work in. If they have not discerned a calling, or have misheard one, they potentially damage themselves and the churches they serve. And churches aren't without fault for it is in the faith community that people should be taught how to discern, exercise the spiritual disciplines that can help them discern, and see courage exercised in being told they are not called to ministry. Early on in *Preventing Ministry Failure*,

Wilson and Hoffman write, “Great damage can be done when those who aren’t truly called attempt to lead without spiritual empowering” (Wilson and Hoffman 2007, 27). Great damage can also be done when our views of pastoral ministry become too worldly. One Evangelical Lutheran Church in America bishop, in the Duke University research, made this observation: “The sense of call to ministry is different today. Many pastors want specific types of places to serve that will provide them with good resources for their lives and ministry” (Hoge and Wenger 2005, 157) not places that have struggles. Another said,

younger pastors are looking to work a 40-hour week instead of serving when and where service is needed or requested. Some are coming out of seminary thinking that the church owes them a call. Some are not open to going to small, rural congregations or multiple-point congregations. (Hoge and Wenger 2005, 157)

Perhaps some younger pastors are trying to minimize the stressors of time, money and family that have already been mentioned at the beginning of this chapter. This comment perhaps also points to generational differences in perceptions of call.

Some pastors, especially children of pastors, go into church ministry with their eyes wide open. They have few illusions regarding how difficult ministry can be. Jimmy Dodd, president and founder of PastorServe, a ministry supporting pastors in crisis that receives over 14,000 calls annually, says,

Many pastors don’t think they are called anymore because they have lost their passion for ministry. Most knew it would be hard, and they expected to take some arrows in the chest from the stands. But when they take arrows in the back they say, ‘That’s not what I signed up for. I signed up to stand on the front lines for the kingdom but did not expect to get shot in the back by my own people.’ (Stone 2010, 48)

This is when a well-discerned call to ministry is crucial. In the Duke University study an Assemblies of God district supervisor says, “Without a clear call to the pastorate, you don’t have a chance of survival” (Hoge and Wenger 2005,162). And Ruth Haley Barton adds, “Whenever a leader is out of touch with his/her identity or calling, they are vulnerable to a life lived at the mercy of other people’s expectations and their own inner compulsions” (Barton 2010, 25). This is not a sustainable way to live.

The same supervisor mentioned above also said: “I have seen some leave the ministry, particularly during the first five years of ministry, whom I believe never came to grips with the call of God. I believe some of these have gone into the ministry as a vocation and not as a call” (Hoge and Wenger 2005 161). Here is a denominational leader speaking of the essential nature of call to ministry to survive ministry while also stating that the first five years are crucial in ministry, perhaps a time in which the practice of spiritual direction could be utilized. He also makes a linguistic distinction between vocation and call that indicates many evangelical Protestants’ confusion about the word and the concept of call I addressed earlier in Chapter 2.

Even when a call is correctly discerned the realities of relating to a church, a congregation full of people with multiple expectations and needs, can still be overwhelming and make many a pastor think “That’s not what I signed up for.” Cullinan and Harvey present two views of call that both represent American evangelical Protestantism. Harvey’s view explains how discerning a call to ministry may be difficult for some evangelical Protestant women. Spiritual

direction can help women discern a call to ministry, especially if they are from a tradition that doesn't recognize women as being able to receive calls to ministry, and spiritual direction can play a role in preventing pastoral attrition as spiritual directors can companion those who are discerning a call to ministry early in the process. They can also help a pastor evaluate how he discerned his call and walk with her through the difficult journey of naming a misheard call.

Congregation

More than one author I read for this project described pastors' lives as being, "Like a stray dog at a whistler's convention" (Boers 1999, 92, Herrington, Creech and Taylor 2003, 15, Reimer 2010, 1). This description is a sad commentary on both pastors and congregations in that the dog is described as stray, as in lost, homeless or separated, and the congregation appears to be a group of people randomly whistling, each trying to get the dog's/pastor's attention. A pastor *always* belongs to God and a congregation should *never* forget that nor should they try to take God's place in a pastor's life.

In the previous chapter I cited various authors who have applied systems theory to churches. The point I particularly brought out was Jesus's capacity to self-differentiate and how important it is for pastors to do so. Jesus was never at the whim of anyone's whistle but God's. Pastors are part of many systems: their family of origin, their own immediate families, their team, if there's more than one pastor in the church, their church board or council, any other committees they might sit on in the church, the whole church, their friends both inside and outside

the church, their neighbourhood, and their wider community. Systems theory expands the picture of pastoral ministry as “Our culture’s focus on the autonomy of the individual easily blinds us to the reality of our emotional connection to one another as human beings” (Herrington, Creech and Taylor 2003, 30). Pastors are emotionally connected to a lot of people and “Leaders often experience the tension of staying connected to the system and offering responsible leadership without being done in by it” (Herrington, Creech, Taylor 2003, 46).

Unfortunately, as seen in the pastoral realities described at the beginning of this chapter, many pastors are done in by the systems they are trying to lead. Some pastors take arrows in the back, as mentioned above, and experience extreme disillusionment in their relationships with people in their churches, the church they pastor and the Church as a whole. This can cause both spiritual and emotional pain. We sometimes forget that being a pastor doesn’t just require spiritual maturity but emotional maturity as well and that a pastor’s relationship with her church is just as emotional as it is spiritual. Herrington et al say, “Effective leadership comes from someone with enough emotional maturity to call a congregation to discern and pursue a shared vision, to remain connected with those who differ with the leader or the majority, and to remain a calm presence when the anxiety rises” (Herrington, Creech and Taylor 2003, 46). When one person in a system becomes anxious often the whole system becomes anxious. Interestingly, as I’ve heard pastor-directees describe church or committee meetings they’ve often come to realize that it’s not always the issue that is causing the contagious anxiety but just the fact that one person is exhibiting

anxiety. There is no way to eliminate anxiety. As one pastor put it, “I don’t have to be nonanxious, I just try to be less anxious than anyone else in the room” (Herrington, Creech and Taylor 2003, 70). We develop our own individual anxiety and reactive patterns in our families of origin and “changing how we relate to that family clears the way for changing our relationships with our spouse, children and congregation” (Herrington, Creech and Taylor 2003, 88). This echoes Boers, Richardson and Steinke in Chapter 2. Spiritual direction can support a pastor in being the least anxious presence in the room and in changing patterns that would change his relationship with his congregation.

A pastor can do a lot of personal work to understand himself but given that the dating period in a pastor’s and church’s relationship is generally short, a pastor doesn’t always know much about the emotional or spiritual health of church before he enters into the marriage, if you will. Reimer states that unhealthy congregations are hard on pastoral well-being (Reimer 2010, 9) and Eugene Peterson observes, in *The Pastor*, that “Many pastors, disappointed or disillusioned with their congregations, defect after a few years and find more congenial work. And many congregations, disappointed or disillusioned with their pastors, dismiss them and look for pastors more to their liking” (Peterson 2011, 5).

To summarize this section, I specifically chose the lens of systems theory through which to look at congregations because of my awareness that when a pastor is in a spiritual direction session he is bringing many people with him though they are not physically present. Some of those people are whistlers, some of them are emotionally immature and anxious, and all of them have expectations.

A pastor needs to be both spiritually and emotionally mature to be in a relationship with a congregation so that he can stay connected without being done in by the very system he is serving. Spiritual direction can provide a rest from the whistlers and a reminder that the pastor is foremost and primarily God's beloved.

Separating a pastor's relationship with a congregation from his relationship with God and call is really impossible to do and those other relationships are what actually sustain a pastor in those times of disappointment and disillusionment with congregations

One of my hopes for this project is that pastors might see that spiritual direction as a spiritual discipline has the capacity to deepen a pastor's relationship with God so that she never speaks more about God than with God, that spiritual direction can serve a person in discerning whether she is called into ministry or help a pastor discern whether she discerned her calling correctly, and can be a place where pastors learn to self-manage rather than manage others, with God's help.

Following is a short introduction to some of the literature that has and continues to form and inform me as a spiritual director especially as I give spiritual direction to pastors.

Giving Spiritual Direction

There is no way to do justice to the whole body of work available from almost two centuries of practice so I have chosen three works that have influenced me as a spiritual director, especially as a director for pastors, and one that has a

particular focus on some of the historical elements of spiritual direction. In these works are a number of themes and questions that have shaped my everyday practice of spiritual direction.

Distorted Images of God

In Chapter 2 I cited Venetia Lorraine-Poirier regarding our operative images of God as she contributed to part of chapter in *Spiritual Direction and the Care of Souls: A Guide to Christian Approaches and Practices*, edited by Gary W. Moon and David G. Benner. This was my first introduction to the concept of operative images of God. I've since learned more from Wilkie Au and Noreen Cannon Au in *The Discerning Heart: Exploring the Christian Path*. Au and Au describe two ways in which our images of God can become distorted. One is through negative transference, which is the psychological process "by which we unconsciously bring feelings from a past relationship into another relationship," (Au and Au 2006, 114). A common example is when people who are raised by domineering and controlling parents often see God the same way and behave in distrustful or rebellious way towards Him. A second way our image of God can become distorted is projection. This is a defensive psychological process by which people "unconsciously disown or deny unwanted feelings, attitudes, and traits assigning them to others" (Au and Au 2006, 115). Au and Au explain that projection shapes our responses to God. If we see Him as a tyrant we will respond with servility. If we see Him as a judge then we will respond with guilt. One of the greatest dangers is projecting onto God our own attitudes and traits (Au and

Au 2006, 115). I am still learning about how to ask the right questions to help pastor-directees discern their operative images of God and how they might be distorted, especially be negative interactions within their congregations.

Jesus as Question Asker

While studying in seminary I wrote a paper entitled *Jesus as Spiritual Director* and in it I came to realize that I generally thought about Jesus as the one who answered questions yet one of the most profound questions of the Bible is His: “Who do you say I am?” (Mark 8:29). In *Spiritual Direction: Where is Spiritual Direction found in Scripture?* the author wrote, “Jesus demonstrates spiritual direction over and over again in the way he answers questions. Quite simply, he often doesn’t answer them! He continually guides people into self-awareness through his responses.” Jesus’ model of question asking relieves me of the need to know everything. In writing the paper, I came to realize I needed to develop question-asking skills more than I needed to be able to answer questions, as spiritual direction isn’t about me knowing but the directee discovering (Patterson 2009, 10). This realization helped me generally as a spiritual director and specifically as a spiritual director to pastors, as pastors are under considerable pressure to be answer people. In spiritual direction they are asked questions and if an answer isn’t immediately available, we just sit with the not knowing. This is hopefully a model they can replicate in their own ministries.

Jesus as Storyteller

Spiritual direction is a story-telling, narrative discipline. I explore this later in this chapter regarding my choice of research methodology. Jesus was a storyteller and in many ways He *is* the story as every Christian is in a transformative relationship with Him to become more like Him. When I listen to people tell their stories in spiritual direction I am always looking for the connection to Jesus. He knew the power of stories and used them, parables in particular, to teach. As Wendy Miller says in *Jesus Our Spiritual Director*, “In a sense, all stories, no matter who tells them and when they are told, tell the same story – of our flight from God and our return to God” (Miller 2004, 46).

Pastors are natural storytellers and they are, in a sense, responsible for re-telling Jesus’ story over and over again every week as they preach. And in every encounter with a congregant they are looking for the connection between that person’s story and Jesus’ story. Spiritual direction provides pastors with a place to tell their stories, to have someone else look for the connection between their stories and that of Jesus.

Some Classic Elements of Spiritual Direction

Miller’s observation regarding how all stories tell the same story – from God and to God – is an example of Ignatian spirituality, one of the roots of spiritual direction. Morris Dirks, author of *Forming the Leader’s Soul*, explains that St. Ignatius identified that inner movements in the soul were either towards God or away from Him (Dirks 2013, 93). These movements either bring us

consolation, in which we experience a deep awareness of God's love, or desolation, in which we experience a loss of love or faith (Dirks 2013, 96). This is a highly simplified explanation of consolation and desolation but it is in being with or without God where spiritual discernment is essential in discovering and understanding why we feel either one (Dirks 2013, 94). Asking a directee whether he feels consoled or desolate in a situation or as he tells a story is a very clarifying question. Then it becomes a question of discerning why they feel one way or the other.

Dirks also explains St. Ignatius' concept of inordinate attachments that form when our false self, the part of ourselves in constant misalignment with God (Dirks 2013, 78), becomes attached to something that imprisons us (Dirks 2013, 78). "We knowingly develop this false way of being as we attempt to become the managers of our own lives," says Dirks (Dirks 2012, 79). As Dirks is writing specifically for an audience engaged in ministry he tackles how the need to be liked (Dirks 2013, 80), the need to succeed (Dirks 2013, 82) and the need for perfection (Dirks 2013, 85) are inordinate attachments.

In summary, distorted images of God, question asking, storytelling, consolation and desolation, and inordinate attachments – these are specific themes and guiding principles that I have incorporated into my practice of spiritual direction and, I believe, have been important elements in giving spiritual direction to pastors. Below I specifically look at the literature regarding pastors receiving spiritual direction.

Giving Spiritual Direction to Pastors

The contemporary literature available specifically on the topic of giving spiritual direction to pastors is quite limited.

Michael Gemignani, an Episcopal priest, explores the need for a sound spirituality generally and the need for pastors to have a sound spirituality specifically in his book *Spiritual Formation for Pastors: Feeding the Fire Within*. He provides five attributes of clergy that affect their spirituality – that they are called, are expected to be teachers, counsellors, and guides, are visible symbols of Christ and His church, are expected to intercede with God for their people, are expected to be men and women of prayer and lead their congregations in prayer (Gemignani 2002, 22-24).

Gemignani strongly suggests that spirituality, especially for pastors, “cannot be grounded in the emotions. Spirituality requires intellectual content because it must form the basis for practical decisions. A spirituality founded solely on sentiment, devoid of intellectual content, risks being little more than ‘If it feels good, do it’” (Gemignani 2002, 25). This balance of intellect and spirituality is something that can be attended to in spiritual direction as can the identification of each pastor’s unique spirituality. Gemignani helpfully reminds readers that even pastors with similar gifts will still have unique spiritualities and that in identifying their spirituality they can better understand themselves, their calls to ministry and their motives (Gemignani 2002, 34-35).

Gemignani’s attempts to describe spiritual direction are somewhat mechanical. He gives four reasons why spiritual direction is invaluable –

accountability (Gemignani 2002, 88), compassion, resource recommendations, and prayer (Gemignani 2002, 89) and though they are good enough reasons they don't nearly capture the wonder of discovery and the depth of companionship that often occurs between directee and director like both Peterson's and Dirk's books do. He describes nine attributes that make a good director, but provides no stories about pastors in direction. He also raises five possible objections about spiritual direction, one I especially agree with – the use of the words “direction” and “director” – but he provides no alternatives nor does he mention that the traditional language has historical weight. Here he touches on what might make evangelical Protestant pastors somewhat wary of the discipline as the word “direction” creates a barrier for some people and can take on connotations of mediation between an individual and God (Gemignani 2002, 98-99).

As already mentioned, Morris Dirks's work has been invaluable to this project. Much like Peterson, who provided a cover blurb for the book, Dirks says spiritual direction for Christian leaders isn't optional (Dirks 2013, 11) especially in light of his discovery “that Christian organizations, both inside and outside of the church, are often characterized by systemic patterns that put the leader at risk” (Dirks 2013, 11). Near the beginning of his book, Dirks cites Roy Oswald, of the Alban Institute who says this in his book, *Clergy Self-Care*:

The majority of clergy I work with have no one who relates to them in this special way, no one who pays particular attention to them and their spiritual journey and with whom they regularly review their spiritual path...If I were to choose one discipline to undergird all others, it would be meeting regularly with a spiritual director. (Dirks 2013, 25)

Authors I cite later in this chapter agree.

Dirks describes a picture of pastoral occupational hazards that fits into the pastoral realities other writers have already described, such as unrealistic responsibilities, emotional drain, spiritual neglect, relational isolation, and identity issues along with systemic issues such as consumer culture and lack of relational trust (Dirks 2013, 13-20). He continues, citing Kenneth Leech who says, “It has not been obvious in recent decades that spiritual direction belongs to the core of the Christian ministry” and that in preparation for ministry pastors “in the area of their personal relationship to God...were left to their own devices and insights, and received virtually no guidance” (Dirks 2013, 36). Pastors, I suggest, need spiritual direction in seminary and after they have left seminary.

As mentioned above, in the section on formative literature, Dirks focuses on the contribution of St. Ignatius to the discipline of spiritual direction, especially in the area of inordinate attachments, those things or people we become attached to that then imprison us. “This is soul work at the level of our motivations,” says Dirks (Dirks 2013, 77). “It is critical to understand this component as it undergirds all forward movement in the spiritual life, particularly in the lives of those who lead Christian organizations” (Dirks 2013, 77). I know that pastors rarely have the time or space to discern why they do what they do, especially when they are constantly responding to the needs of others. Many pastors unthinkingly, unknowingly, are motivated by the tyranny of the urgent, by the person who is in front of them, or on the phone, demanding their help. A pastor can truly become a dog at a whistler’s convention until he falls down flat, panting for breath, wondering what he’s supposed to be doing. “All of this,” says

Dirks, “is especially evident in ministry, which takes on hazardous characteristics when this false self becomes unknowingly entangled in our leadership style” (Dirks 2013, 79).

Spiritual discernment is essential for pastors for if they are unable to discern the movements that occur within their own souls they will find it much more difficult to discern the movements within the souls of those they lead. Once pastors practice this discernment in spiritual direction it is much easier for them to discern in the moment, whether in an anxiety-ridden meeting or the hospital room of a dying parishioner, what is happening in how they relate to God and others.

In summary, Gemignani emphasizes that a pastor’s spirituality cannot be solely based on emotion but that it requires intellectual vigour. He suggests that spiritual direction can be a place where the balance can be attended to as can the identification of the pastor’s unique spirituality.

Dirks is concerned about all Christian leaders who are in organizations and churches that are characterized by unhealthy, risky systemic patterns. His description of pastoral realities is in alignment with those already described and he places a particular emphasis on the pastor’s capacity to discern well, especially in the area of inordinate attachments. He suggests it is in spiritual direction that directors can assist pastors in identifying the systemic patterns of their churches, their own inordinate attachments and how the false self, the part of themselves that is in constant misalignment with God, is becoming entangled with the way they lead.

Pastors Receiving Spiritual Direction

The literature I cited in the previous sections formed me as a spiritual director and experientially they collectively informed how I give spiritual direction to pastors. Below I explore the literature regarding pastor's experiences of spiritual direction.

In his 1987 book *Working the Angles: The Shape of Pastoral Integrity*, Eugene Peterson looks at three angles of ministry – prayer, scripture and spiritual direction. *The Celebration of Discipline*, by Richard Foster, had been published in 1978 and Dallas Willard's *Spirit of the Disciplines* was published in 1988, within months of *Working the Angles*. Foster and Willard's books created a new awareness of old disciplines in the Evangelical West and Peterson made the connection to these disciplines and pastoring.

He starts the chapter on receiving spiritual direction with this: "There is a saying among physicians that the doctor who is his own doctor has a fool for a doctor" (Peterson 1987, 165). Essentially, no pastor can pastor himself. He goes on to address the dichotomy of being a pastor – how the pastoral role requires a pastor to speak and act authoritatively in the name of the Lord while his or her Christian identity requires a servant attitude (Peterson 1987, 167). He asks, "...when do we have the chance to practice obedience? Who is there to represent the same authority to us?" (Peterson 1987, 167) and states, "It is not merely nice for pastors to have a spiritual director; it is indispensable," says Peterson (Peterson 1987,167).

Most of the books, articles, studies I have included in this chapter were written in the last decade. Here Peterson describes some of his colleagues, and no doubt himself to some degree, over 25 years ago:

The widespread loss of what in healthier times was assumed leaves the pastor in enormous, though usually unnoticed, peril. And the wreckage accumulates: we find pastors who don't pray, pastors who don't grow in faith, pastors who can't tell the difference between culture and Christ, pastors who chase fads, pastors who are cynical and shopworn, pastors who know less about prayer after twenty years of praying than they did on the day of their ordination, pastors with arrogant, outsized egos puffed up by years of hot-air flattery from well-meaning parishioners: 'Great sermon, Pastor.... Wonderful prayer, Pastor.... I couldn't have made it through without you, Pastor...'. (Peterson 1987,166)

The authority and respect a pastor can still garner in certain communities can become the very thing he hides behind. The aforementioned need to practice obedience that is witnessed by someone else becomes essential in the continuing spiritual formation of a pastor and in her deepening humility.

Peterson willingly divulges his reluctance to enter into spiritual direction – he wants to retain control, to not have to face his spiritual pride (Peterson 1987, 172). “The first thing that I noticed after I began meeting with my spiritual director was a marked increase in spontaneity. Since this person has agreed to pay attention to my spiritual condition with me, I no longer feel solely responsible for watching over it,” says Peterson (Peterson 1987, 172).

He also found his relationship with himself changed. “I was the disciplinarian of my inner life, the one being disciplined, and the supervisor of my disciplinarian – a lot of roles to be shifting in and out of through the day. I immediately gave up being ‘supervisor’ and shared ‘disciplinarian’ with my

director” (Peterson 1987, 173). The sharing of that load is a true example of the body of Christ functioning as it should.

In searching for other articles or books that might provide examples or stories about pastors receiving spiritual I found an article by James A. Dodge, in a now defunct journal, *The Christian Ministry Journal*. Dodge noted that pastors came to him for different reasons. One came to talk about call, identity and discernment, another to listen and begin the “process of unclogging, cleansing and deepening the spiritual channels in her life” (Dodge 1996, 28) and another to be held accountable for his spiritual disciplines. And Douglas S. Hardy, in a chapter entitled “The Pastor and Spiritual Direction”, in his book *The Pastor’s Guide to Personal Spiritual Formation*, observes that, ironically, pastors who so passionately advocate for Christian community often find themselves alone and isolated” (Hardy 2005, 112). Hardy’s observation is in line with the picture of pastors’ realities provided at the beginning of this chapter as is this observation made by a directee of Ruth Haley Barton, a parish priest, about spiritual direction: “My job is to help people attend to their own inner world and to cultivate hope and expectation that God is actively present in their lives but I have lost that hope and expectation in my own life. I need someone to help me do what I am trying to help others do” (Barton 2010, 22).

Given that spiritual direction is a well-established and well-known discipline within the Catholic Church, as mentioned in Chapter 2 in the short history of spiritual direction, I had hoped to find some information about spiritual direction and priests. I found a few articles and the burgeoning knowledge that

perhaps because spiritual direction has been part of the warp and woof of the Catholic Church for so long it isn't something that is seen as new or different. Though most of the articles I found were written in the 1980s there are still some interesting points to be gleaned. One is that priests deal with many of the same pressures as pastors. Psychologist Thomas G. Plante describes the pastoral realities for priests – they are stretched too thin, have excess responsibilities to fulfill in less time, depleting them of energy and interest in self-care, and are alone a great deal which all lead to less opportunity for “support and corrective feedback” (Plante 2013, 32). Plante points out that unlike other professionals, such as physicians and psychologists, there are no mandated continuing education requirements for priests (Plante 2013, 32) and he suggests that all priests “have an ongoing spiritual direction and formation plan reviewed and approved by their religious superior or bishop” (Plante 2013, 33).

There is always the fear, which I share, of doing more harm than good in spiritual direction, especially with a pastor who is deeply wounded or depressed. Gerard W. Hughes in *Spiritual Direction and the Priest*, in an article first published in 1983, says:

The director is a very privileged person, who is allowed in to the recesses of another's mind and heart. Of all the mechanisms of man and of nature, the human psyche is by far the most delicate. To blunder around insensitively with the hobnailed boots of general moral judgments and pious aphorisms can be as damaging as letting a butcher try his hand at a transplant. Enormous damage can be done through clumsy spiritual direction. (Hughes 1983, 27)

However, he continues: “Certainly, poor spiritual direction can be a waste of time and even very damaging, but a much greater danger is not to have it at all”

(Hughes 1982, 28). Hughes' insistence on the importance of spiritual direction is further seen in the stories of a few pastors who speak about their experiences of spiritual direction in Dirk's book, *Spiritual Formation for Pastors: Feeding the Fire Within*, which has already served us in providing much of the history of spiritual direction, in Chapter 2, and some of the elements of the practice, above. Following are some of the ways in which spiritual direction served two pastors.

While Todd Gorton was getting run down he was exploring how to ramp up his ministry. He soon realized that making changes in his ministry wasn't going to change his spiritual apathy (Dirks 2013, 60). "Looking back, it was a spiritual director that saved my life...well, at least my ministry and quite possibly my attitude," says Gorton (Dirks 2013, 60). He describes spiritual direction as his tether and says, "My spiritual director reminds me who God is while helping me remember who I am supposed to be...Together we search for a day-to-day connection with God that is fresh and new" (Dirks 2013, 61).

Dave Wilkinson's church plant ministry was resulting in new life and followers but he was feeling depressed and anxious. At a meeting of other church planters, Dave met with a spiritual director. He says, "I'm not trying to be overly dramatic but that meeting saved my life. I was able to share my story with somebody who really listened, not just to me but also to the Holy Spirit for me" (Dirks 2013, 90-91). Wilkinson experienced the freedom from shame, competency, and being the one with the answers. He also began to see that his motivation for being a pastor was mostly about himself (Dirks 2013, 91). Wilkinson's summary of his experience of spiritual direction is this: "What I

experience in spiritual direction spills over into other areas. I'm becoming aware of my anxiety before it gets toxic. I'm able to be more present with people in my life. I'm a better pastor, not because of an arsenal of great tools and techniques, but because of a deep sense that I'm a child of Abba" (Dirks 2013, 91).

Wilkinson's observations about his anxiety relate to Chapter 2, and anxiety in a church system, as well as a pastor being the least anxious person in a room as mentioned earlier in this chapter.

Both of these pastors see spiritual direction as life giving. One sees it as tethering him, the other as freeing and like Hughes, see it as essential for ministry.

Reimer's survey on pastoral well-being, already mentioned above, did not include any questions about pastors' spiritual disciplines or spiritual direction. Schonwetter's study, done within the smaller denominations that make up the Mennonite Church of Canada, included questions specifically about spiritual direction and many pastors indicated it was a known discipline to them.

In Schonwetter's findings, in regards to what extent pastors are spiritually formed by people or experiences, "pastor" ranked the highest, along with churches, professors, youth group, and camp. "Spiritual director" ranked number seven on the list (Schonwetter 2008, 31). Those who seek help will engage in coaching/mentoring first, then spiritual direction, then counselling (Schonwetter 2008, 59). Most of the pastors, 89.2 percent, perceived that they were growing spiritually and the "key for the success of pastors are mentors and/or spiritual coaches that probe and encourage all pastors concerning their spiritual growth, especially those who are experiencing a spiritual decline" (Schonwetter 2008, 70).

When asked what helps pastors maintain healthy spiritual lives prayer, reading the bible, reading devotional books were the three top answers. “Meeting with pastor/mentor/spiritual director” was number four (Schonwetter 2008, 72). Pastors were asked what their outlets were for questions of faith, spiritual director/mentor ranked fifth, after “other pastors/peers/colleagues/ministerial, friends, reading and spouse (Schonwetter, 73). When it came to factors that are critical to continuing ministry, spiritual direction ranked sixth after spouse, engaged congregation, personal development, professional development and peers.

Schonwetter’s work is evidence of spiritual direction being practiced by some Mennonite pastors within the Mennonite Church of Canada. In Pike’s work, the aforementioned master’s thesis entitled *Spiritual Direction for Pastors*, he uses the terms spiritual director and spiritual mentor interchangeably (Pike 2000, 87,88). I would suggest this is an inherent weakness of his work as they do not historically fulfill the same function and spiritual direction is pointedly not about advice or problem solving but about listening for God in another’s life. The spiritual director rarely reveals anything personal within a session whereas a mentor would be expected to do so. Pike does make it clear that he is trying to establish whether any of the respondents are seeing anyone who is guiding them in spiritual renewal rather than in skills and performance development (Pike 2000, 87). He says, “It becomes obvious that the concept of spiritual direction is not a very high priority when only 18% of the pastors respond that they currently have someone who fills that role” (Pike 2000, 88). None of the pastors serving rural churches indicated they were in spiritual direction and one third of urban pastors

indicated they had a spiritual guide (Pike 2000, 88). For some of the pastors, spiritual disciplines and spiritual direction were new concepts and for one pastor weekly spiritual direction was a part of his interaction with his ministry team (Pike 2000, 88). Pike, however, points out that the mere definition of spiritual direction “does little to encourage pastors to practice it” (Pike 2000, 86). Pike does not expound on this in his work.

In summary, Peterson sees spiritual direction as an indispensable practice for a pastor, as pastors can't pastor themselves. Priests share many of the same challenges as pastors and Plante suggests that priests have an ongoing spiritual direction and formation plan in place. Hughes suggests that bad spiritual direction is better than no spiritual direction at all and two pastors in Dirks' work spoke of the life-giving nature of spiritual direction.

Schonwetter's study shows that some pastors in Mennonite traditions see spiritual directors as spiritual directors ranked fourth, along with pastor and mentor, as helping them maintain healthy spiritual lives. Pike found that spiritual direction is not a well-known practice in the four denominations he surveyed in Western Canada and only eighteen percent of respondents said they had someone to fulfill the role of guiding them in spiritual renewal.

Following is the last section of this chapter regarding the literature that relates to the research methodology chosen for this project.

Methodology of Project and Research

Spiritual direction is a narrative-based discipline. God's story is narrated within the story of each directee, and vice versa, and each session is often a succession of short stories, sometimes related and sometimes not, that illuminate the ways in which God is moving, challenging and guiding a soul. I often refer to spiritual direction as a holy soap opera. I don't mean this in a disparaging, minimizing way but in the sense that the story is never complete, the next instalment is always coming, and there will be unforeseen twists and turns in the plot, even drama. Yet, because God is the author of these stories, his holiness permeates the episodes, the spiritual direction sessions, and indeed the whole narrative.

Following I present my reasons for choosing a few guiding principles of action research and specifically look at some of the literature regarding narrative inquiry as it pertains to the narrative elements of spiritual direction.

Action Research

The elements of action research applied in this project are inherent in the definition supplied by Bramer and Chapman: "An iterative process of action, research and reflection guided by a leader with the participation of others in the situation to effect positive social and individual change and to gain theoretical knowledge" (Bramer and Chapman, 2011). The entire cycle of this project is action research in that each of the six sessions was an iteration, the interviews and sessions were the research and the reflection occurred as the pastors completed

the evaluation/reflection forms and as I read the forms. Whether positive social and individual change was effected and theoretical knowledge gained will be discussed in Chapter 6.

Narrative Inquiry and Spiritual Direction

Janet Ruffing, in her book *To Tell the Sacred Tale*, shows that the methodology of narrative inquiry is compatible with the discipline of spiritual direction. Ruffing, who has trained and supervised spiritual directors for 25 years (Ruffing 2011, back cover), says, “telling the unique story of God and self – telling one’s sacred tale – is the central activity that occurs in spiritual direction” (Ruffing 2007, 2). Ruffing delves into the rich relationship between spiritual direction and narrative with a deep historical understanding of the discipline.

Ruffing speaks of spiritual direction as participating in two distinct yet related traditions: “It is an ancient Christian practice originating from specialized forms of religious living. It is also deeply shaped by the narrative practices of Christianity embodied in its scriptures, rituals, and catechesis, as well by the Western literary tradition of spiritual and secular autobiography” (Ruffing 2007, 49) which perhaps lends some credence to my “holy soap opera” description of spiritual direction.

Ruffing provides a definition of narrative within the framework of spiritual direction that parallels my earlier description of spiritual direction: “...a face-to-face narrative situation within the context of conversation in which the directee tells the sacred tales of his or her faith-filled life experiences. The

director listens to this story and also influences its telling” (Ruffing 2007, 69).

She goes on to list the complex expectations most people have of narrative – some form of sequencing, some connecting or recognizing of patterns, “some reference to character and the world of human values”, and meaning or significance (Ruffing 2007, 69).

The directees I see often stop in a middle of a story and wonder why they are telling it to me. It is in the telling that they start to find out why the story is important or how it is connected to another story. Most people don’t have the expectation that there is any coherence or cohesiveness in their stories.

“Unfortunately,” says Ruffing, “ many people do not articulate their identity/life story narratives, even to themselves, in any comprehensive way. In large part, only those who have experienced something unusual or exceptional have engaged in such articulation” (Ruffing 2007, 104). She later observes “many people view their lives as a series of individual events, more like a collection of snapshots than a coherent story” (Ruffing 2007, 105) and that most directees will need to speak about significant experiences a number of times before they fully become a part of their life narratives (Ruffing 2007, 107). I’ve found that many people “scrapbook” their lives. They create a word picture, a scrapbook, of a particularly important or special event, but the scrapbooks remain on a shelf, disconnected from each other. One of the gifts of spiritual direction can be a coherent, cohesive life narrative.

The affects of spiritual direction narratives on both the directee, including how storytelling provides an opportunity to re-enter an important experience

(Ruffing 2007, 110) and director, including how hearing a directee's story may remind a director of his own storied journey with God (Ruffing 2007, 159), are described by Ruffing and provide a graced coherence with action research and narrative inquiry as both methodologies allow for the act of research to affect both researcher and "reshee." During a presentation of my project, made primarily to a group of spiritual directors, I was asked how I thought my research process had changed me and how I engaged in spiritual direction. The question reminded me of Jean Clandinin's emphasis on the inquirer being affected by her own research. Clandinin is a narrative inquirer/researcher in the field of education. She says, "What this means is that as we tell our stories and listen to participants tell their stories in the inquiry, we, as inquirers need to pay close attention to who we are in the inquiry and to understand that we, ourselves, are part of the storied landscapes we are studying" (Clandinin, 2013, 82). These landscapes are essentially people's lives and we become part of them when we study them. She adds, "Because narrative inquiry is an ongoing reflexive and reflective methodology, narrative inquirers need to continually inquire into their experiences before, during, and after each inquiry" (Clandinn 2013, 83). Spiritual direction is, in a sense, a series of narrative inquiries, and part of my discipline as a spiritual director is to reflexively reflect on each session, the inquiry if you will, and understand what has occurred within me during the session and after.

Jean Clandinin and her colleague Michael Connelly are two pre-eminent experts in the field of narrative inquiry. Ruffing provided a connection between the worlds of spiritual direction and narrative inquiry when she cited Clandinin

and Connelly in her own work. When I read her citation there was for me a sudden sense of narrative cohesion. This served as further confirmation that I was choosing the best methodology for my particular interests.

Narrative Inquiry as Research

Narrative inquiry generally seems to be defined more by what it isn't than is and even Clandinin and Connelly, in their seminal work *Narrative Inquiry: Experience and Story in Qualitative Research*, say, "Our intention is to come to the 'definition' of narrative inquiry slowly in this volume by 'showing' rather than 'telling' what narrative inquirers do" (Clandinin and Connelly 2000, 20) but they do provide "...some characteristics that make up a kind of working concept: narrative inquiry is a way of understanding experience. It is a collaboration between researcher and participants, over time, in a place or series of places, and in social interactions with milieus" (Clandinin and Connelly 2000, 20) to learn something in particular. These characteristics of narrative inquiry certainly lend themselves to spiritual direction, as it is a collaboration between director and directee, over time, in a specific place to learn how God is speaking to the directee.

Clandinin and Connelly provide an historical context for narrative inquiry and then attempt to answer the question "What do narrative inquirers do?" One answer, among many they provide, is that they focus on four directions when inquiring: inward, outward, backward and forward. Inward, toward internal conditions, like feelings and hopes and outward, like the environment. By

backward and forward they are referring to temporality – the past, present and future (Clandinin and Connelly 2000, 50). Interestingly, these four directions are naturally occurring directions of inquiry within a spiritual direction session. Questions about a directee’s inward condition, what they are feeling, the inner movements they are noticing, as mentioned above, are part of every session. A directee often brings an issue or situation that has occurred in their outward world, in the case of pastors it’s often a situation in their church. In the session the situation is spoken, listened to, and prayed about. The backward and forward directions, past, present and future, are essential for reminding a directee of what God has already done, noticing patterns, and what might be holding someone in a pattern.

Spiritual direction and narrative inquiry have many convergence points. One of the most helpful convergences, as a spiritual direction researcher, is this statement by Clandinin and Connelly:

Narrative inquiries are always composed around a particular wonder, a research puzzle. This is usually called the research problem or research question. However, this language and wording tend to misrepresent what we believe is at work with narrative inquirers. Problems carry with them qualities of clear definability and the expectation of solutions, but narrative inquiry carries more of a sense of a search, a ‘re-search’, a searching again. (Clandinin and Connelly 2000, 124).

The phrase “particular wonder” fits particularly well with spiritual direction, as it is always a wonder-invoking inquiry. Spiritual direction is not a problem-solving discipline but, in fact, a place and time in which to search, and search again, with no clear expectation that what is being searched for will be found.

However, the disciplines of spiritual direction and narrative direction also diverge. One primary point of divergence is that spiritual direction is a spiritual discipline and narrative inquiry is not. The practice of spiritual direction is upheld by prayer and God is acknowledged as the third person in the room. Another point of divergence is that spiritual directors rarely divulge personal information or stories whereas narrative inquirers often do (Clandinin and Connelly 2000, 52). Spiritual directors depend on their memories and notes to capture narratives whereas narrative inquirers record their conversations with research collaborators. It is a common practice in supervision for spiritual directors to create verbatim accounts of parts of their conversation with a directee so as to capture something significant for either the directee or the director. Narrative inquirers, on the other hand, transcribe the whole narrative, read it multiple times, and then analyze the narratives. These are the primary ways in which the two disciplines diverge.

Below I describe the particular elements of narrative inquiry analysis I applied to the narratives.

Interpreting Through Multiple Lenses

Coralie McCormack, at the University of Canberra, views narrative transcripts through multiple lenses by

immersing oneself in the transcript through a process of *active listening*, identifying the *narrative processes* used by the storyteller, paying attention to the *language* of the text, acknowledging the *context* in which the text was produced and identifying *moments* in the text where something unexpected is happening. (McCormack 2000, 285, italics hers).

Active listening includes the researcher asking such questions as who are the characters in the conversation, what are the main events, how is the researcher positioned during the conversation, and how is the researcher responding emotionally and intellectually to this participant (McCormack 2000, 288)?

Narrative processes can be identified by “stories, descriptions, argumentation, augmentation, and theorizing” (McCormack 2000, 288), have recognizable boundaries, and linked events and actions and ultimately answer the question “Why was the story told?” (McCormack 2000, 288).

The language lens finds “word groupings or phrases that indicate the relationship of self and society”, words used frequently, words that indicate a pause to think, a specialized vocabulary, including words pertaining to the particular subject that is being studied, and worlds used to describe self-image, relationships, and environment” (McCormack 2000, 291).

Context is primarily about cultural fictions and how the project participant constructs his or her view of “what counts as being a person” (McCormack 2000, 293). How does the participant conform to, resist or re-write these cultural fictions? (McCormack 2000, 293). In this project, a cultural fiction at play may be the idea of what constitutes a “perfect pastor.”

Finally, moments could be key words, phrases, a memory recounted during an interview, epiphanies, and turning points. Spiritual direction is made up of many moments, especially those further described by McCormack – moments of surprise, strangeness, insight, joy, sadness and questioning (McCormack 2000, 294).

I read all the transcripts and forms through these lenses, the process of which I will describe in further detail in Chapter 4. Below I explain why I chose McCormack's lenses.

It was a matter of integrity for me that the stories of the pastor-directees not be deconstructed to the point of being unrecognizable by them, the tellers of the stories. Quantitative research is an appropriate way to understand many kinds of data and coding organizes vast amounts of material to make it accessible to people. The nature of the data generated by this project doesn't lend itself to becoming a series of numbers, such as "Four of the six pastor-directees prayed three times a day," separate from the experiences of the storyteller. McCormack's lenses provide a way in under the edges (Clandinin 2013, 82) of the pastor-directees' stories without ripping them apart and making them something different from the original narrative.

Kathleen Wells, in *Narrative Inquiry*, presents a rather complicated notation system for verbatim transcription (Wells 2011, 39) that requires the recording of every word spoken. Leonard Webster and Patricie Mertova, in *Using Narrative Inquiry as a Research Method: An Introduction to Using Critical Event Narrative Analysis in Research on Learning and Teaching*, suggest, however, that "Narrative research does not claim to represent the exact 'truth', but rather aims for 'verisimilitude' – that the results have the appearance of truth or reality" (Webster and Mertova 2011, 4). As Kathleen Wells suggests, transcription is "an interpretive act" (Wells 2011, 38) with which I agree. Therefore, even if every word is captured, the transcriber, or researcher, is still interpreting the data.

Verisimilitude, for example, allows for the narrative inquirer to leave out repeated “ums” and “ahs” in portions of cited transcripts so that they are easier to read. It also allows for the changing of names and details to protect the identities of project participants. Carla Nelson, director of the Bachelor of Education program at Tyndale and a former doctoral student of Clandinin, strongly suggested I adopt Clandinin’s practice of sharing the narrative accounts, that I created based on the transcriptions of each narrative, with each project participant as a way of assuring verisimilitude (Clandinin 2013, 129). I describe this process in Chapter 4. As Webster and Metrova point out, “...in qualitative research ‘reliability’ refers to the consistency and stability of the measuring instruments, whereas in narrative research attention is directed to the ‘trustworthiness’ of field notes and transcripts of the interviews” (Webster and Metrova 2007, 5).

McCormack’s multiple lenses provide a very compatible and fruitful way to study spiritual direction, as the lenses are congruent with the practice of spiritual. The lenses provide a notation system, described in Chapter 4, that identifies the narratives that are most helpful in terms of how pastors’ relationships with God, call and congregation are facilitated by spiritual direction while keeping the narratives intact, not deconstructed beyond recognition, and maintaining verisimilitude.

In summarizing this section on the literature regarding the methodology of narrative inquiry, I described the narrative nature of the practice of spiritual direction, provided a short description of the project, and explained how some

elements of action research, iterations and reflection in particular, are included in the project.

Narrative inquiry was primarily defined as collaborative experience of understanding experience that focuses on the four directions of inward, outward, backward and forward, directions also explored in spiritual direction. I then explored elements of narrative inquiry and how it both converges and diverges with the practice of spiritual direction.

McCormack's five lenses, active listening, narrative processes, language, context and moments were described and noted as being a way in "under the edges" (Clandinin 2013, 82) of the pastor-directees' stories. They also provide a notation system that allows for the original narrative to remain intact and to maintain verisimilitude, the appearance of truth, in that not every word, such as repeated "ums" and "ahs," are seen by the reader. Verisimilitude is also maintained by asking the project participants to read narrative accounts, created by the researcher, based on the transcripts of their narratives.

Conclusion

At the beginning of this chapter I reviewed some books and studies that created a picture of many of the realities facing pastors, which included the repeated themes of time, money and family as some of the greatest stressors for pastors. I then looked at why pastors are leaving ministry, and though time, money and family are the reasons for some leaving, moral failure, spiritual burnout, conflicts within congregations, and the desire for less stressful work, are

some of the other reasons. Pastors are also dealing with the particular ministry stressors of long workweeks, being on call, and having to be omni-competent. The books and studies did show that there are pastors who are very satisfied with their jobs. Regarding the tenure of pastors, one study found they are staying in churches, on average, for 3.8 years.

Russ Veenker asserted that clergy health is the issue at the beginning of this century and he maintained that if pastors can model healthy physical, emotional and spiritual formation the church will be better for it. The three themes of this project, pastors' relationships with God, call and congregation, are related to pastors' physical, emotional and spiritual health. I looked at what some of the literature has to say about these three themes. Regarding a pastor's relationship with God, it is the power source for all his other relationships, especially with his congregation and spiritual direction can play an important role in deepening a pastor's relationship with God and providing a place to explore issues like distorted images of God.

A call can be hard to discern. Cullinan and Harvey agree that no one should discern a call alone but they disagree about whether women can be called into ministry or not. The two authors represent the wide spectrum of theological thinking about call in evangelical Protestant circles and Harvey's stance on women in ministry points to how spiritual direction could be helpful for some women trying to discern a call in an discouraging environment. In fact, spiritual direction would be helpful for anyone trying to discern a call, whether early or later in life, and it also serves as a safe place to question a call.

Systems theory is a helpful lens through which to look at congregations as it validates the complexities of relating to a congregation. These complexities also point to the need for a pastor to be both spiritually and emotionally mature to be able to be the least anxious person in the room. Spiritual direction creates a place for pastors to step back from the congregation and its various system to understand the complexities and perhaps gain the perspective needed to change her own patterns, especially as they affect her spiritually, in the congregation.

In the next section I noted some of the most formative literature in my own development as a spiritual director, including Dirks' descriptions of the Ignatian understanding of the inner movements of consolation and desolation and inordinate attachments, which provide important questions for spiritual directors to explore with directees.

I then looked at spiritual direction through the eyes of some pastors, like Eugene Peterson, who sees spiritual direction as indispensable to pastors, as does Dirks. Peterson found relief in not being solely responsible for his spiritual condition. Plante suggested that all priests should develop an ongoing spiritual direction and formation plan and Hughes suggested that essentially bad spiritual direction may be better than no spiritual direction at all. Two pastors in Dirk's book saw spiritual direction as life giving and Schonwetter's and Pike's Canadian studies showed that spiritual direction still isn't that well known in many Canadian denominations though those who have experienced it value the discipline.

In giving spiritual direction to pastors, Michael Gemignani suggests that pastors need a spirituality informed by intellectual content and suggests this need can be addressed in spiritual direction. He also suggested pastors have unique spiritualities that can be identified in spiritual direction and, in doing so, they can better understand themselves, their calls to ministry and their motives. Dirks' observations about pastoral realities echo those presented at the beginning of the chapter and though he's concerned about pastors' capacity to discern well he suggests that spiritual direction becomes a place where they can practice discernment.

Finally, I discussed some of the literature regarding narrative inquiry, especially as it pertains to spiritual direction. Though the two disciplines are compatible there are also differences, such as the capturing of the narratives. I introduced McCormack's multiple lenses of active listening, narrative processes, language, context and moments and explained how they provide a notation system for the narratives of the pastor-directees and provided a way in under the edges of their stories.

In the next chapter I provide a way in under the edges of this project as I describe its inception, chronology, its various elements, and what I did.

CHAPTER FOUR: METHODOLOGY

This project was inspired by pastors I was seeing in my spiritual direction practice and it was through their honest sharing that I came to identify the three themes of this project: their relationships with God, call and congregation. I became curious about how spiritual direction facilitated those three relationships and began to conceive how to research this puzzle without changing the nature of the discipline of spiritual direction. Following, I describe the chronology of the project from that point, as well as the various elements I utilized, my ethical concerns, how I conducted the research, analyzed the data and presented the findings.

Project Chronology and Design

In the spirit of action research, I began the project knowing it would have an iterative nature. Each spiritual direction session was an iteration of the project. During 2012 I determined that elements of narrative inquiry would be compatible with spiritual direction in terms of a methodology for narrative analysis. I began to design a narrative inquiry, originally thinking I would ask twelve people to participate. I thought I would meet with pastor-directees for a year, twelve spiritual direction sessions, but upon further reflection I realized that between

disruptions in my schedule, due to Christmas and summer breaks, and the cancellations that naturally occur in busy pastors' lives, it would take at least eighteen months to complete twelve sessions with that many people. As I had already made the decision to invite some of the pastors I was already seeing and an equal number that I wasn't, I had to consider how many more directees I could add to my practice and serve everyone well. Eventually I decided to ask six pastors to participate for six sessions because this would allow me to go deeper with than a larger number of pastors. I would also be able to maintain the relational connections I had with the directees I was already seeing.

During the fall of 2012 and early winter of 2013, I prayed and thought about whom to invite to participate with me in this project. Though there would only be six participants, the project would benefit from as wide a representation of pastoral experiences as possible, including pastors who are members of a pastoral team and those who pastor alone, as well as pastors who have been pastoring for some time and those who have only just started, as the length of a pastor's experience could affect his or her relationships with God, call and congregation. It was also important to me that there be at least one female pastor in the group as the evangelical Protestant world could not be properly represented without one and her experiences might be quite different, especially in terms of her relationships with God, call and congregation. My own experience of living in Toronto led me to also include pastors from various ethnicities as one's ethnicity, especially in a mono-ethnic church, could also impact a pastor's relationships with God, call and congregation. Though a number of ethnicities were represented

in the group of six pastors it eventually become evident that I could not reveal their ethnicities without revealing other details that might reveal their identities. Another consideration was the size of the church the pastors were in as this too affects a pastor's relationships with God, call and congregation. The six pastors represent six very different churches of various sizes. Though all of these above considerations were important, a final one was a natural affinity between myself and the pastor-directee as this cannot be manufactured and, if I was only going to meet with three of the pastor-directees for six months, it would be an important foundation for honesty and reflection. All six pastors I asked to participate in my project agreed to do so.

During the fall of 2013 I decided on the final design of the project and began to invite pastors to participate. I struggled discerning how to study spiritual direction without changing the practice of it for the pastor-directees, both for those who were already in spiritual direction with me and those who were experiencing it for the first time. I fleetingly considered recording the spiritual direction sessions but didn't for two reasons. The first was that recording the sessions might limit pastor-directees' freedom to speak about very personal issues and about their congregations. Secondly, the time required for transcribing and analyzing that much data would have been prohibitive. I decided to record an interview both before and after the six sessions for which I developed interview protocols, appendices B and C, that listed specific subjects I wanted to cover, especially for the three pastor-directees I was seeing for the first time and would allow for pre- and post comparison. For the first interview these subjects included

some details about their spiritual histories and how they discerned a call to ministry. For the second interview the subjects were primarily about how spiritual direction had facilitated their relationships with God, call and congregation. The two interviews and six sessions constitute the action research iterations of this project. I then created an evaluation/reflection form, Appendix D, which the pastor-directees completed after each session. The forms were sent, filled out, and returned electronically. The forms constitute the action research portion of my project as well as providing narratives written by the pastor-directees. The forms were the mechanism by which the action, the session, was formally reflected on by the pastor-directees. I then did my own reflection as I read the forms. The twelve interviews and the thirty-three completed forms, three were not completed, generated 340 pages of data and my own handwritten notes added another sixty-four pages, though I did not analyze them as data as they were made primarily to remind me of what occurred in sessions.

I started the first interviews with pastor-directees in February 2013, where each one signed an informed a consent form (Appendix A) and completed the final interview in May 2014, the schedule can be seen in Appendix E, and the interviews were transcribed during the winter and spring of 2014. I analyzed the data in the spring, sent the transcripts to the pastor-directees at the beginning of June, and made a presentation of my findings on June 15, 2014, primarily to a group of spiritual directors. I then sent the narrative accounts to the pastor-directees in July.

Before describing how I analyzed the data I will explain the ethical considerations taken in this project.

Ethical Considerations

Though narrative inquiry, as a research methodology, allows for the identities of project participants to be revealed this was not a possibility for this project as the pastor-directees' identities, and the identities of their churches, could not be revealed if the pastors were to have the freedom to speak honestly about their experiences, especially in terms of their relationships with their congregations. Protecting the privacy of the pastor-directees in this project was the primary ethical consideration. Each spiritual direction session took place in the same room in the same church. Though the pastor-directees were seen by other people, they were not introduced as participants in this project.

My computer was password protected for the duration of the project. The signed consent forms were kept in my home office. To protect the privacy of each pastor-directee, they were assigned a number and their interview transcripts and evaluation/reflection forms were saved under that number, by date, on my computer. After the interviews were transcribed the transcripts were sent to each participant to be checked for accuracy. They later received a narrative account I wrote summarizing their experiences, these specifically focused on their relationships with God, as affected by being a pastor, call and congregation. In these narrative accounts I gave each pastor-directee a biblical name that reminded

me of them. I realized I couldn't refer to them by their assigned numbers in these accounts or in Chapter 5, as I wanted to stay relationally connected to them.

A particular secondary ethical concern I had, in regards to the spiritual care I was giving to the pastor-directee, was that I not in any way cause the pastor-directees unnecessary spiritual distress. I included a question on the evaluation/reflection form, that the pastor-directees completed after each session, asking if there was anything I had done or said during the session that was not helpful and if there was something done or said that was particularly helpful.

Analysis of Data

As mentioned in Chapter 3, I utilized elements of narrative inquiry in analyzing the narratives of the six pastor-directees in this project. In particular, I applied McCormack's multiple lenses to the narratives marking them up with the following abbreviations - AL for active listening, NP for narrative processes, L for language, C for context, and M for moments. I read each narrative many times, usually with the intent to do so through one particular lens but inevitably seeing it through one of the others. When reading the narratives through the lens of active listening, I marked where active listening was taking place both on my part and the pastor-directees' parts. However, because the interviews were like traditional spiritual direction sessions, I did very little of the speaking so much of the active listening was done on my part. I write about what I learned from this in Chapter 5.

Some of the narrative processes were pages long as the pastor-directees told stories within stories. I had to read these numerous times to make sure I noted

all the narrative processes contained within each narrative process. I began to use the notations “ NP B” and “NP E” to mark the beginning and end of a narrative process.

In regards to language, I started making lists of the words each pastor-directee used frequently, from their “ums,” “ahs,” “likes,” and “Yeahs,” to specific words or phrases. I also made lists of phrases and descriptive words related to the three themes of the project, God, call and congregation, as well as marking those three words each time they appeared in the narratives. I also created descriptive lists of words the pastor-directees used when they spoke about spiritual direction, especially on their forms. I looked for and noted words that were indicative of their self-image. Many of these same words were related to context, their cultural fictions, especially, as I mentioned earlier, in relation to their own views on what a pastor is or should be. I made a particular effort when reading the narratives through the lens of context to mark the ways in which the pastor-directees were conforming to, resisting, or re-writing their cultural fictions.

Reading the narratives through the lens of moments garnered many God moments, especially in the first interview as pastor-directees recounted their spiritual histories. There were also many moments of insight, often accompanied by moments of silence, which overlapped with the lens of language. In fact, many of the lenses overlapped. I found making lists of the words related to the different lenses helpful in keeping the lenses from conflating.

After I finished the analysis of the narratives, I noted the narrative processes that were most related to the three themes of God, call and congregation.

It was from these specific narratives that I wrote a narrative account for each pastor-directee specifically related to their relationships with God, call and congregation. However, I also included autobiographical details from their spiritual histories that were related to the three themes and their experiences of spiritual direction. I then sent the narrative accounts to each pastor-directee to read and respond to regarding its accuracy or verisimilitude, as narrative inquirers pointed out in Chapter 3. I then wrote Chapter 5 where I included some of the narrative processes of the pastor-directees, again primarily related to the three themes and spiritual direction. Following, I explain how I prepared to present my findings to a group of spiritual directors.

Presenting the Findings

It was a somewhat daunting experience to find a way to present the findings from this project, both the information I had gathered from reading in preparing to write Chapter 3 and from my own research, in an hour and half, which included a question and answer time. I chose to paint a picture of pastoral realities for the audience, and then present the three themes of pastors' relationships with God, call and congregation, and how those relationships were facilitated by spiritual direction, primarily using the words of the pastor-directees in the project.

During the question and answer time it became apparent to me that I was woefully unprepared to address the subject of call and calling. This awareness informed how I re-wrote, the sections on call both in Chapters 2 and 3. The

questions asked also indicated some of the confusion many evangelical Protestants, represented by most of the people in the room, have about the subject. There was a somewhat short and heated exchange between a few of the people present regarding pastors' need for spiritual direction and how to create an awareness of that need in churches. At the end of the presentation the current chair of the Tyndale Association of Spiritual Directors asked me to consider presenting my findings to that group.

To summarize this chapter, I provided a chronology of the project, which included an explanation of how I chose the number of participants and the number of sessions, both six. I also provided a rationale for the design of the project, including why I felt uncomfortable recording the sessions, which eventually included two interviews, one before and after the six sessions, and evaluation/reflection forms that were completed after each session. I described how I analyzed the narratives, provided by the interview transcripts and forms, through the multiple lenses of active listening, narrative processes, language, context and moments. I wrote narrative accounts for each pastor-directee, which they read for accuracy. I also included the ethical concerns I had regarding the project and process of preparing for a presentation of my findings.

In the next chapter, I present the findings of my research.

CHAPTER FIVE:

FINDINGS

This chapter holds the narratives of the six pastor-directees in this study regarding their relationships with God, particularly as it is affected by being a pastor, their sense of call, their relationship with it if you will, and their relationships with congregations and how spiritual direction facilitated those relationships. I include my interpretation of their stories, particularly in regards to how spiritual direction may help other pastors, and my own story as it relates to what I have learned during this project.

I begin with a short introduction of the pastor-directees and review some of the parameters of the project before presenting the pastor-directees' narratives.

The Pastor-Directees

The six pastors-directees in this project all live in or near Toronto. Two were born and raised in other parts of Canada; two were born outside of Canada. All are married and four have children. Three are children of pastors. Two are female pastors.

The age difference between the youngest and oldest pastor-directee is over 25 years. The pastors' experience in ministry ranges from three to 25 years. Two had careers in other fields before entering ministry full time.

Sunday morning attendance in the pastors' churches ranges from less than 50 to close to 400. Some of the churches are mono-ethnic, some multi-ethnic, and all are multi-generational. One church has been established for 20 years, another over 150 years ago. The churches are in diverse neighbourhoods, some urban and some suburban. At the time the project was initiated the pastors had all been in their churches for two years or more.

Regarding the spiritual histories of the six pastor-directees, all became Christians before they were 20 years of age. The youngest was four years old and the oldest was 16. Camp was significant in the spiritual formation of four of the six pastor-directees.

Project Synopsis

As mentioned in the introduction and Chapter 2, I chose to focus on pastors' relationships with God, call and congregation because these have been recurring themes in spiritual direction sessions I have had with pastors over the last five years. The quality of a pastor's relationship with God is central to his own spiritual health and identity. A pastor needs to know he is called to ministry to withstand the stresses of ministry and, unfortunately, it is often in a pastor's relationship with his congregation that he experiences that stress. Therefore a pastor's relationship with his church needs to be well differentiated and, coming back full circle, healthily separated from his own relationship with God. Below we will hear through the narratives how spiritual direction facilitated the six pastor-directees' relationships with God, call and congregation.

Given that I am utilizing some elements of narrative inquiry, as explained in Chapter 3, it is sometimes necessary to include long quotes from the pastor-directees' narratives. By including these lengthy quotes I am honouring their stories, their thought processes, and the spirit of narrative inquiry. I applied McCormack's multiple lenses of active-listening, narrative processes, language, context and moments, as described in chapter 3, to the narratives. I will be referring to them throughout my interpretations of the narratives. As also explained in the previous chapter, I have given all the pastor-directees biblical names that connect to their characters for their benefit in terms of privacy and my benefit in staying relationally connected to them while protecting their privacy.

The Pastoral Narratives

In the following section the narratives of each pastor-directee's relationship with God, call and congregation are presented in the order in which the initial interviews took place as this established a chronology in my mind, which became important in remembering who was who after I gave them their biblical names. There will be a summary at the end of each pastor-directee's narratives. Following the narratives, the findings related to my own development as a spiritual director are presented.

Deborah

Deborah, at the beginning of this project, was an associate pastor at a predominantly middle class church in Toronto. This was her first pastoral position. Deborah had been in spiritual direction with me before the project started.

God

Deborah had been experiencing a distance in her relationship with God, a somewhat barren wilderness, before she entered the project and was exploring ways to re-connect with Him during the project. After our third session in the project, Deborah wrote about how starved she was for alone time with God. “I have been afraid that my need would be so strong and deep that if I gave in to it, I might just be sucked away and need to disappear from the ‘ministry world’ (my needs have seemed especially incompatible with the expectations and time demands of church life),” she says. Here is an example of the impossibility of separating the three themes of God, call and congregation as her relationship with God is being affected by the congregation’s expectations. This refers back to Chapter 3 and how a congregation’s expectations are one of pastors’ stressors. She later wrote, after the fourth session,

One of the reasons I struggle today when people tell me to take comfort in God, ‘to run to God’, is because I doubt that God will be there when I need Him. I truly doubt that he will be a source of comfort when I need it. This is because that belief died in many ways during my ‘faith crisis’ [overseas].

Deborah’s relationship with God changed drastically when she was overseas serving Him. Unfortunately, she had a really difficult experience with other Christians. This was when she entered a wilderness. She knows the reality of her relationship with God places her in a precarious position, as Fil Anderson observed about himself in Chapter 3, in terms of encouraging others to spend time with God and to take comfort from Him.

I have been reflecting on why it is that it is so hard for me to relate to God emotively. And in reflecting on a few of our conversations regarding my

present struggle with faith and my past experiences with God particularly [overseas], I am piecing some things together more. Here's what I'm thinking - On one hand I have wanted to believe that God wouldn't ever abandon me or forsake me... especially if I was faithful to him in obedience- but then I looked to the cross and saw Christ's experience of forsakeness in the midst of his deepest obedience. Sermons have taught me over the years that God "just had to separate Himself from Christ" because there was just too much sin on Him and he couldn't be present with him. This is a truly distressing theology to me. I think it has created in me an insecurity in my trust of the Father. I am wondering, thinking that if it is spiritually possible for God to forsake Christ- it is certainly possible for him to forsake me (if the Trinity has the capacity to fracture, then my experience of God forsaking me is not out of the question.). However, in recent reflections I have come to question the theology that states the Father forsaking the Son. I am starting to wonder if Christ was really forsaken on the cross and I don't think He was.

Here Deborah is narratively processing, one of the multiple lens through which I looked at the transcripts, and she provides an example of how our conversations were causing her to reflect on issues between sessions and how they led to her being able to articulate a theological dissonance she hadn't been able to before.

Deborah had been walking on hard ground, as described in Chapter 2, in her relationship with God as her heart had been hardened by the hurt others had caused her. In another form she wrote of an experience she had with one of her children and how it brought her some peace in her insecurity and fear of being forsaken.

I had slept on my bed curled around [my baby's] bassinet but she didn't know I was there. She was fed, changed and was just whimpering herself to sleep. I didn't want her to know I was there because she might start crying and I wanted her to be able to fall asleep on her own. Even though I wasn't comforting her and she couldn't see me at all, I was completely present.

I thought of how she must long to be comforted and feel a tangible arm; She must feel forsaken. However, her experience of abandonment was not the reality of the situation. Even though I had to remain hidden for her

own growth- the reality was that I was completely present in the darkness of that room.

In order to move forward with God... if I am to engage Christ emotively, if I am to regain trust in the tenderness of God- I have to believe that it is impossible for Him to forsake anyone- whether it is myself in my darkest hours or Christ in His darkest hours on the cross. Because if that is possible than I cannot give myself vulnerably to Him. But if the reality is that God is wrapped around my bassinet and will never fracture Himself from me- I think I can accept that my experience of darkness and abandonment can never deny the fact of Emmanuel "God with me".

Deborah's words comprise both a narrative process and a moment, as seen through the multiple lenses, representing ongoing themes in our sessions – a distrust of God and a resistance to being vulnerable with Him. However, Deborah was extraordinarily vulnerable in our sessions, in the interviews and in the reflection/evaluation forms. Spiritual direction provided an outlet for these thoughts and authentic questioning of her own theology and that of others regarding whether or not God forsook Christ on the cross. These questions and thoughts could have been potentially isolating for Deborah, both from God and her congregation, a pastoral reality mentioned in Chapter 3.

Another aspect Deborah spoke of in her relationship with God was the gap between her head and her heart: "One of the main tensions that we have been able to identify through the last few sessions is the ability to maintain a soft trusting heart with God while critically analyzing scripture, "biblical" promises/claims; the tension between the emotional & academic pursuit of God." Gemignani spoke of this tension in Chapter 3 in regards to giving spiritual direction to pastors. After the first session in the project, Deborah wrote about the challenge of wondering what God wanted from her or for her: "I realize that perhaps I had begun to give

up on God in terms of relationship. After the last session I have re-begun to engage with God about this. I have asked God about that relational door that has been closed, to ask him what we are going to do about it together.” Here was hope that in joining with God relationally she would be able to better manage her fearful thinking.

Deborah’s choice to share with me her need for time with God, her insecurity about being forsaken, her word picture of God’s presence being like that of her body curled around her baby’s bassinet, and the gap between her head and her heart was courageous and spiritual direction served as the place for those difficult things to be said, thereby becoming the place and the process through which she was relating to God.

Call

Deborah discerned in high school that she wanted to be in ministry, maybe even a pastor. She had no female role models so the idea seemed to have come out of nowhere though God used a male friend to simply ask, “Why not?”

Given how difficult ministry has been for her in the last few years she’s asked whether she discerned the call incorrectly, the church incorrectly or the particular role incorrectly. Here is an excerpt from one of our conversations:

Deborah: But, just me relating to him as a human being, relating to their creator. And not, as you know, as a staff person or a pastor or so...

Sarah: Interesting. So, not having a clear view of your calling, actually messed up your connectivity with God.

Deborah: Yes, because I think for a long time I felt, well that, and other things, but I felt that it was something I did not want to do; it was sort of

too bad, do it anyway. Because you know life's tough and suck it up. And, so, I think my picture of God was OK, we have to push through these circumstances. I have to just push through and just embrace this road he's taking me on, even though I don't want it. So it created like, a bit of mistrust of God. Wondering if he really had like my best interests at heart or if he really knew me and how I was wired?

Sarah: So in gaining clarity about your call, it, it made it, in a sense easier to trust God?

Deborah: Yes, yeah.

In our final interview Deborah said:

Yeah, I think probably just because of the stage of life I'm at and the seasons that's I've been going through... it... they've been very closely connected. And now that...in answering some of those questions on calling I feel like I've been able to relate to God on a much more like intimate level, and personal, and just open up, parts of me that I hadn't, that I'd sort of shut down to him for a little while".

She also said, in another dialogue:

And yeah, just knowing, like you had said this so, a while back, like knowing yourself, the more you know yourself, the more you can relate to God. I find that to be so true because the things that, like, as I realize there are things that are within me that I'm drawn to or I like or that I want and that those are God's like seeds in me that he wants to grow that's so reaffirming, so that I don't have to bulldoze over who I naturally am in order to please him and what his expectations are.

Sarah: So, um, in a way you're kind of a recovering mis-called person? (Laughing)

Deborah: Yes (laughing). I feel like I'm a recovering religion addict. Of wanting the, the rule book and just wanting somebody to lay down...the ten things you need to do to please God...that's do draining and so life sucking. Yeah, just in the last little while to find more tools, to not be sucked into that.

Deborah's call journey has affected her image of God, perhaps even distorted it as Au and Au described in Chapter 3. Her call journey has also affected her relationship with God both negatively, in perhaps not discerning or knowing her

call well, not listening well, and positively in taking the time and having the courage to question it and engage in a conversation with God about it. Deborah identified her lack of passion for her ministry and how, like her mother, a pastor's wife, she did much of her ministry from a sense of obligation, of deep responsibility, and she also was able to name that she had "in a weird, like twisted way" clung on to things that she wasn't passionate about because "I have a fear of God calling me to other things."

Her call, according to Deborah, hasn't been formalized yet, either in her mind or through ordination. "But it's been kind of like scraping away of different layers of my own assumptions of what should be or could be. And I'm still realizing that there's kind of layers that I haven't seen yet." Deborah was able to identify that she's really drawn to broken places and marginalized women, people living on the periphery due to crime or abuse. Naming this was significant as for some time she thought: "Maybe I'm just called to this and I'm fighting God's call and I need to like suck it up and realize that, you know, God's call was going to be hard and it wasn't going to be fun...I don't want to be a quitter."

In this short narrative process, Deborah's sense of obligation, responsibility, of not wanting to be a quitter, of not wanting to disappoint, of wanting to please and to be part of making things better are both honourable *and* ministry-killing characteristics. When we look at this narrative through the lens of context, we can identify the cultural fictions of a called person and a quitter that Deborah is questioning and resisting. As already mentioned, she has seen a deep sense of obligation in her mother that is a part of her own history, something

shaped in her by her family of origin. This illustrates systems theory (Chapters 2 and 3) and how the first system we engage with, our families of origin, affects our formation as a person (Chapter 2).

Deborah has courageously faced her assumptions and fears regarding her call in spiritual direction. During the project she moved from “pushing through” to recognizing God’s seed in her. She saw that she didn’t have to bulldoze over who she is but in fact be whom God has made her – perhaps another example of her resisting a cultural fiction of what she was supposed to be. She is seeing who she is as the layers of her assumptions about her calling are being scraped away. Deborah should not be ashamed, as Wilson and Hoffman mention in Chapter 2, about discovering that she might have been operating under a false calling or hadn’t yet discerned her true calling. I don’t think it is too much to claim that spiritual direction has been a part of preparing Deborah for the next phase of her ministry.

Congregation

As Deborah has been trying to understand her call, she’s also been trying to understand her church, recognizing that she’s both a part of it and not. It’s been a disillusioning experience being on the pastoral staff of a church going through it’s own growing pains as she’s gone through her own. As she says, “...in a general body there are individuals that kind of tank the whole group by their attitudes and their stubbornness and so it’s hard to see people for who they are individually because you’re always dealing with them like a system.” Though

Deborah sees her church as a system, as I suggest is helpful in both Chapter 2 and 3, she is seeing it as being characterized by the actions of individuals. However, she also describes her church this way: “I just see a lot of good people that are just really tired and need soul rest and they think they’re going to get it on Sunday morning because that’s the only time in their life that they’ve carved out as God time.” Though there is sympathy in her words there’s also some frustration.

Deborah’s responsibilities at her church included the creation and staffing of children’s programs during the worship service. Below is a description of how she spent most of her Sunday mornings at church.

I sat through a couple of services in, I think, it was like early February. There was like two weeks in a row that I was upstairs, but there was maybe one other time this school year that I’ve actually been upstairs. But, I also have not, because I’ve been struggling with my own faith and even just questioning the church in general and who God is, and why we even read the Bible, like going back to all those questions, I haven’t, I’ve been searching in other areas, like spiritual direction, or like the different courses that I’m taking.

And so for me, doing that kind of traditional... to sing three songs, listen to a sermon, shake everybody’s hands, like to me that was just kind of turning me off church for a bit and so I think I needed the space that... I could have maybe pushed myself into a few more services if I’d ever really wanted to be up there but I’ve been content to be doing other things.

Deborah, though tired and needing soul rest herself, was not finding either on Sunday mornings.

Deborah’s experience of pastoring in her church caused further questioning of God, Scripture, and church itself. And while Deborah has been struggling with her own questions her church was struggling with some of their own, especially about the number of pastors they have:

And I think it makes the staff in general a little bit like defensive and edgy because whenever it comes up out of meetings people say well, we like the staff and all but do we really need all these people, so you start to feel really like unwanted or like kind of disposable.

Though Deborah's position at the church wasn't being questioned the doubts of the congregations affected the rest of the staff she worked with. This is another example of context, of the cultural fictions of what a church should be and what a pastoral team should be, bumping up against reality. This was a recurring theme for Deborah, a pastoral theme if you will. She was being destabilized by one system within another system, as referred to in Chapter 3, and becoming an anxiety sponge (Chapter 2). And ministering as part of a pastoral team, especially a demoralized one, was complicating her relationship with the rest of the church and her relationship with God.

This is what she said in her initial interview as she was thinking about resigning from her position:

when I've felt the strongest feelings of oh, I'm like tied into this bondage to this people that I don't even like, all that kind of negative emotion, my thoughts are, I need to get away from this church. I need to do my own thing. I don't want to be involved.

And so, it causes extreme reactions against the people in general but with the freedom of, oh, you know, maybe I don't have to take on this role with this congregation that I don't really, that I'm not passionate, like I care that happens, and I hope that somebody does it but I know that I'm not passionate about it and I feel a freedom to just appreciate people more for who they are instead of resenting them for being part of my call to obedience and so they've kind of gotten morphed into anger at God, that now, yeah, I can just appreciate them and not have such, um, kind of broken expectations about them.

In this narrative process Deborah is naming the desolation she feels in relating to her church as well envisioning a future where she can relate to the church without resenting the people and having whole, rather than broken, expectations of them.

In one of her evaluation/reflection forms Deborah wrote about spiritual direction and how it was affecting her ministry:

I think it helps me be a more self-aware person who is conscious of her own spiritual health. I can interact with people in a more integrated way than I have in the past. When I have a space to acknowledge the darker places/unknown geographics of my own faith I don't have to fear those places. I then don't have to try and shove them down and mask them over. Making me a more authentic human being instead of someone who is afraid of her own shadow and afraid of the congregation knowing her... Spiritual direction helps affirm who I am as a person in Christ whether or not I have it all figured out. I came across a situation this week where I really didn't know what I was doing and I felt that a volunteer was trying to direct me and inform how I should be doing my job. Through prayer behind the scenes I was able to gently assert my authority over the matter and also affirm the volunteer's opinion and integrate it into a response. I think they received my response really well and I sensed an increased respect. But it took me taking a step back and returning to some of the prayers and thoughts that I had been focusing on in SD instead of just reacting."

This is a rich narrative. What intrigues me most is in Deborah acknowledging the darker, unknown places of her own faith she has become less afraid of them and, even though she didn't know what she was doing she could step out of the situation she mentions, become less anxious through prayer, finding a way to assert herself while gaining the respect of the volunteer. Deborah became less anxious and engaged in the spiritual discipline of prayer to seek wisdom as to handle the situation. I mention the importance of being the least anxious presence in the room in Chapter 3.

As mentioned above, Deborah began to think about resigning from her church. She took a leave of absence though we continued to meet. This is what she wrote while still on leave:

Right now I am allowing a lot of the situations and confusion about my congregation to surface so I can deal with some of the woundedness. There have been a lot of things that have happened over the past few years that I haven't felt I could "sit with" and process because things needed to be done and the ship had to keep moving. I didn't feel that I had the "luxury" of processing- it would have taken so much time and energy that I wouldn't have had anything left to keep doing my job.

Deborah and I would meet and "sit with" the many things that had happened to her over the years and it was such a joy to see her begin to heal from some of the wounded-ness. Part of this healing was the irony that when she eventually resigned from a pastoral position that included discipleship, she was able to actually disciple people. Deborah has stayed in spiritual direction with me since the project ended.

To summarize, in Deborah's narratives regarding her relationship with God, she names her starvation for time with God, her fear of being forsaken by Him, her head and heart gap and she describes how she came to see her presence with her own child as being similar to God's presence with her.

In the narratives about her calling, Deborah spoke of her lack of clarity regarding her calling eventually articulating that she feels it hasn't been formalized yet. She recognized her sense of obligation and responsibility, something modeled in her family of origin, and named her fear of being called to other things, things she might not like. Deborah also envisioned the possibility of being called to minister to women who are living on the periphery of society.

Deborah's congregation was experiencing turmoil as she was experiencing her own. She spoke of her disillusionment with the church, the destabilizing of the pastoral staff through the congregants questioning if they were all needed, and her anger with the congregation being morphed into her anger with God. She also named the possibility of future where she wouldn't feel so responsible for the church and would be able to have "unbroken" expectations of the people in it.

Deborah spoke of how spiritual direction made her more self-aware and conscious of her own spiritual health. She also spoke about having the space to acknowledge the dark places of her own faith and how, when they are acknowledged, she doesn't have to fear those places. This acknowledgement has allowed her to be more authentic, instead of someone who is afraid of her congregation knowing her. Spiritual direction even helped her in a practical situation with a volunteer. Deborah had delayed processing the wounded-ness she was experiencing in her congregation. In taking a leave from ministry, Deborah could allow her feelings to surface, as she didn't have to keep the ship moving. Spiritual direction became one of the ways she processed her experiences of wounded-ness.

Deborah's narratives reveal a number of pastoral themes, or realities, including being a member of a destabilized pastoral team, her lack of spiritual rest and input on Sundays, and her frustration with the congregation she was serving, that echo and add to the realities described at the beginning of Chapter 3.

Esther

Esther is the only pastor of a Toronto church that is experiencing many changes. This church is her second pastorate. Esther had been in spiritual direction with me before the project.

God

When it comes to her relationship with God, Esther says, “I wish I felt more emotion but that’s not who I am.” She also wishes for a really deep sense of intimacy with Him. During spiritual direction sessions Esther would often leave with a thematic question, such as “How does my life reflect God’s glory?” or images of nature that nurture, such as orchards and water, or word pictures, like one about three ships and their trajectories depending on how often the captain took a reading, that would draw her closer to God and create an intimacy that lasted much longer than the session. This was Esther’s primary way of being good soil – receiving God’s Word and letting it take hold *and* entering a green, quiet wilderness where she could rest.

During the first interview Esther described her relationship with God like this:

That’s a tough question. How I describe my present relationship with God? Good. We talk a lot. I tend to talk to him a lot during the day. I’m not so good setting aside specific time to pray. I do it and then I ignore it but I think my relationship with God is good. And, I mean, I certainly trust Him implicitly. Sometimes it doesn’t appear that way, I certainly know He’s constantly present and constantly there and I try very hard to lean on Him and follow Him. Right now I think it’s good. I wish it was better but it’s good.

Esther was very open and honest in the two interviews and six forms she filled out after each session. As she said after one session, “I was exhausted walking into my last session. I was over stressed and at the end of my rope. My session was exactly what I needed – time out to listen to God and to think out loud” and “ I have once again been reminded that God loves me and walks with me, even in the valleys and the seemingly dark times. He cares for me. He has called me.”

Esther was able to declare God’s care of her and the unique ways in which he has made her. Esther made the following observation about herself, an example of her conforming to and resisting cultural fictions, in the first interview: “You know, I’m definitely a Martha not a Mary. And that’s a constant struggle. A) Because I’d like to be more Mary like but b) I need to learn to accept that I am Martha. The world does need Marthas– we just need more Mary-like Marthas. We need balance between Mary and Martha.” Doing rather than being is Esther’s fallback, her natural stance, however her mind and soul during spiritual direction sessions lean toward the aforementioned images of nature and word pictures – perhaps an indication of her Mary-like Martha-ness.

In speaking about the connection between spiritual direction and God, Esther said, “It keeps me connected with God. And it keeps me going, practicing the spiritual practices that keep me connected.” Perhaps it is Esther’s particular uniqueness as God’s creation that spiritual direction is so essential to her or perhaps it is the stage of life she is presently experiencing. It is noteworthy that Esther has been receiving spiritual direction for a number of years, in different

ways, and has always made herself spiritually accountable to another person. She has sought out this kind of support wherever she has been in ministry.

Though Esther wished to feel more emotion in her relationship with God she recognized she isn't really wired that way. She is, however, really wired to experience God through words and images, as mentioned above, and as her spiritual director I was able to start our sessions with Scripture passages or readings that were rich in imagery

Call

Camp, church, Urbana Missions conference, Sunday School teachers, her mother, who, according to Esther, continues to say "Esther just does whatever she decides she's going to do...she just does it", all influenced her formation as a person. And it was ministry that she was going to do. It didn't cross her mind that being a woman would hinder her in ministry and no one in her life made it an issue, least of all her father, who is a pastor.

Esther says, "I think my call in ministry is to empower and facilitate the ministry of others." Some situations in her church have caused Esther to question her call but ultimately it was the situation she wanted to leave, not her call. For her, the call remains intact and distinctly separate from the specific situation in which she is ministering. In spiritual direction, Esther found the safety and assurance of confidentiality to speak about wanting to leave her present church: "But, but the fact that I can actually be honest with someone about that, is pretty cool. There's not many people, I mean, other than my husband, there's nobody

else that really knows that I'm, was that close ever to [leaving]" she says.

Herrington, Creech and Taylor suggested that the questioning of call is necessary discipline in churches. Esther's questioning didn't, and perhaps couldn't, happen in her church but it did happen in spiritual direction.

There is in Esther a deep understanding that her call is not limited to a specific place or people – "I don't think I'd ever actually physically leave call, leave my calling - I'd end up in some other kind of ministry. I think that part of it might be different, a different kind of ministry," said Esther. Her understanding of her calling seems to allow her flexibility and the capacity to envision possibility instead of rigidity and hopelessness.

It was a great privilege to walk with Esther as she came to this understanding again, as she had experienced questioning her call before, and to see how sustaining God's call is for both the person and the pastor.

Congregation

Below is Esther's description of her church during our first interview:

They went through three very difficult pastoral situations...and they prayed about closing the doors and decided that wasn't what God wanted to do and kind of hunkered down, dug their heels in and started praying and that's when they deliberately started working towards becoming more multicultural. They realized they were pretty homogenous and that it doesn't work in Toronto. So, they really had to work to develop that. And then they've slowly started to grow but that's taken time and it's also taking learning what it means to be, we're still learning what it means to be multi, I actually like the word multi ethnic better than multicultural because multiethnic, multicultural involves varying religions and in the church that's not the case. We are multiethnic.

But, so, we're slowly growing. We did the whole new pastor honeymoon thing and then the cleaning house stage and so we're into our third year. Hopefully we're going to start growing again little by little.

In naming the stages of honeymoon and cleaning house, Esther is describing the pastoral realities of entering a new church and becoming acquainted with it. One of the things Esther soon realized about the church was that they hadn't had a pastor to rely on in some time and didn't realize they could rely on her:

I have to remind myself that I really need to be present in these people lives because it's been so long. I mean, one of my key leaders, her mother died a year and a half ago and they didn't phone me until after she was dead. I mean, she was dying, but it just never occurred to them that that was something they should do because it's been so long since they had a pastor to depend on to walk with them through stuff like that. It just didn't occur to them and she was a key leader and he just got to go, that is sad... They just got used to not having anybody to depend on.

There's a lot being said by Esther in these two narratives – the church considering closing at one time, the realization the church made regarding the need to change and the commitments made to change, the naming of multi-ethnicism rather than multi-culturalism, the named stages of honeymoon, cleaning house, growing slowly and actually relying on the pastor. However, another reality Esther names is the lack of support and care she has received though there is a new deacon who is asking questions about her support. Recently, Esther didn't receive a raise even after being promised one – intellectually she knew it probably wouldn't happen but emotionally the decision still had a bite, as if the church didn't value her. Esther's experience of not receiving a raise harkens back to Chapter 3 and the financial stress many pastors face – another pastoral reality.

Her experience adds a further dimension to the issue in that the raise, for her, was somehow symbolic of her value.

Above, Esther is making particular observations about the church, the system she is a part of but also separate from in that she isn't been relied on and she isn't being paid enough. In the midst of trying to understand her church, Esther understands this about spiritual direction: "Firstly, I believe that a healthy pastor is essential to a healthy congregation. Spiritual direction helps me be healthy, not just spiritually but also physically and mentally," said Esther. "Secondly, me practicing spiritual direction models this for my congregation and encourages them toward the same thing. I recently had a conversation with one of my deacons about his need to have a regular person speaking into his life." It's wonderful and intriguing to hear how Esther sees spiritual direction and how it is something she's encouraging members of her congregation to engage in. Her statement about her spiritual, physical and mental health is reminiscent of Veenker's assertion, in Chapter 3, regarding the importance of pastors modeling healthy physical, emotional and spiritual formation.

Esther makes this observation about what is essentially her own emotional and spiritual health: "When I am more in tune to God I can help my congregation stay in tune. Also, when I have had time to work through my stuff with God, I have more 'space' to help my congregation with their stuff." Esther's awareness points to, in my mind, the most basic thing she can be and do for her congregation. She is essentially practicing self-differentiation, mentioned in chapters 2 and 3, as

she isn't bringing her own "stuff" into her ministry of helping others with their stuff.

Paralleling systems theory, Esther wrote this after one of our sessions:

This session I was struggling with being caught in the middle of my elder's board and also with some of the things that have been happening. Discussing this and having Sarah ask me how this made me feel helped to clarify things in my mind. Also, discussing some of the systems things that were going on has really given me perspective to help me deal with it all appropriately in a way that I feel is God-honouring,

Esther is becoming more aware of the systems that exist in her church and is recognizing that people's reactions to situations in the church are often indicative of their own long-standing patterns, as can be seen in this excerpt from our final interview.

Two of my elders have a tendency to go to, like their stress reaction, when they're under a lot of stress in a situation, they will react a certain way. Unfortunately, they both react in totally opposite sort of ways, when they are under an awful lot of stress. And through talking, through spiritual direction, through talking it through I was able to figure out what they're stress levels are. And they have repeated. And so, when it happened again, I was able to say okay, instead of taking it personally a second time, like I did the first time, I was able to say, OK, what's going on in their personal life outside of here that's causing them to react this way? And so it gave me objectivity that I didn't have the first time it happened.

Systems intertwining, overlapping, colliding – being the least anxious person in the room, resisting triangulation, self-differentiating – all of this is occurring in this one narrative process that aligns with many pastoral realities described in Chapter 3. She is also seeing the emotional health of her church being revealed through a difficult situation (Chapter 2). And she's getting on the balcony, not just in spiritual direction sessions but also in the middle of situations (Chapter 3). There's evidence of Esther's increasing capacity to distance herself from the

congregation in ways that, interestingly, seem to help the congregation. It has been in spiritual direction where she has done some of the holy work of understanding the other, both God and other people, as well as herself. That's a gift of spiritual direction that Esther already mentioned – a healthy pastor for an increasingly healthy church.

In summary, Esther names her desire to feel more emotion in her relationship with God but also names her love of images and word pictures and how they create touchstones for her between our sessions. Spiritual direction can serve her love of images and word pictures well. Esther mentions that these images, and even some questions, stay with her after the session and that she continues to reflect on things we have spoken of between sessions. Esther also names her Martha-ness and her desire to be more Mary-like.

In regards to call, Esther, unlike Deborah, was able to name what she is called to though, like Deborah, spiritual direction became a place for questioning her call. She was able to discern that her call remains though the place in which she lives it out might change.

Esther and Deborah also shared an understanding of their churches as systems and Esther, in particular, recognized that the people she is working alongside are coming from their own family systems. She was able to make intentional decisions to self-differentiate and not to take a situation personally.

Esther sees spiritual direction as paramount for her spiritual health, as would Peterson and others who I mention in Chapter 3, and for the health of her

church. Esther has remained in spiritual direction with me since the end of the project.

Timothy

Timothy is in his first pastorate as an associate pastor in a Toronto church. Timothy had been in spiritual direction with me before the project.

God

Timothy is an eloquent writer, as you will see below, and chooses his words carefully. Here he writes of how spiritual direction helps him relate to God.

The peacefulness and calmness of the environment (the room, lighting, the time of day) is one of the primary factors of connecting to God. The other would be Sarah's non-invasive approach through the reading of scripture and prayer at the beginning of the session.

He added this: "The privilege of having a time and space carved out to let my thoughts through remains the single most important reason to the way I feel connected with God." Timothy's observations about the reading of Scripture, the prayer, and time carved out are once again reminiscent of the quiet wilderness referred to in Chapter 2. Timothy continues:

This may sound strange, but it is almost as if Sarah serves as a proxy for God; she is through whom I communicate. Of course, as a director, Sarah is not entirely transparent; she comes with all the ways in which she is uniquely gifted and formed. That is the beauty of it: it is not God communicating to me through a "direct line" and vice versa, but God doing his work through another human being unto me. This aspect also presents itself as helpful to me in connecting with God. So in the strongest sense, I don't believe I am merely chatting with Sarah during the sessions, but it is sharing my thoughts with God through Sarah and receiving his feedback through Sarah.

Timothy writes about spiritual direction in ways that I find humbling and illuminating. He truly seems to understand more about what was happening in a session than I did which is, in many ways, as it should be.

Like Deborah and Esther, Timothy was consistently open and vulnerable in interviews, sessions and in filling out the forms after each session. He shows his vulnerability in a form after our third session:

This past session was particularly painful for me because it was about a terribly ugly (verbal) fight I had with my wife. I was still in recovery mode as I walked into the session. Yet through sharing my fears and failures it became evident that God was there. Not only in the session, but he was there in the fight. I found peace knowing that suffering (albeit self-inflicted) is the way to experience God and grow to be increasingly Christlike.

Timothy's description of this session further illustrates the various systems a pastor is a part of and how his family relationships affect his relationship with God.

In our final interview he named something particularly profound affecting his relationship with God: "I think one of the recurrent themes over the sessions is that power is beginning to be something that is tempting...I really need to be aware of how those things are growing in me...perhaps I would put it this way, that there's nothing to prove, I guess. I need to hear from God that there's really nothing to prove." Timothy's temptation of power echoes Jesus' own temptation in the wilderness, as mentioned in Chapter 2, and this moment of insight, one of the multiple lenses, reveals a deep longing in Timothy to be accepted by God and a deep knowing that if he could really know he was, power might not be a temptation. In speaking of this over time, Timothy seemed able to create a

distance from the temptation – another gift of spiritual direction. This is a pastoral reality for him and perhaps many other pastors.

Call

Earlier in his life Timothy didn't hear any specific calling to become a pastor but a call to be fully immersed in God. When I asked if a specific pastoral call started to emerge, he answered that when he was a member of the church council, in the church where he is presently one of the pastors, which was a very formative time for him, he was still seeing church from a leadership stance largely shaped by reading books written by Americans.

Then, as he put it later, "I guess I feel at one point, this faith, this religion, of believing in Jesus, can work in ways that people, that most people do not see...it's much more relevant than people realize so I really want to be part of that." I asked if a new relationship with his calling had developed and he replied that it had become more real, that it was grounding him. Timothy is evaluating and re-evaluating his call as mentioned in Chapter 2. He needs to feel called and needs to realize that though he felt called in the past he was still blind, he only saw a certain aspect of church life, specifically the organizational aspect. Further along in our first interview Timothy said this about his call:

I would say it is very different than how I felt I was originally called. I felt that, I felt that I was called to just go and lead a church, to go and kind of organize stuff in a way that made sense and in some sense make it more efficient and effective. Yeah, sort of like a business leader. But I think God has helped me to put that in the right place. Not to throw it away, not to totally denounce it because there is a place in that for church but it's not as big as it used to be. I think now it has actually become a lot more scary, in the sense that it's not something I can control.

Now he feels called to point people to God, to point to the presence of God. “I want people to see that God is here, God is also in the future, near and far,” he says. The above narrative is an example of a narrative process and Timothy’s language, including the repeated phrases, indicates that he is processing as he talks, coming to the realization that his call is now scarier.

He continues, “I’m still forming” and in a later reflection form he says, “ My inner core tells me that I am much more at peace with God’s calling for me to be a pastor. He’s not calling me to be some influential pastor out there. He’s calling Timothy to be. And I must continue to be before my God. My ministry comes from this deep center of knowing and security.” Timothy’s call is seemingly not set in stone but it is rooted in deep knowing. In that deep knowing he can distance himself from his work:

Timothy: But yeah, at the same time a sense of self, a sense of self, or, or security in being who God is, in being who I can for God, that security has allowed me to distance myself from the work I do.

Sarah: Oh, yeah, yeah, yeah.

Timothy: That is very, very important because at one point I could not...

Sarah: You couldn't differentiate and now you can.

Timothy: Every little thing was against me and every little thing I can do was about me, you know, so I, it, it provided that distance for me so I think it's in a healthy way but the slippery slope is that, yeah, this thing is disposable now (starts laughing).

Timothy’s narrative highlights another pastoral reality – the need for a secure sense of self, rooted in his relationship with God. In becoming self-differentiated from his work, Timothy notes the healthy slippery slope he’s on that has made “this thing”, his ministry, potentially disposable.

Given systems theory, which I cited in Chapter 2, and Jesus' own capacity to differentiate, the potential disposability of Timothy's ministry is, in my mind, indicative of his deepening spiritual maturity and understanding of his role as pastor. Spiritual direction provided Timothy with the place and space to articulate his thoughts about his call and his relationship with it as he was grappling with his changing role in his congregation from member, to council member, to pastor.

Congregation

Just before the second interview, at the end of the project, Timothy had attended a training conference for pastors in his denomination. It was there he realized that he was the only one in attendance who had become a pastor of the church he'd been attending, in his case for eighteen years. It dawned on him that he was in a unique situation and that it may have contributed to him having trouble creating distance from the congregation. This is a distinct challenge.

Another distinct challenge Timothy has within his congregation is working with the church's senior pastor, another pastoral reality. During the project his frustration mounted. In the first interview he said: "...the tension between him and I has eased off but at the same time I'm also looking for leadership from him and he sometimes doesn't really provide that and that continues to be a problem." He clearly stated that it was his call that helped him manage this frustration. Unfortunately, by the second interview nothing had really improved. We had another dialogue regarding the situation with the senior pastor:

Timothy: That there's no compassion so people have a sense from him...

Sarah: Really?

Timothy: So, it's really weird.

Sarah: So, do you then find that you compensate for him?

Timothy: Of course I do.

Sarah: In the congregation? And then you end up taking on too much.

Timothy: Yeah, I describe it as I end up feeling a fool dancing around him.

Sarah: Oooh.

Timothy: I...I really feel like that, in a sense of pastor, most of our efforts, the congregation would view as a team effort...

Sarah: Hm hm.

Timothy: So, most of the time I would be the fool that sort of dances around yet my teammate is unmoved and almost, you know, lets me feel that I'm, just leaving me out there hanging dry. Just basically like that, that feeling.

Sarah: So, you and he aren't dancing at all?

Timothy: No.

He feels like there is a large cloud looming over the church and it's weighing him down in particular. He says there is a lack of laughter, story and emotion in the church as there is in the preaching of the senior pastor. A further pastoral reality for Timothy is the knowledge that his colleague's actions are affecting the whole church.

A direct link between spiritual direction and Timothy's congregation are experiences he has in spiritual direction sessions that he then takes into his

congregational experience, such as a benedictory prayer I prayed over him as he was leaving a session.

I remember one point, through one of your prayer you sort of prayed me out of there, here, and back into, kind of calling that awareness that God continues to walk with me outside of these doors. I think that is quite significant...it made a change immediately...that I can actually also do the same as I relate to my congregation...the benediction, right after our worship service now, there's now an added meaning to it.

This moment of insight, one of the lenses, provides an example of a distinct connection made between spiritual direction and practices in a congregation by a pastor-directees in this project.

Spiritual direction has helped Timothy stay grounded, just like his call does. "I am encouraged to connect with my congregation more genuinely, not as someone who's staying from up high. It keeps me from thinking that I am immune to relational issues." And in another form he wrote, "One of the recurring themes that keeps surfacing during these sessions, including this last session, is the necessity to *be who I am* before the congregation I am pastoring." Here Timothy is naming his desire to be authentic and in doing so implies another pastoral reality – that it is possible for pastors to be inauthentic, staying "up high," thinking they are immune from relational issues. His next statement, regarding being who he is before the congregation, relates back to his "sense of self" narrative in the previous section. These narratives connect the importance of a pastor's relationship with God to how he relates to his congregation and how his identity is rooted in his relationship with God.

Timothy also experiences spiritual direction this way:

SD provides a ground for me to reflect. It is different than reflecting in solitude. Both have its merits. In some ways SD is more interactive than doing so alone. In general, the sessions clarify my thoughts and surface what can be understood as priorities. Sometimes, however, God uses the session to raise doubts toward my current situation. For example, whether I made the right move or not in moving in with my mother. At the same time it surfaces some discomforts I was experiencing by naming them: “My mother does not welcome me” (which, in retrospect, was only a passing emotion but nonetheless was helpful in identifying it).

Timothy is experiencing intense personal and professional formation – there are internal and external circumstances bearing down on him and he is still finding out who he is in these circumstances. Spiritual direction again provides the space and freedom to express things that cannot be uttered elsewhere and Timothy, like Deborah, goes to some of the deepest, darkest places in his soul both in spiritual direction sessions and in the interviews and reflection/evaluation forms he filled out for this project.

To summarize, Timothy provided me with an awe-inspiring insight, and a moment of deep gratitude to God, when he described how he sees my role in spiritual direction and how it facilitates his relationship with God. Timothy named the reality of his relationship with God being affected by his family relationships, his primary system.

Timothy and Deborah share an expectancy about their calls becoming clearer as neither of them would claim they are fully formed yet – this is reminiscent of Cullinan’s work mentioned in Chapter 2 where she suggested that for many people, their calls come gradually over time. Timothy and Deborah are younger than the other pastor-directees and this may have something to do with

their calls still be somewhat nebulous. Timothy does name his desire to point people to the presence of God and to minister from a deep centre of knowing.

In regards to his congregation, Timothy named the challenge of becoming a pastor of a church where he had been a member and how he is learning how to differentiate within the congregation. Being self-differentiated in a congregation continues to be a recurring theme in the pastoral narratives presented so far. He also named his frustration in his relationship with the senior pastor – a pastoral reality, possibly for many pastors, as is the challenge to remain authentic with his congregation. Like Deborah and Esther, spiritual direction was a safe place for Timothy to process questions, thoughts and situations that would not have been appropriate for him to share with anyone in his congregation. Timothy speaks of spiritual direction as a way of keeping him grounded and authentic.

Timothy has remained in spiritual direction with me since the end of the project.

Luke

Luke is an associate pastor in a socio-economically diverse Toronto church. He's been pastoring for over four years. Luke was not in spiritual direction with me before the project.

God

Luke inherited a love of books and studying from his father. Studying became a primary way of relating to God. In fact, it was an intellectual curiosity that brought him back to God and the church after a time away in his twenties –

the “lost decade.” Yet, despite his intellectualism he is quite content with ambiguity and tension, in fact, “...in terms of the whole following Christ thing...it’s all about ambiguity. And tension,” says Luke.

In terms of spiritual direction and his relationship with God, Luke enjoyed listening to scripture twice at the beginning of sessions. Luke also relished questions, in particular a question about what part of the Trinity he was relating to the most and a question he returned to a number of times in his forms, “What does your soul crave?” His first and only answer was “transformation.” He came back to the question and answer a number of times, always articulating the ways in which he was transforming. Luke also discovered that he connects with God through his work and, though he enjoys his vacations, he doesn’t need to go on one to re-connect with God as he’s been connected all the time. Luke’s love of a good question is something I address in Chapter 3, especially Jesus’ questions. His love for God’s Word was an indication that he is good soil (Chapter 2), able to receive it and let it take hold within him.

One moment of transformation was realizing, after hearing a 1 Corinthians 13 paraphrase read to him during spiritual direction, that God trusts him. “This has made me think of the different things going on in my ministry as things God has entrusted me with,” said Luke. This theme of being trusted, of having a ministry entrusted to him, continued throughout the project for Luke, especially as Luke had generally only thought about his trust of God rather than God trusting him. This was a theme he revisited in the last interview as well.

Like many pastors, Luke does many of the same things over and over again. In one of his forms he wrote: “I found that getting a chance to articulate what had been on my heart about the miraculous/mundane and acknowledging where I had been seeing God in the seemingly mundane helped me to connect with God.” This kind of awareness can deepen many a pastor’s relationship with God, as ministry could easily be described as an exercise in seeing the miraculous in the mundane, and perhaps is even a pastoral reality.

Call

In one of his father’s books about ministry, Luke found an inscription written to him a couple of years before his father had died. It read, “You never know, you may find this useful one day.” His father had written the words in 1989. The “one day” was sixteen years later when Luke started attending a seminary as an occasional student. He was already in seminary when he became a deacon at his church.

Once he became a pastor there he started experiencing his “broad” ministry description and his philosophy of leadership became “I’m going to do this, so who is going to come?” However, there’s the call and then there’s the everyday doing of his ministry and deciding where and who he puts his energy and time:

So, yeah, I do have to figure it out, because even, I recognize I mean I preach about, I preach about, about 10 times a year? And I realize if I were preaching on a weekly basis I wouldn’t have the time to do this stuff. So what does that look like? Maybe it looks like leading people, in a, leading a group of 4 or 5 and getting into that in a big way. Maybe it means less time for sermon preparations, I don’t know. So yeah, I’m figuring that out.

At the beginning of the project Luke was coming off a season of doing too much at the same time even though he enjoyed the individual ministries. He was trying to discern what sustainable ministry looked like, another pastoral reality. He was also evaluating and re-evaluating his call, a healthy practice, as suggested in Chapter 2. By the end of the project he and other leaders in his church were starting to anticipate some changes and he didn't yet know what that was going to mean for him but it would mean change. He already knew there would be a drawing back from some things and yet a continuation of "doing what God has put in front of me to do." That's the ambiguity and tension Luke actually seems to like living in, another pastoral reality, and spiritual direction was a place where he could sit in ambiguity and tension and not be forced to move out of it but to receive companionship in it - another gift of spiritual direction.

His call language came to include God entrusting him, that it was simply "a sense of this is what I want you to do," the promise of "you will see me in this, I have made you for this, a certain way to do certain things."

Congregation

Luke easily incorporated images or phrases from scripture passages that I would read to him into his life or the way he was seeing situations or people. From Psalm 46, he incorporated the phrase "standing at the cliff edge of doom" into the suffering occurring in his congregation. The idea that God was present in that suffering, "planting flowers and trees" (Psalm 46) in the midst of this suffering, was "comforting and strengthening" to him. "I see a difference in me

being able to help people in the face of these cliffs of doom with more grace and equanimity than I have before (particularly when things were bad this time last year),” wrote Luke. “I think that spiritual direction in association with the other spiritual disciplines I’ve been trying to practice has enabled me to face this suffering I’m talking about with a degree of peace and calm which was not with me, say, one year ago,” said Luke. This is reminiscent of Herrington, Creech and Taylor’s observations about spiritual disciplines in Chapter 3 and dealing with the suffering of others is a pastoral reality, one that Dirks mentions in Chapter 3.

Luke also incorporated what he was experiencing and processing in spiritual direction with his congregation.

I think one of the ways is in simply sharing with people what I’m doing with Sarah. It’s given me an opportunity to explain what spiritual direction is and given people an opportunity to pray for something in my life in a very specific way...talking about some of the questions I’ve been reflecting on has helped in sharing some of the things I struggle with (e.g. rest/balance) and I think caused some people to reflect on these questions themselves (e.g. the “What is your image of God?” question).

He also incorporated the *lectio divina*, the reading of Scripture out loud, I was doing in spiritual direction with him into leading his small group. He then started sending out daily *lectio divina* readings to his small group members. Here Luke is cultivating good soil in those around him.

Near the beginning of the project Luke had gone through an evaluation with the board at his church after I asked him about his operative image of God. He and the board members scored him low on self/work/family balance. He said, “I shared the idea of my image of God being like running in a race with God ahead of me, and how upon reflecting on that image I hadn’t accounted for any

resting. I think this generally led to some good understanding.” As noted in Chapter 3, our operative images of God shape how we work with Him and for Him.

Luke saw God work in his small group in “really powerful ways” and the group meetings, in his mind, were starting to take the shape of “group spiritual direction.” It is in this group that Luke felt his deepest connection to the congregation. He used breath prayers, short passage of Scripture or phrases that are memorized and prayed, with the group and asked them questions to help him prepare for a sermon about where they saw God in the mundane. Luke is an “inviter” – so willing to try things himself and then invite others into the experience.

Luke and I engaged in a long dialogue about the ministry his church has with homeless people. There was one man he was particularly affected by:

Luke: I'd say he's in his 50s. Yeah... and we've been talking pretty, he was at my ordination actually, and he'll come in on Saturday and, and sometimes just really, really drunk and, and he's never caused any trouble and you know he'll, he'll, I'll be playing piano and he'll come over, you know, and he'll ask for Bach or something classical. And it's, it's been good, and just sort of getting to know him this year. And I was playing on, before this happened, and I was playing on Saturday night, and he came over. And he started, started telling me, how, how, like he's really tormented. And this is like a tough guy. Like, he's talking about going to the hospital after a knife fight and this kind of stuff. And how he's on his own. And, and I look and he was, like, tears are streaming down his face. And he, a couple of weeks ago, I was playing. I don't know what I was playing, something. And he goes, you know you're breaking our hearts. I said, I don't want to do that.

Sarah: (laughs)

Luke: Anyways, so he was beside me and, and I put my arm around him. And he was like wearing like a vest, a down vest. And I grabbed it like a

handful of it. And I held him against me and I said, “You’re breaking my heart”. And he was crying. And, and anyway that kind of went on and he went away, sort of, kind of OK.”

This man represents one part of Luke’s congregation as do the parents of kids in his church whose views of and fears for the spiritual lives of their children are affecting their children, another challenge, another pastoral reality, we spoke about in a spiritual direction session. “It’s, it’s meeting people where they are and I can say that and I can, can go on this, these outreach type ministries, and go, yeah, I’m meeting people where they are. And then, forget about meeting my congregation where they are. You know what I’m saying?” says Luke. This is again the ambiguity and the tension that Luke lives and thrives in. “Embrace the craziness,” says Luke. Again, in spiritual direction Luke sits in the ambiguity, the craziness of ministry, and sees God in all of it. Luke has decided to remain in spiritual direction after experiencing it for the first time as a participant in this project.

In summarizing Luke’s relationship with God, perhaps because of his relationship with God, ambiguity is something Luke embraces. Luke also embraces Scripture and questions as they help him connect with God. Luke named God’s presence in the mundaneness of his ministry, and in articulating this in spiritual direction this created a deeper connection with God. Luke’s ministry was pulling him towards God, unlike Deborah who experienced it pulling her away from God. Both of these experiences are pastoral realities.

In spiritual direction Luke named God entrusting him with His work and this became part of his call language. He also named his call as simply being a sense of what God wants him to do but also named that he's still figuring out the everyday doing, where to put his time and energy. Luke shares with Deborah and Timothy the experience of being relatively new to pastoral ministry. There is a seemingly continual working out of call in the practical realm for all three of them.

Luke connects his spiritual direction sessions to his congregation in more obvious, practical ways than anyone else in the project. The small group he was leading was studying Ruth Haley Barton's book *Sacred Rhythms: Arranging Our Lives for Spiritual Transformation*, a look at how to establish spiritual disciplines in our lives. This was a happy convergence for both Luke and I as he was able to process what he was preparing for the group study in spiritual direction sessions and I was able to hear how spiritual direction was influencing how he led the group.

Luke's capacity for sitting in ambiguity meant he could enter into spiritual direction without the expectation of getting answers or solving problems. He easily entered into a self-observing and questioning mode that made spiritual direction a particularly good fit for him as a spiritual discipline.

Paul

Paul is an associate pastor in a diverse Toronto church where he has served for over 25 years. He is still in his first pastorate though his role has

changed over time. Paul had not been in spiritual direction with me before the project though he had briefly experienced spiritual direction before the project.

God

My initial interview was twice as long with Paul than with the other participants because he has long-established daily spiritual disciplines that took much longer to describe than the rest of the pastor-directees. My final interview with him was much shorter primarily because spiritual direction didn't have the same degree of impact on him than on the other pastor-directees.

Paul has an ongoing dialogue with God that doesn't shut down. It's not necessarily cognitive but "in my awareness" says Paul. But there's also intentionality in his relationship with God:

... this whole issue of intentionality has been something I've truly had to work towards...I like a Spurgeon quote that says, set your course at the beginning of the day and then when you make the little distance, a lot of distance, at least it will be in the right direction. You know, I'm all about that and it makes good sense to me. Ideally I will do the important things in the morning because it sets the course for the day. I believe all of that, but, thankfully, from my perspective, I have moved away from feeling if I don't do this then this will happen. No, God loves me. God's in control. God isn't going to blow me off because I didn't do this, you know.

So the picture I developed over time was a corrected picture, so, you know, me and Jesus walking side by side, me stumbling and falling, my tendency was to grovel. Um, especially, you know, if a fall was sin related and feeling like I had to, somehow, I realized at one point what I was trying to do was pay for my sin in some way and you know, someone gave me the insight that that is so insulting to God, to suggest that I could and Jesus had already paid the price for that. And so, and so, my corrected picture is that Jesus has no, has nothing to gain from, and does not want me at all to be groveling, it's about, OK, let's be practical here. You sinned, OK, confess the sin, forgiveness, my hand is here. Stand up, let's keep walking.

That's the picture I have, God wants of me in relationship, um, so, you know, so that's why it's the ongoing walk, the dialogue that continues, so, it's not, I don't take out time for God (laughs). All of my time is with God. And I'm either enjoying His presence or I'm pleasing Him or I'm displeasing but I'm never away from Him. You know, we're just always together.

Paul's narrative of intentionality and relationship with God shows his familiarity with God and a closeness that continues to deepen as they keep walking together. It also shows that his operative image of God, as mentioned in Chapter 2, changed over time as he related to God. There is a difference between his ongoing awareness of God and his spiritual disciplines but what they share for Paul are moments – “This moment, the next moment, and string it together for the rest of my life,” said Paul. Any distance that could/would exist between Paul and God, Paul would take responsibility for but he actually wouldn't call it a distance but a wall. Here is an excerpt from our dialogue about the wall:

Paul: ...by our actions, by our attitudes, by our neglect, whatever, it is very possible for us to build a wall between us and God. So, in those cases, it's not about running after God saying please come back, please wait for me. It's more about, OK...

Sarah: Going to the wall...

Paul: And dismantling the wall. Yeah. And again, that's my responsibility.

Sarah: So, that's, it's interesting because formationally something happened with you and God where once you started relating to Him you never stopped.

Paul: Hm,hm. Yes, and I always had, I can never really remember not knowing God was there relating to me in some way. This might come back to my Dad as well which was, even though I wasn't always happy with him, I always knew he was there for me. Like, I never doubted his love. I would certainly be annoyed with him or not agree with him but even in those times, you know I never doubted that he was there.

After Paul read his narrative account he emailed me to inform me that his thinking about the wall had changed:

In my old paradigm, I would dismantle the wall through the act of confession and as a result, God and I would be reunited. In this new understanding, Jesus never leaves me. Confession is still needed but Jesus is right there, affirming me, empowering me, loving me, and available to receive my confession and give me forgiveness. He then remains with me to help me deal with any consequences of the sin, any restitution or rebuilding.

Paul's email is an example of his narrative continuing beyond the parameters of the project. Paul's awareness of God, his willingness to dismantle walls between them, and to then change his thinking about what that dismantling looks like, indicate a willingness to change his thinking. Like Luke, Paul enjoyed some of the questions I asked in spiritual direction sessions. In the answering there was a dependence on God, a deepening awareness about his tendency to be judgmental, that helped him see opportunities to confront this challenge, and an awareness of compassion for someone he hadn't previously experienced. Here Paul experienced going on to the balcony, as mentioned in Chapter 3. In spiritual direction Paul found an appreciation for the "unusual and wonderful opportunity to talk openly" about God.

Call

It was in the process of Paul understanding his salvation truly being secure that he came to the realization that he wouldn't be happy doing anything but ministry, though he didn't understand what that meant at the time. "I felt that that was what I was to do. So, I think already at that point...I didn't understand what it

was to be, necessarily, and I didn't...I never envisioned being a pastor," says Paul. He knew he needed training but didn't know particularly in what so he joined a music and drama team while he was at Bible College and was involved in as many things as possible including a year overseas working with missionaries.

Paul grew up on a farm and that experience led him to briefly wonder about living in nature and being self-sustaining:

Living in isolation has some, you know, some attractiveness to me but my purpose really is to serve God and to serve God by serving people so there's a disconnect there so... you know, that was part of my story, how I viewed the world and what my place was to be in it and that I had a responsibility that probably comes out of the fact that my church was a very strong missions church.

There was no clear audible calling nor was there any writing on the wall for Paul:

"...this sounds ridiculous but, you know, I woke up one morning in Toronto to find myself to be a pastor and I'm not really sure I ever planned it." Paul then went through a discerning process as he had an invitation to go back overseas and he also knew he had an interest in youth ministry. "And part way through the process I realized that God, well, I felt, that God really didn't care or it might be an issue of timing, that it wasn't that a big a deal," says Paul.

And so at that point, of course I knew I would potentially work in a church, uh, and I knew there was a thing such as a youth pastor but I was still surprised with the pastor title in a way and maybe it's because I, maybe even at that point I thought, you know, youth ministry could happen in a variety of ways. Although I did have a sense I would be in a church. Yeah, I'm not sure where that comes from... And I think part of my ambivalence would be, I've always wanted to be accessible so that's why I didn't become ordained for a very long time because I thought that might be a barrier and maybe that's also it, even yet, people will ask me what I do and I'll say I work with volunteers in a church setting or I do leadership training or I'll do something... I very rarely say I am the pastor

of a church because to me that throws up a wall and, uh, I'm not interested in that and I don't identify in that way.

Paul's narrative process, above, shows his resistance to the context of pastor, the cultural fiction of what constitutes a pastor. He is, in a sense, re-writing the cultural fiction, when he tells people "I work with volunteers in a church setting." Paul feels part of his attitude or stance towards ordination and the title of "Pastor" is a result of a distrust of education and position, an attitude shaped by his background. Paul was one the pastor-directees with the most pastoral experience in the project, and he was the one who struggled the least with calling in terms of his present ministry.

Congregation

Paul appreciates his church and the freedom he has been afforded to explore new directions in his ministry. However, he also points to another pastoral reality, one also mentioned by Esther, when he noted that there hasn't always been consistent care given to the pastoral team from the congregation:

I wouldn't say they didn't care but there was, even now I would say there's very little in the leadership that would say, OK, how are our pastors doing? You know, that kind of a thing. Are they being cared for? Are they, you know, there's the pro and the con that, looking back, I would have to say, OK, well, you know, I'm glad I've had what I've had rather than overbearing, you know, really restrictive and stuff...

He feels very much a part of the church, a member of the body, with a distinctive role – to enable, mentor, see potential, encourage and build. Becoming a solo pastor is not attractive to him as there are parts of that role, and even his present role, which feels like a waste of his time. "I used the word "waste" and I realize

those things are all valuable but if God is designing me to do this, this and this and I'm doing all this, that's not right," said Paul. There's a strong sense of call in Paul that shapes what he will and will not do but there's also a frustration with certain ministry tasks, like planning car rides for a retreat, that become onerous, cumbersome, and intensely disliked compared to other things he feels called to do but they have to be done. Paul's description of his call echoes Wilson and Hoffman's assertion, in Chapter 2, that when we are called *to* something we are also called *from* something. This is also an example of how the three guiding themes of God, call and congregation cannot always be neatly separated.

Paul had recently experienced a difficult situation in his church where he felt hurt, betrayed, and disappointed in one person in particular. Spiritual direction helped him reach a place sooner, he hoped he would have gotten there anyway, of being curious about why this person, and others, behaved the way they did. Perhaps because of his call, he hoped he would be able to better care for these people in the situation that had caused him pain.

In one reflection/evaluation form Paul wasn't completely sure about how spiritual direction was helpful. However, he did say this: "The things that we talk about are already on my heart but talking about them solidifies the message and gives me opportunity to explore it deeper, therefore better preparing me to be obedient to God in those areas."

To summarize, Paul's awareness of God and his spiritual disciplines are healthily intertwined and he knows he's with God all the time. He names his responsibility both for the walls that can go up between him and God and the

dismantling of them and also named the change in his thinking. And also, in recounting his past, he names how his operative image of God was corrected through understanding that there was no outstanding debt to be paid as Jesus had already paid it. He also names how spiritual direction provided the unusual opportunity to talk openly about God, indicating this doesn't happen often.

Paul names his call as being tied to his understanding that his salvation was secure and though he never envisioned being a pastor, and named his hesitancy in taking on the title, he sees his call, actually articulated in the "Congregation" section, as enabling, mentoring, seeing potential in others, encouraging and building.

Regarding his congregation, Paul names the irony of having great freedom and little care. Though he would rather have this experience than one of being micromanaged, this is reminiscent of Hoge and Wenger's work in Chapter 3 where the observation was made that pastors are under supported. Paul also names the tension between what he's called to do and what the congregation needs to have done.

As already mentioned above, spiritual direction did not have the same impact on Paul as it had on the other pastor-directees in the project. I think there are a number of reasons, including Paul's well and long-established spiritual disciplines, but I also know Paul better and longer than any other pastor-directee. This impacted my relating to him as a spiritual director in that too often I didn't ask a question I should have because I assumed I knew the answer. I explore this below in my own findings as a spiritual director. Thankfully, Paul has indicated

that he wants to continue in spiritual direction with me and I will have an opportunity to become more aware of my patterns in relating to him as a spiritual director.

Peter

Peter is a solo pastor of a Toronto church where he's been ministering for over 5 years. Peter has over 20 years of experience as a pastor. Peter had not been in spiritual direction with me before the project.

God

When describing his relationship with God he said, "To be honest, I think it's, I would say that my relationship with God is adequate. That's not the best word but I think it's not as dynamic, as thriving, as I want it to be but I think I have maintained a consistent walk." He added, "I'm always conscious that I'm not where I ought to be and yet I'm always consoled that God does not accept that thesis...I've been through difficult times in my life, difficult times in terms of I know where I'm not supposed to be and yet still God has kind of always carried me over."

Peter continued to speak about his relationship with God: "There's no doubt in my mind in terms of my place before God, my position in Christ...I know where I am with God – I belong, I'm his child. I'm loved and I'm cared for. We have this thing going on but I know I could be more. I deliberately said that - I don't think it's about doing more."

Peter was reading his bible and praying when we first started meeting. However, he felt he wasn't digging deep enough and that's why he said his relationship with God was adequate. He is very grateful for his wife who is helping him discern what God is saying to him. Schonwetter's study, mentioned in Chapter 3, showed how important a spouse's support is in ministry.

During spiritual direction sessions Peter found reflecting on scripture and moments of quietness helped him connect with God. During sessions he experienced a real sense of God's presence. This is how he described one session in a reflection/evaluation form: "During the session I really felt as if God was speaking to me, offering words of comfort, assurance and affirmation." And this is the good soil Miller mentions in Chapter 2, where the Word can be received and it takes hold.

In our last interview he reiterated how helpful it was to hear scripture read out loud. "For most of ministry life, I am the one helping people hear God through the scriptures and I've never been in a directed spiritual, um, session, it's more general conversations and stuff so this really provided an outlet where I was able to listen and to hear, particularly through the scriptures and the reflections, God speaking to me," he said. He added that pastors tend to read scripture for preaching and bible studies and to hear it just for himself helped him greatly in terms of his own connection with God. Here, Peter is stating another pastoral reality.

Spiritual direction has caused him to try and find God in places he didn't look before, to be more open to receiving His presence, and over the time we met,

he was seeing God differently and was able to appreciate Him more. This is a movement from thorny ground, where other voices were amplified, to good soil.

Call

Peter thought studying economics and management would provide a good educational base for his life. He'd been attending camp during his teenage years but there was one camp where he knew God was talking to him. The theme was along the lines of taking hold of tomorrow or shaping tomorrow. Peter was waiting to get into college but he knew God was asking him to change course. "It was so overwhelming. I couldn't resist it," said Peter. He went back to his summer job after camp and told his employer that he would be going off to Bible College at the end of the summer. He describes his call as "an impression on my spirit...I had this sense, strong conviction, that the Lord wanted me to serve Him through some kind of church vocation and I...I fought against it." This was in opposition to the irresistible knowledge that God was changing the course of his life.

God provided all Peter needed to attend Bible College through scholarships, accommodation, books, and work every summer and holiday. These provisions confirmed his call. A call he came to know as preacher and teacher, used to build up people's faith.

I see vocational church work as my life. It's not that I can't do anything else in terms of competence – I can't do anything else in terms of compulsion. I just feel compelled that this what I have to do, this is what God has called me to...it may change in its manifestation but I still think it's going to be in the context of a church.

Peter's description of his call being a compulsion is reminiscent of Wilson and Hoffman's statement that no one called by God into ministry will every be at peace doing anything else (Chapter 2). The struggle Peter has now is to discern whether he is called to the particular church he is in or not. He knows he's doing what he's supposed to be doing but where he's doing it is a different question. This is very similar to Esther's experience mentioned above. He's been able to bear some really difficult things in his present church situation and the fact that he's not been broken is, to him, further confirmation of his call. He has a curiosity about what God is doing in his church: "Maybe there's something to be said that God has me there not only because he wants me to do something there in the people but he wants me to be there so He can do something that will impact me," he said. Here is an example of the observation made in Hoge and Wenger's work, in Chapter 3, that without a clear call to the pastorate there is no change of survival. I think that if Peter is able to wonder about what God might do in him, it is a sign that he is surviving.

He was grateful for having a place, spiritual direction, to process and talk through what he's been experiencing in his church and to "have another voice...it just strengthened my resolve," he said. We learn more about his church below.

Congregation

"Sometimes Sunday morning is a chore," says Peter. He likes what he does, just not where he's doing it. Should he expect to be happy? That is an ongoing question for Peter. And what does effectiveness in ministry look like?

Having come from a non-congregational denomination and now ministering in a congregational church he has an anxiety about the church being able to let him go and having no safety net if his ministry is deemed ineffective.

Peter was experiencing a conflict between his call and the intractability of his church in moving forward. There is seemingly little openness to discover the opportunities for ministry and mission that God has given to them. This is another pastoral reality. Through spiritual direction Peter was made more aware of possible spiritual strongholds in his congregation and they were contributing to the church's intractability. After identifying these strongholds in a spiritual direction session he shared his thoughts with a small group at his church that resonated with his observations. He also found that spiritual direction has helped to re-orient his perception of his congregation and he was seeing his fellow leaders with greater compassion and sensitivity. This is another similarity Peter shares with Esther in that she began to see some of the leaders in her church through newly compassionate eyes.

His church is dominated by one culture and it is often the values of that culture, rather than those of Scripture, that determines how decisions are made. Peter spoke of a number of situations in his church that illustrated the difficulty he was experiencing. One was the search for new deacons. Peter and other leaders suggested a man in his forties who had been a Christian for a long time, was well educated and very capable. He was deemed too young by the leaders who have been in the church a long time – this was possibly a decision based on cultural

values but the irony for Peter is that he is close to the same age as the man he recommended.

There are very strong leaders in the church who have been there for years. A few in particular resist anything new or any new leaders, which is another pastoral reality. Peter has experienced situations that have literally made him cry. Peter was seeing the emotional health of the church being revealed through difficult circumstances, something Richardson points out in Chapter 2. He's still concerned about the spiritual condition of his church and has become much more prayerful about the members.

Peter has been at his church over five years and in that time there have been five out-of-wedlock pregnancies. These pregnancies have caused him to think about what he hasn't done or said, how he could have prevented these pregnancies. He seemingly wants more for his congregation than they want for themselves, perhaps another reality for some pastors. "For my own well-being... I will work with the system, this unhealthy, dysfunctional system, but I'll also try to agitate," said Peter. Peter came to the realization that he was indeed dealing with a system, as noted in Chapter 3, and was able to avoid the church becoming his "total institution" (Chapter 2) as he was determined to agitate within the system.

Maybe there will be some signs of systemic change but Peter says this about pastors: "We are that funny kind of creature, we're insiders/outsideers." He encountered this reality to some extent when he arrived at his church. There were cliques made up of people with certain commonalities and everybody else was an outsider. As pastor

he's not permanent. He's going to come and stay a while and then he's going to go. So, you can't let him get too entrenched and too powerful and, yeah, because, before long he's going to be gone... We're understood as belonging and as a part but, on the other hand, we're temporary residents.

He adds:

It's difficult to navigate because you, you want to immerse yourself and become fully involved and engaged with this community because it's your community but you also know that it's just possible they may ask you to leave at some point... you can't be too deeply entrenched. But for me personally I pastor better when I am enmeshed in people's lives. I'm kind of a relational person.

These observations harken back to Boer's comment about his experience in a church, in Chapter 2, and to possibility of pastors becoming isolated, mentioned in Chapter 3 and indicate a cultural fiction about pastors, as seen through the context lens.

Peter refers to his church as a loop church- it just keeps doing the same thing over and over again. During another difficult meeting Peter decided that instead of trying to find an immediate answer to an issue he would invite everyone to stop and pray. This was something we had spoken about in a spiritual direction session in regards to a previous meeting he had found very difficult. The group wanted to keep talking but Peter wanted to create both physical and spiritual space to prayerfully process the issue. Some people recognized that they actually needed to seek God in an intentional way.

At the end of our final interview Peter said about himself and his church: "I'm there to worship God, you know. I just happen to be the pastor but I'm really there as a worshipper first... I'm a worshipper first and I'm not an organizer, I'm not a director, I'm a worshipper first." Here Peter is naming, indeed claiming, his

primary role in church. Peter was able to name many other things about his church as well as his desire to leave. Peter had not decided by the end of the project whether or not he was going to continue in spiritual direction.

In summary, Peter named his relationship with God as being adequate and also named the support of his wife as being important, especially during this time in his life. Peter also named a reality of many pastors - he rarely has Scripture read to him. He found it helped him immensely in connecting to God. Esther, Luke and Tim expressed the same need but in different ways. Peter also named the experience of hearing God speak to him through spiritual direction

Peter names his call as “an impression on his spirit”, names it as preaching and teaching and a matter of compulsion and he names his call’s sustaining power in the midst of dealing with spiritual strongholds, cultural values that aren’t always biblical, strong leaders who exert great influence, the intractability of the church in moving forward, and his understanding that he is a temporary resident. This list confirms many of the pastoral realities described in chapter 3.

Through spiritual direction Peter ‘s relationship with his church shifted. He was able to name those strongholds already mentioned, which led to speaking about them with some leaders. His perception of his congregation was re-oriented and he began to pray more for his church while also asking them to pray, especially in meetings.

Summary of Pastoral Narratives

The narratives of the pastor-directee's regarding their relationships with God, as it is affected by being a pastor, call and congregation are located within their pastoral realities. The narratives of the six pastor-directees confirm many of the pastoral realities described in Chapter 3, including the stress of being underpaid, being discouraged, and experiencing conflict in congregations. Below, I summarize the pastoral realities of the six pastor-directees as they relate to their relationships with God, call and congregation as they are exhibited in their narratives. I then summarize the particular ways in which spiritual direction facilitated their relationships with God, call and congregation.

Summary of Pastor-Directees' Realities

The pastor-directees' narratives confirmed many of the realities described in terms of pastors' relationships with God, call and congregation, cited in Chapter 3. In particular, the ways in which their relationships with their congregations were changing or had changed their relationships with God, as they were now visible servant leaders. Deborah's experiences, including not attending church for some time while pastoring, the tension she felt between the emotional and academic pursuit of God, and the disillusionment she felt when her colleagues' positions in the church were being questioned, all contributed to complicating her relationship with God. Peter also had to come to terms with his own attitude towards his congregation, their intractability about moving forward and the

spiritual strongholds he discerned, and declare that his primary relationship with God is as a worshipper, before anything else.

Deborah, Timothy and Luke did not articulate clearly defined calls to ministry. This may have been for a number of reasons, including the confusion around call illustrated in the contrast between Cullinan's and Harvey's work, presented in Chapter 3, that exists within evangelical Protestant circles. Deborah and Timothy share a lack of clarity about their calls and Deborah went as far as wondering if she had misheard her call. Esther and Peter both questioned their calls, a pastoral reality for those who experience difficulties in their congregations, and discerned that their calls remained intact despite the difficulties in their churches.

All the pastor-directees' narrative confirmed how churches are complex emotional systems, as described in Chapter 3. Deborah, Esther, Paul and Peter all spoke of the realities of relating to complex systems that are often characterized by anxiety and disillusionment and their narratives show the emotional and spiritual maturity that is required to manage pastoring in those systems. Deborah, Esther, Paul and Peter all felt the effects of parishioners' and colleagues' words and actions while attempting to stay connected enough to care but not so connected that they couldn't self-differentiate. Deborah goes as far as describing her relationship with her congregation as sometimes feeling like she's tied into a bondage with people she doesn't even like. Esther and Paul articulated their realities of being under supported in their congregations and, though neither Deborah or Peter articulated this, it was evident in their narratives that neither of

them were being well supported or cared for by their congregations. Luke spoke about the pastoral reality of caring for those who are suffering and how that suffering becomes one's own.

The pastor-directees' articulated some distinct pastoral realities that the authors cited in Chapter 3 did not. A reality for Deborah was that her responsibilities and her choices on Sunday morning meant she wasn't in church on Sunday mornings. This is a pastoral reality experienced by associate or assistant pastors. Esther experienced people in her congregation not relying on her for support, which was a disappointing and frustrating reality for her. Timothy's narrative reveals the particularly disillusioning and painful reality of trying to minister alongside a colleague who shows little interest in leading a team and working together. Luke spoke of a number of pastoral realities: the mundaneness of ministry and finding God in it, discerning what sustainable ministry looks like, living in ambiguity and tension, and ministering to people who have very different needs. Peter spoke about his pastoral reality of needing to hear Scripture for himself instead of on behalf others. Another pastoral reality for him was the conflict he experienced between his own call and the church's unwillingness to change and move forward. Having described some of the realities of the pastors in this project, I now summarize how spiritual direction facilitated the six pastor-directees' relationships with God, call and congregation.

How Spiritual Direction Facilitated the Pastor-Directees Relationships with God, Call and Congregation

Many of the observations the pastors have made about spiritual direction facilitating their relationships with God would apply to all Christians. To summarize their observations below, I attempt to include observations that specifically pertain to them being pastors acknowledging that there can be no hard delineation between person and pastor.

For the six pastors in this project spiritual direction facilitated their relationships with God by providing a dedicated time and a welcoming environment in which to speak about Him, to listen to Him and to think about Him. The environment was welcoming because of the prayers that were spoken, the Scripture that was read and the presence of spiritual director. In speaking about God there was often a reminder of His faithfulness, both in the past and the present. As well, there was articulated theological reflection in the session that usually continued as unarticulated reflection, except in the completing of the forms, between sessions. Things could be spoken of God, including doubts, that couldn't be reflected on or processed in many other places. One person mentioned how it helped to have company in the processing. Questions could also be asked but left unanswered which, for one person, was an ambiguity he enjoyed.

In listening to God, there was discernment, which led to the recognizing and naming of things, either in themselves, or their situations. In particular there was the naming of a sense of obligation driving ministry, fears about ministry and of being known, the naming of temptations, like power, and the acknowledgement

of dark places. There was also a naming of identity, such as being a Martha, being a worshipper before anything else, and identifying as having the freedom to be someone who is still forming. In listening to God there was also the freedom for some of the pastor-directees to discover the specific ways in which they individually relate to God and to be authentic.

Though I already mentioned processing in terms of speaking about God, a few of the pastor-directees mentioned how spiritual direction allowed an outlet for their thoughts or space for their thoughts to surface.

Finally, in regards to spiritual direction facilitating pastors' relationships with God, a number of the pastor-directees spoke about knowing God's love and care through spiritual direction and being ministered to through the discipline.

Spiritual direction created a safe space for some of the pastor-directees to question, doubt, explore, and re-affirm their calls – something most of them could not do in their churches, as it was circumstances in their churches that were causing them to question their calls. There was also the time and freedom to challenge and question some of the cultural fictions about what being called means and what being a pastor means. For one pastor-directee, spiritual direction allowed for the envisioning and articulation of a new or different call. And finally, for one pastor in particular, there was the recognition in articulating his call that he still had to discern where to put his time and energy.

The narratives of the pastor-directees revealed just how complex and painful a pastor's relationship with his or her congregation can be. In spiritual direction the pastor-directees' relationships with their congregations were

facilitated by providing a place to discern the congregational system they are in and name the particular situations that are affecting it, such as a demoralized pastoral team. Spiritual direction served as a self-differentiating practice for a number of the pastors as they became the centre of attention, apart from their congregations. Spiritual direction also helped the pastor-directees process their thoughts and feelings about their congregations, providing an opportunity for them to speak about their congregations in ways they couldn't elsewhere and, for a few of them, express their desires to leave their congregations.

Spiritual direction also changed how a number of them related to people in their congregations, by praying for them, gaining new insight about and compassion for them, and gave one of the pastors a way of communicating to his board something about his way of working. This same pastor articulated how spiritual direction helped him deal with the suffering in his congregation calmly and peacefully.

Finally, spiritual direction facilitated three pastor's relationships with their congregations by resourcing them with ideas and inspiration that they used in worship services and small groups.

The Spiritual Director's Narrative

As a spiritual director in this project, and as a recipient of the narratives of the six pastor-directees told to me over two interviews, six spiritual direction sessions and six reflection/evaluation forms, I was as much a participant in this

project as the pastor-directees, as the elements of action research and narrative inquiry I utilized allowed and indeed required me to be so.

Below I describe my expectations for the project, what surprised me in the project, as well as what I learned from applying the methodology of narrative inquiry, through the five lenses introduced in Chapter 3, and what I learned from the pastor-directees. In a sense, what follows is my narrative.

Expectations and Surprises

The findings of this project, the above narratives and observations, and the outcome of five of the six participants continuing in spiritual direction, with the sixth as yet undecided, have more than met my expectations for this project. What I didn't expect was the amount of data that would be generated, the aforementioned 340 pages of transcription and my own sixty pages of notes, and how hard it would be to discern what to include and what to exclude. The three themes of God, call and congregation delimited my study and therefore the number of narratives I could include. However, the narratives that were not included have informed me as a spiritual director.

I didn't expect the depth of honesty of the participants primarily because, even though I assured them that as much identifying information as possible would not be revealed, they knew some of what they said and wrote would be read and heard by others. I hoped that they would be honest but they didn't have to reveal as much as they did for the project thesis to have some merit. The level of comfort with the discipline and me could explain the honesty of the three who

were already in spiritual direction with me prior to the project. However, the other three participants were just as honest even though they had never received spiritual direction from me before and two of them had never received spiritual direction at all.

The aforementioned evaluation/reflection forms (Appendix D) captured reflections, insights and information that could only have been discerned after some time had passed. Unlike the interviews, which required the participants to think quickly as they received no list of questions beforehand, the forms allowed for rumination and some beautifully crafted passages about spiritual direction that I will personally revisit and treasure. Normally in spiritual direction I don't get a peek, if you will, into the hearts and minds of my directees between sessions. I address this further in the next chapter. The forms revealed what had stayed with them after each session, what they were doing with what they had learned or been reminded of in sessions, like suggesting praying in a meeting when a group had reached an impasse or saying a benediction with more intention. What was particularly interesting to me was that it wasn't always what I thought had been most significant in the session that stayed with them. This was an invaluable reminder to me to ask what had stayed with them and periodically I have since done so. I also had encouraging affirmations of knowing that what I thought had been significant was indeed so for the pastor-directee. The forms also helped me to prepare for the next session in a way that I normally can't other than through my own recollections. I was also reminded to pray for the pastor-directees when I received their forms and until the next session.

Reading the forms, transcribing the interviews, and reading the transcripts allowed me to develop a layer of intimacy with these directees that I don't normally experience as I could re-hear the stories, catching nuances I wouldn't hear after one telling, understand the significance of some events, and recognize emerging patterns that I wouldn't necessarily see after hearing something even a few times. This was a confirmation for me that I had chosen the right methodology, narrative inquiry, to utilize for my research as the method proved to have congruence with spiritual direction and enhanced how I gave spiritual direction. There are elements of narrative inquiry, particularly the multiple lenses, which would be helpful for spiritual directors to become familiar and incorporate into their practice of spiritual direction.

What I Learned from the Lenses

The multiple lenses through which I looked at the narratives, active listening, narrative processes, language, context, and moments (McCormack 2000, 285) served me well in learning to pay attention to what is really being said in spiritual direction sessions.

Regarding active listening, I, as the listener, am to identify characters and main events in the narrative as well as be aware of how I am responding emotionally and intellectually to the participant (McCormack 2000, 288). This has reinforced my awareness of what is happening in me in receiving someone's story and what I need to do, especially in terms of controlling myself emotionally, so that I can remain completely present to the other. Sometimes that means getting

caught up in the emotions they are exhibiting and sometimes it means not doing so. The data shows that I am still learning how to do this. Sometimes I laugh when they laugh, sometimes I don't, and sometimes I laugh when they aren't. A few times I noticed on the digital recordings that their story was affecting me in a way that took me out of the moment as I was remembering something similar in my own life. This is something every spiritual director has to learn how to manage as feeling a similar emotion to the directee can actually keep me engaged or cause me to disengage.

I was somewhat chagrined to find out from the transcripts that I am not nearly as good a listener as I thought I was. This was evident in my taking a dialogue in a new direction before the participant had finished processing a subject or interjecting a thought or opinion that really wasn't required or didn't actually enhance the conversation in any way. I know from listening to the digital recordings and reading the transcripts that the pastor-directees followed my lead. I also know that more was often revealed if I just said a simple "Uh uh" at the end of an explanation or story but if I asked a question or offered an observation the answer was generally much shorter.

The second lens, identifying narrative processes, requires the researcher to recognize linked events and actions and to continually ask, "What happened?" and to then identify the point of the story (McCormack 2000, 288-291). This happens naturally in spiritual direction as these are inherent elements of the practice.

The third lens, the language lens (McCormack 2000, 291-29), made up of word groupings, phrases, frequently used words, metaphors, analogies, repetition, words that make space for thought, such as “um”, “ah”, and “like”, formalized the kind of listening I was already engaging in during spiritual direction sessions. In fact, it felt as if I was granted permission to do something I had always wanted to do but didn’t necessarily know the value of in terms of spiritual direction. Though I would have happily argued before the project that how someone speaks is just as important as what they actually say, utilizing this lens helped me understand why. Repetition was something I had already been trained to notice aurally in my spiritual direction training. However, the transcriptions and forms made me much more aware of the repetition that was occurring in individual sessions and over the course of a number of sessions. I found that people often repeat what is important to them or what is new to them. Repetition is an invitation to see patterns of thinking and feeling and to explore, by simply asking, “Do you know you are saying this word a lot? Do you know why?” Repeated “ums”, “ahs” and “likes” are actually thinking words, they are filler until a new thought has been formed in the mind of the speaker or they are noises that indicate a new thought and mouths are still moving while minds are processing. Either way, I still have to learn more about when to jump in and ask a question and when to not do so. Reading the transcripts of their interviews embarrassed a number of the pastor-directees, as they were appalled to see how many “ums”, “ahs” and “likes” they used. I assured them that if they looked at my parts of the conversation they would see that I was doing the same thing.

There were also some notable differences between my pastor-directees and their use of language or language patterns. Given that most of them are preachers, or at least public speakers, their interviews were a lovely and lively example of tangents partially explored and abandoned and words and ideas skipping over and bumping into each other. Their interviews were not well thought out, cogent arguments or explanations but truly “in the moment” answers. As already mentioned, some of them unknowingly used many “ums” and “ahs” while they were thinking. Others would take long silent breaks before answering a question. Three of the men’s voices would consistently drop when they were thinking deeply, often when they were trying to express a feeling. The women were the easiest to hear on the digital recordings.

I am now much more aware of the language patterns of all my directees, especially the new ones to whom I listen to with more intentionality at the beginning of our acquaintance. I’m more attuned to hesitancy, often indicated by someone starting sentences with a repeated word like “I” or “but”, more aware of the verbal signs mentioned above that indicate processing or thinking, and the use of certain words or a specific kind of vocabulary. Recently, I am very sensitive to words that indicate someone has a passing knowledge with systems theory, such as triangulation or self-differentiation, or counselling words, such as enmeshment. These signs help me to take note of what might be causing the hesitancy, learn each persons thinking rhythm, and ask what they know about certain subjects.

The fourth lens, the context lens, requires the researcher to ask questions about cultural fictions (McCormack 2000, 293) that the participant is drawing on

to construct his or her view of herself and where the participant conforms to them or resists them. In this case, a cultural fiction is made up of the assumptions a pastor makes about what a pastor is or does. This lens is particularly congruent with systems theory. I already knew that pastors exist in multiple systems – that is why I included systems theory in my theological rationale (Chapter 2). However, I was somewhat taken aback by how often the different systems a pastor interacts with enter into spiritual direction and how much those systems impact each other. Pastors' lives are complicated. Many people walk into a spiritual direction session with a pastor though none of them are physically present. These people can represent long-established relationships, such as a parent, or someone who walked through the church doors the morning of the day I am meeting with a pastor-directee. One role many pastors have within their congregations is that of a receptacle of people's pain, fears, dreams, and joys. Most committed sons, daughters, siblings, parents and spouses also play this role in their families. Pastors need to have coping mechanisms in place to manage the impact of these feelings and stories of those they love or are caring for pastorally. This becomes more complicated when situations in a pastor's family are affected by, or even caused by, a situation at church or vice versa. An added complication is that many pastors feel not just emotionally responsible for the people around them but also spiritually, desiring to help people draw closer to God in the midst of what they are experiencing. If pastors don't have the aforementioned coping mechanisms in place, or the time to use them, the interwoven systems that a pastor is connected to come into spiritual direction with him and the session sometimes becomes an

exercise in separating out the systems he is in, discerning their impact on him spiritually.

I kept dialogues about the families of the pastor-directees to a minimum in the findings above, as they could too easily identify some of the pastors. Those dialogues, like Deborah's awareness of her own mother's patterns of duty and obligation, show how intertwined the systems are and how an event in one can affect the other, or even multiple systems within a church. Deborah, Esther, Timothy and Peter regularly used systems theory language to describe their context or their situations. Deborah ultimately resigned her position at her church partially because she knew that continuing to engage in that system as a pastor would be damaging to her relationship with God.

Finally, moments, the fifth lens, such as the ones that make up Paul's life with God mentioned above, are one of the main elements of spiritual direction. They are events, stories, memories, epiphanies, turning points, surprises, insights, puzzles, sufferings and joys. I was so privileged to have been present for so many moments during this project and to have those moments prolonged when I read the forms that were filled out after each session. Deborah's physical moment, when her body was wrapped around her baby's bassinet, became a spiritual moment, knowing that God is with her, just as she was with her baby, even when she can't see or feel his presence.

The five lenses magnified many things, especially those mentioned above, that I will continue to listen for and use in my spiritual direction practice.

What I Learned about the Pastor-Directees

The pastor-directees who participated in this project are all intelligent, wise, articulate, curious, dedicated, stubborn, idealistic, and reflective people. They all engaged in spiritual direction with a curiosity about what they would learn about God and themselves. They readily noticed and articulated the ways in which they could apply what they were learning in their pastorates. In fact, their dedication to their churches was seen in this and their desire to learn more. We had many side conversations about books, especially in regards to subjects that came up in spiritual direction sessions. A number of them read books I recommended and I started a list of ones they spoke about. Their dedication was further seen in their willingness to be challenged as to how they saw their churches, prayed for their churches, and related to their churches.

All of the pastor-directees showed a strain of stubbornness that perhaps could be described as idealistic in that they were tenacious in hanging on to hope – hope for their families, their churches, especially in desiring to create a welcoming community where people can come to know God, and for the world, especially for those who are suffering.

They also showed a capacity to be very aware and discerning about the situations they found themselves and the people they felt responsible for but often required some help in becoming self aware, especially in terms of how these situations and people were affecting them.

The pastors differed in a number of ways, as well they should as they are all unique, and their personalities and age appeared to predicate their capacity to

put firm boundaries in place in terms of their relationships with their churches. Some of these boundaries needed to be in place yet there was often both a laxness and rigidity in keeping them, depending on the person and what they were experiencing at the time. This was interesting to me as those who had less personal resources were often the ones who were lax in keeping the boundaries in place, and those who had the resources kept them rigidly in place. Perhaps the latter was the result of wisdom acquired over years.

Finally, most of the pastor-directees were not availing themselves of the benefits of spiritual disciplines. They knew they should be taking more time to be with God and a number of them actually needed permission to explore new and different ways of relating to Him.

What I Learned from the Pastor-Directees

As mentioned earlier, participating in the project didn't overly impact Paul, one of the pastor-directees. In my mind, Paul provided a great foil to other pastor-directees and also tempered my view of spiritual direction as being essential for every pastor. Paul has been in pastoral ministry the longest and he had the longest established spiritual disciplines, which included daily praying, reading scripture, reading books, listening to podcasts of other Christian leaders, as well as regular retreats. I also mentioned that I came to the awareness that I may not have served Paul well as a spiritual director because I've known him for a long time and I noted that I didn't ask questions I should have because I assumed I knew the answer. This points to a larger issue in spiritual direction as some directors would

never give spiritual direction to someone they already know. There is simply not enough space here to properly debate this issue here but I learned two things. One, the transcripts of the interviews brought to light this fault in my work as a spiritual director which indicates that periodically recording a session with a directee, with his permission, would be helpful in identifying issues like this. Two, I learned that while all the other pastor-directees found the form fairly easy to fill out, Paul did not. Finding another way to get the same information would have been better for him. However, it should be pointed out that Paul was one of the pastor-directees who had not been in spiritual direction with me before the project so it took a few sessions before he felt he could answer some of the questions.

A welcome outcome of the project was that the pastor-directees in my project wrote so eloquently and knowledgably about spiritual direction even though they had not studied it as a subject nor had a couple of them even experienced it before the project. Even though I was the one leading them through it they were able to speak and write about it in ways that I could not, perhaps because of their vantage point. However, it's humbling to realize how transparent my practice of spiritual direction actually is and how much the pastor-directees notice. As already mentioned, the pastor-directees filled out reflection/evaluation forms electronically after each session. The form included questions about how spiritual direction was impacting how they connected to God in the session and since the session, how it was impacting their connection with their congregations, and how it was impacting their spiritual disciplines. I also asked if, in the last

session, there was something done or said that was or not helpful. Now that I'm at the end of the project I would create a somewhat different form, using "relationship" rather than "connection", and I'd include a question about call. I did include call as a subject to cover in the interview protocol for the interviews. Call was a subject that came up in the sessions on a regular basis so it still showed up on the forms, especially in the answers to the question about congregations. It was in the written responses to the questions on the form that I received most of the pastor-directees' thoughts about spiritual direction, often in the section where they were asked if they had any other stories or comments.

What the Pastor-Directees Found Helpful about Spiritual Direction

Below I have included a few portions of dialogue from interviews or written portions of their reflection/evaluation forms to illustrate their understanding of spiritual direction and what they found to be helpful about it outside of the confines of the three themes of pastors' relationships with God, call and congregation. Interestingly, Deborah and Timothy were the two youngest pastor-directees in the project and articulated things that some of the older participants did not. Their reflections were insightful, profound, and stirring. I have wondered if this was simply because the exercise of filling out the forms suited their personalities or way of thinking, if they took more time than other participants to fill out the forms, or if they were in a particular spiritually formative season where spiritual direction was serving them in a way that wasn't the case for the other participants. I truly enjoyed being taught about the discipline

of spiritual direction from all the project participants and particularly enjoyed the way God used Deborah and Timothy, both significantly younger than myself, to do that.

Deborah

Below Deborah speaks about what she found particularly helpful about spiritual direction and the director:

I think what was particularly helpful was your response to some of the things that I had to say. I did not feel judged or criticized for things that continue to tangle into my interactions with God. Which is something you can tell more from the way someone looks at you when you share than from anything I remember being said!

I don't talk about some of those complex relational waters that I have with my husband because of what I do and because all our relationships are pretty much shared. But I feel safe bringing it up occasionally at SD and feel affirmed to keep bringing these matters before God and to know God understands-which was particularly helpful this week.

I also appreciate the way you recap and summarize the themes and issues not just of the session but of the past season- helps me to see the lines that continue through my circumstances.

Deborah's' observations point to the importance of the spiritual director being non-judgmental and spiritual direction being a safe place to speak about that which really can't be spoken of elsewhere. Deborah also points to the reminding that often characterizes spiritual direction.

Esther

Below, Esther also sees spiritual direction as a safe place to talk:

Yeah, if I didn't have a spiritual director where I could talk these things through, where would I talk them through? And I know me, I would have to talk them through with somebody somehow, somewhere and I would hopefully be able to find somebody who was disassociated. And it would

probably end up being a family member and that's not always healthy either. I think that's the biggest value for me. Well, not quite, that is one of the biggest values. The biggest value is just keeping me on track with my own spiritual life. That's for me, that's the key one.

Esther also defines spiritual direction's greatest value for her - keeping her on track with her spiritual life.

Timothy

Timothy's writing is dense and full of imagery. Below he writes of spiritual direction as a lens:

The discipline of spiritual direction remains a resourceful way to keep me open to the guiding of Holy Spirit in every day life. Yet it has also given me a whole new lens of seeing things and people around me by delicately unveiling the intricate relationship between me, the unique person God has made, and the way God desires to lead me and others through me. That is to say that while God still speaks as a God who is holy and apart from me from without, He also speaks from within and through the very characteristics and tendencies that are innate. I acknowledge this is a fine line and maybe a "slippery slope" to some as the line between me speaking and God speaking is blurred. But it also yields this awareness: that at the same time God's presence and I are evermore integrated and organic. I suppose the branches cannot be far from the vine and though the very nutrients and sustenance running through the entire vine may be in different forms but are one and the same at its root. This tension between the distinction and the integration (or oneness) is what I have come to accept as part of reality in the Kingdom of God; this tension between God and I shall forever be entwined yet it is also clear to me where all of life's resources come from.

Timothy names spiritual direction as a resource in keeping him open to the Holy Spirit and the lens it provides has enabled him to see the intricate relationship between himself and God and what God has created him for, being lead by God and leading others. He is also processing what it is to be at one with God yet still

distinct from Him. This discourse is an example of Timothy's need to think theologically and this form, and spiritual direction, allows him to do so.

Luke

In the final interview Luke spoke of how spiritual direction had served him:

Yeah, I, I appreciate you know, the chance to, you know, take an hour, even if it's just once a month to, you know, contemplate and, and think. And, as we say, sort of get away from everything. And, and, yeah, I'd, I've been able to do that. I mean I'm not, you know, finding myself. Like sometimes you have to do something and your mind is like, thinking about what I have to do. But no, I think I've been able to do that. It's, it's been a place where I could just sort of focus on these questions of, of, where is God in this and who is God in all of this stuff. The theological reflection questions.

Luke is generally much more eloquent than this however his language is an example of repetition being a sign of thinking. Luke appreciates the time to think, get away from everything, and reflect theologically about where and who God is in "this stuff."

Paul

Below is an example of how my saying "Hm hm" brought more out of a directee than a question.

Paul: Um, and I think it was good but I felt it was somewhat ambiguous. Now, I know that's also a personality thing. You know, I'm looking for the push back.

Sarah: Hm hm.

Paul: You know, I'm not looking for something that's warm and fuzzy.

Sarah: Hm hm.

Paul: Um, you know, I will say that our conversations at times have pushed me to speak more categorically than I would normally.

Sarah: Hm hm.

Paul: And I can see that being a good thing because that potentially, um, causes something that just might be a seed to be shown more clearly so then if it's a problem then it's more out in the open. What I'm saying is, if everything is talked about in such moderate terms...

Sarah: Hm hm.

Paul: You may not be able to see what's really there so, because I think of our ability to talk about things and my comfort level with you I've been able to say things that, or I'll say this is going to sound judgmental but

Sarah: (Chuckle). Yeah.

Paul: In a way that's good because where in another conversation I would self manage.

Sarah: Yeah.

Paul: To not say that, in this situation saying it brings it out into the open, which sheds a light on it perhaps.

Here Paul is indicating that he wants more pushback in spiritual direction. This was one of the indicators for me that I perhaps had not served him well. He also mentions that he doesn't feel like he has to self-manage and can speak directly about issues thereby shedding more light on them.

Peter

From the beginning of the project, Peter expressed how much he loved hearing Scripture read to him. This remained true in this excerpt from his final interview:

Sarah: ...and so my last question - would you recommend spiritual direction to other pastors?

Peter: Definitely. Um, it, I think because it's different from a mentoring session or a counselling session, and it's, for one, there are no expectations (laughs).

Sarah: (laughs).

Peter: In the sense that I, you know, I think there are two parts to our... I analyze our sessions in two parts. One, there's the section I talk and reflect on scripture, I try to hear what God is saying to me. And that was very, that was very meaningful for me personally and in my own spiritual development and then in the subsequent conversation when we talk about my role as a pastor and how, you know, I function and that, um, which, that was very therapeutic, um, was, it was, and this is a crass way to put it and it allowed me to unburden.

Sarah: Yeah, no, no, no.

Peter: I could unburden, and talk honestly about, you know, how I function. It kind of had a nice balance to it and was not a case that you were trying to help me find solutions, it was just to process stuff and, you know...

Here Peter describes spiritual direction sessions as having two distinct parts. The first part was his own spiritual development in hearing the Scripture and the second was therapeutic, where he was allowed to unburden. He also recognized we were not trying to find solutions but simply processing. It is satisfying to hear that Peter saw the sessions as having a “nice balance.”

To summarize what the pastor-directees found generally helpful about spiritual direction:

- That the spiritual director is a welcoming, not-judgmental person
- A place to speak about complicated relationships and to be affirmed in bringing them to God, to talk things through outside of family, to contemplate, to think, to theologically reflect, unburden and talk honestly, and not have to self manage

- The summarizing of themes and issues sessions and over time to see the continuity
- Helping to keep spiritual life on track
- Aiding in keeping a person open to the guiding of the Holy Spirit in everyday life
- Provided a new lens through which to see things, people, and oneself and providing an awareness of becoming more integrated with God
- A way to focus on the questions “Where is God in this?” and “Who is God in this?”
- Free of expectations
- Therapeutic

Conclusion

Firstly, I will conclude the pastoral realities of the six pastor-directees and then conclude the specific ways in which spiritual direction facilitated these pastors’ relationships with God, call and congregation.

Pastoral Realities

The pastor-directees’ narratives confirmed many of the pastoral realities described in Chapter 3, particularly the stress of being underpaid, being discouraged and experiencing conflict in congregations. The affect a pastor’s relationship with a congregation can have on pastors’ relationship with God was particularly evident, especially in Deborah’s narrative. All the narratives confirmed congregations as being complex emotional systems. Four of the pastor-

directees in particular felt the impact of parishioners' and colleagues' words and actions. In feeling the impact they attempted to stay connected enough to care while being self-differentiated.

Esther and Paul spoke about being under supported, a pastoral reality mentioned in Chapter 3. Luke spoke of feeling the suffering of those in his congregation, another pastoral reality mentioned in Chapter 3.

The pastor-directees' narratives also presented some pastoral realities that were distinct from those mentioned in the Chapter 3, including not attending church services due to responsibilities on Sunday morning elsewhere in the church, a reality for associate pastors, the frustration of not being relied on, the difficulty of trying to work with a senior pastor who won't lead or build a team, hearing Scripture on behalf of others rather than for oneself, and experiencing the conflict between a pastor's call and the call of the church in which he is ministering.

How Spiritual Direction Facilitated Pastor's Relationships with God, Call and Congregation

The following conclusions about how spiritual direction facilitated the pastors' relationships with God, especially as it is affected by being a pastor, call and congregation, are located within the pastoral realities of the six pastor-directees. First are the conclusions about their relationships with God.

God

Spiritual direction allowed the pastors to speak about God, listen to God, and think about God. They were able to engage in verbal theological reflection during sessions, continue reflecting after the session, and write some of their theological reflections on the form they received after each session. They were able to express things about God, including their doubts, which could not be expressed in many other places.

In listening to God they were able to discern things about themselves and the situations they were in. They also named things, such as what drove them in ministry, their primary identities, and they also named God's love and care for them.

Thinking about God was primarily seen in the ways in which they theologically reflected, as already mentioned above, and how thoughts about God had an opportunity to surface. Processing was an integral part of all three of these ways of relating to God and was primarily the way the pastor-directees were with God in sessions, *being ministered to by Him*.

Call

In terms of call, the pastor-directees could question, doubt, explore, re-affirm and even articulate the beginnings of a new call in spiritual direction sessions. Two of the pastor-directees were able to discern that circumstances in their churches were causing them to question their calls. In spiritual direction they were able to separate those circumstances from their call. Though one pastor

knew his call, he desired to know how it would help him discern where to put his time and energy for a sustainable ministry.

Congregation

In spiritual direction, discerning the character of the congregational systems they were in and what particular issues or people were affecting the system facilitated the pastor-directees relationships with their congregations. The pastor-directees could process their thoughts and feelings about their congregations, particularly in terms of how their relationships with their congregations were affecting their relationships with God, in a safe and confidential place. They could even contemplate leaving their congregations. Spiritual direction also changed how a number of them related to their congregations as in sessions they were encouraged to pray for people in their congregations and found that they had more understanding or and compassion towards congregational members. One pastor-directee encouraged people in his congregation to pray during a time of discernment. Spiritual direction also became a resource for the pastors in terms of supplying them with sermons ideas, to engage in giving the benediction differently, and provided inspiration for leading a small group.

What I Learned as a Spiritual Director

In concluding my learning as a spiritual director, the forms the pastor-directees completed after each session were a mechanism for capturing information that provided me with an unusual peek into the ongoing reflections of

the pastor-directees between sessions. It was very interesting for me to see that what I thought was significant in a session wasn't always what the pastor-directee saw as being most significant. However, we were in agreement much of the time.

In reading the transcripts of the interviews and the forms a number of times, I was able to develop an intimacy with the pastor-directees that I normally can't after just hearing something once. The multiple lenses were especially helpful in providing insight into the pastor-directees narratives. The lens of active listening showed me some particular ways I can listen better, including simply not talking and allowing the pastor-directee to continue speaking and processing. Much more was revealed when I said less, not more.

The language lens helped me to listen in a new way, especially to repeated words, silent breaks, hesitancy, words used to create space to think, words related to repeated themes, and words that indicate a knowledge of a discipline of theory, such as systems theory.

The context lens, which magnifies cultural fictions of what a certain kind of person should be and do, such as a pastor, revealed some of the pastors primary identities, such as worshipper, and also revealed the deep sense of responsibility the pastor-directees felt for their congregations.

The moments lens allowed for very significant experiences to be noted in a narrative, such as Deborah's understanding of God's presence with her just as she was with her child, and in doing their importance could be further understood.

What I Learned about the Pastors

The pastor-directees are an intelligent, dedicated, curious and articulate group of people who could be very aware of the needs of others but not always their own. They readily made connections between what they were personally learning in spiritual direction and how they could apply that to their church situations. Most of them were not engaging in spiritual disciplines consistently though they were willing to engage in new ways to relate to God.

What I Learned from the Pastors

Older, experienced pastors with long-established spiritual disciplines may not be as impacted by the discipline of spiritual direction as younger, less experienced pastors and a long-standing relationship with one of the pastor-directees may have inhibited how I gave spiritual direction to him.

The pastors spoke and wrote about spiritual direction in a way that indicated they were very aware of what was transpiring during sessions and that my methods were very transparent to them.

What the Pastor-Directees Found Helpful in Spiritual Direction

The pastor-directees narratives revealed more about spiritual direction than just how it facilitated their relationships with God, call and congregation. It was noted that my demeanour as the spiritual director was important in making spiritual direction a hospitable experience, that it was a place for them to process, think and reflect about many things, that it created an awareness of the Holy Spirit

in everyday life, that it was helpful in keeping spiritual lives on track and, finally, that it was therapeutic.

I feel deeply indebted to the intelligent, idealistic, interesting and imperfect pastor-directees who have taught me so much about the discipline of spiritual direction generally and specifically in terms of it extending it to pastors.

CHAPTER SIX:

CONCLUSION

The purpose of this study was to determine how spiritual direction facilitates pastors' relationships with God, their sense of call, their perceptions of and interaction with their congregations and to determine what might be distinctive about giving spiritual direction to pastors. The research question, or puzzle, as it is often referred to in narrative inquiry (Clandinin and Connelly 2000, 124), was born out of my practical experience of giving spiritual direction to pastors and a concern for pastors generally, as during my own seminary training (2009-2011) I often heard about pastors not just leaving their churches but ministry altogether.

My reading for this project, reviewed in Chapter 3, confirmed that indeed pastors are leaving ministry, both here in Canada and in the States, and though the reasons are varied, from stress about money to conflict in congregations, there is a need for pastors to be pastored and, if this happens, the Church could retain years of training, experience, and the gifting of many men and women. Spiritual direction is one way that pastors can be pastored as they pastor others.

Below I describe what the narratives, and my interpretation of them, might mean for spiritual directors, especially those who give spiritual direction to pastors, for churches and for denominational leaders.

Implications for Spiritual Directors

A primary implication for spiritual directors is to recognize that pastors are different than most directees. They do not need to be treated with extra reverence or respect other than what would be extended to every unique and holy creation of God, but the responsibility they bear in caring for the souls of others and the example they are to be in living out the ideals of God's kingdom does need to be recognized. We see this in the pastor-directees' narratives as Luke speaks about the sharing in the sufferings of those in his congregation and as Peter wonders if he could have done something to prevent the five out of wedlock pregnancies in his congregation. Pastors bear a great responsibility in the spiritual formation of many people and the toll on them can be great, especially as they often receive little spiritual care themselves. Pastors do need pastors and spiritual directors can partially fulfill that role for many.

One implication for spiritual directors giving direction to pastors is they need to have a well-researched, biblical and historically based theology of call. I was woefully unprepared in this area entering the project. I found the word "call" was often quite loaded for some of the pastors in the project and also for some of the people who attended the presentation I made regarding my findings, a number of whom were spiritual directors.

Another implication for spiritual directors giving spiritual direction to pastors is they have a working knowledge of systems theory, as this became the foundation of how the pastor-directees and I looked at their congregations and discerned spiritual issues within the systems. Thankfully much has been written about the topic of churches as systems.

A further implication is in regards to prayer. Spiritual directors are privy to some of the deepest pain and bewildering experiences pastors can have. We can pray for them in an informed manner few other people in their lives can.

The final implication for spiritual directors generally is to suggest the validity of creating a feedback form that could be used once or twice a year with randomly or specifically chosen directees within a director's practice. The information I received from the forms was invaluable, far more valuable than my own notes or a verbatim, a word for word account of a part of a spiritual direction session as the director is able to remember. The form could be created to inquire about one's practice of spiritual direction and what the randomly selected directees find most helpful and least helpful in a session. This would be one way of developing an annual assessment. The form could also be used to learn about a specific group of people, as I did in this project, which could include specific age groups, traditions, or identities such as mothers or single people.

Implications for Churches and Denominations

Given that some pastors' realities are somewhat bleak, as seen in Chapter 3, and that the narratives of a number of the pastor-directees in Chapter 5 reveal

difficult conflicts in their congregations, churches should be providing more spiritual care for their pastors. Not every church is necessarily going to have people who are gifted or able to extend spiritual care to pastors though every church should have a deacon or elder, or even a committee or commission, who is responsible for the care of the church's pastor. If those responsible for the care of pastors were aware of the spiritual directors in the area, and if the church was willing to pay for spiritual direction for a pastor, usually a fee of \$20 to \$80 an hour, this would make spiritual direction an accessible discipline for pastors and could compensate for what a church can't provide.

Regarding denominations, it must be recognized that denominational leaders are stretched thin and the one-to-one spiritual care of pastors is an unrealistic expectation of almost every denomination in this era of smaller budgets and downsizing. Denominational leaders could, however, use their broader influence to speak about spiritual direction as a viable option for pastors needing spiritual care and perhaps even have a list of vetted directors in different areas made available on the denomination's website or in its handbook. Spiritual direction could also be offered at the denomination's annual conference or gathering and at pastor's retreats.

Conclusion

In this final conclusion I am compelled to return to Dr. Russ Veenker's assertion that "Clergy health is the issue at the beginning of the twenty-first century. If we in leadership can model healthy physical, emotional and spiritual

formation – Jesus wins, His church wins, His followers win, and we live abundantly in His joy!” (Chapter 3). Though I mentioned earlier that I feel Veenker the first part of Veenker’s assertion is overstated, as there are many issues facing the Church in this century, I do wholeheartedly agree with the second half and, in the case of this study, more specifically the need for leaders to model healthy spiritual formation. This is where I believe social change, a value of action research, could occur as a church and the Church can only be spiritually healthy if its leaders are spiritually healthy. A healthy church, in a rural area or a city neighbourhood, could make a huge impact for Jesus and the discipline of spiritual direction facilitating pastors’ relationships with God, their sense of call and their relationships with congregations could make a contribution to that impact.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX A: Consent Form

This document is a formal invitation requesting your participation in a research project. The intention of the project is to look at how the discipline of spiritual direction may help pastors stay connected to God and to their congregations. I, Sarah Patterson, am a Doctor of Ministry student at Tyndale University College and Seminary under whose auspices I am conducting my research.

The participants in my project will all be pastors. Some will already be in spiritual direction and others will be experiencing it for the first time. The expected duration of the participants' involvement in my project will be 6-9 months. Each participant will engage in an initial interview, at least six one-hour monthly spiritual direction sessions, and a final interview. The interviews will be between one and two hours in duration. After each spiritual direction session I will electronically provide a short evaluation/reflection form that will be completed by each participant. I expect it will take 15-30 minutes to fill out the form.

Your responsibility is to participate as honestly as possible in telling your story during the interviews, engaging in the monthly spiritual direction sessions

with me, re-scheduling should either of us have a conflict, and filling out the monthly evaluation/reflection form. I will ask all participants to consider journaling during the process but am not making it a requirement of participation.

The foreseeable risks of the project lie primarily in trusting me as a spiritual director, realizing that we may not be compatible as directee and director, and a possible increase in self-awareness that may not always be comfortable. There is also a minimal risk of someone being able to identify you through the descriptors I use in my project thesis, should someone you know read it. To minimize the risks to all participants, I will periodically enquire about any ethical issues you see arising during the project and would encourage you to bring any concerns you may have to my project advisor, Floyd Grunau (at floyd@grunau.ca or 289-301-5647). Ethical issues that would affect all participants will be revealed to all participants.

The potential benefits for you will be a deepening of your awareness of God and how your relationship with Him is transforming you as a person and a pastor. You will also be listened to with no expectation of you having to listen to me. You may also be introduced to new spiritual disciplines that might help sustain you personally. The wider potential benefits may lie in you introducing other pastors, or parishioners, to the discipline of spiritual direction.

You are under no obligation to participate in the project and are free to withdraw at any time. If we already have an established directee/director relationship and you decide not to participate in my project, this will not affect our ongoing relationship. Should you decide to participate in the project and then

have to withdraw, we will discern together whether or not we will continue our directee/director relationship. You will be informed in a timely manner throughout the duration of the project of any information that may be relevant to you continuing or withdrawing from the project i.e. a change in requirements, a change in meeting place etc.

My primary concern in this process is your relationship with God. My secondary concern is our directee/director relationship. My third concern is our relationship as researcher and project participant though I recognize the distinction may be hard to make at times. You will be free to make any comments about this aspect of our relationship and the project on the monthly evaluation/reflection form.

Due to the collaborative nature of this research your comments and observations, received through the monthly evaluation/reflection form and your verbal comments during spiritual direction sessions, may change the questions I ask on the monthly form.

Should my project reveal what I hope it does, I may write a journal article or book based on my findings. Any potential articles or books would primarily be for spiritual directors giving spiritual direction to pastors and Christian leaders. I will be making a presentation to the Tyndale Association of Spiritual Directors based on my findings.

It will be your choice to be identified in my final thesis project. Should you wish to be identified indirectly I will use descriptors that do not readily identify you. I will not reveal to anyone who is participating in the project. It is up to your

discretion to whom you reveal your participation in the project. Before I complete the writing of the thesis, I will review the thesis with you to gain a final determination from you regarding my handling of our identity.

Though I am more than willing to answer any questions you may have about my research project you may find that you want to speak to someone more knowledgeable about the scholarly aspects of my research and project. If so, please contact Dr. Mark Chapman, Assistant Professor of Research Methods and Assistant Director of the Doctorate of Ministry Program at Tyndale University College and Seminary at mchapman@tyndale.ca or 416-226-6620, ext. 2208.

It will be necessary for me to collect the contact information on each participant, as well as pertinent biographical information regarding family of origin, denominational background, education, sense of call, and present ministry setting for the purposes of understanding the context from which each pastor-directee comes. I will also be doing the aforementioned interviews and collecting the monthly evaluation/reflection forms. The interviews will be taped and transcribed. The interviews and forms will provide my primary research material. Contact information will be filed separately from all other information I gather from each participant. Each participant will receive a nickname or alphanumeric code and all other information will be filed under that name or code on a password-protected computer in my home.

I anticipate using direct quotes from interview transcriptions and the monthly evaluation/reflection forms and I will also be interacting with the stories I collect. I will be the only person who has complete access to all the information

I collect. It may be necessary to show coded transcriptions of my interviews to my project thesis advisor or to a member of the Doctor of Ministry program staff at Tyndale.

It will be necessary, should I hear from a pastor-directee his or her intent to harm herself or another, to report what I have heard to the proper authorities. This is a legal obligation.

People participating in my project will not receive any remuneration for doing so.

In conclusion, consent is an on-going process. To reiterate, you can ask questions of me about the research and the process at any given time, you can contact the aforementioned people regarding scholarly or ethical questions, and you can also withdraw at anytime. By consenting to all of the above you are not waiving your right to legal recourse in the event of research-related harm.

Once you have read this consent form, please let me know if you have any questions. My contact information is on the front of the form.

I will need to know your answer within a week of your receiving this form (write or type in date). You can mail it to me or give it to me by hand.

Thank you very much for considering participating in this project. I hope and pray that should you decide to participate you will be blessed in the process and that your story may help others pursue spiritual direction.

I, _____, do consent to participate in the research project of Sarah Penney Patterson, MTS, CSD, that is being conducted under the

auspices of the Doctor of Ministry Program at Tyndale University College and Seminary located at 25 Ballyconnor Court, Toronto, Ontario, M2M 4B3.

Signature of Participant _____

Signature of Researcher _____

Date _____

APPENDIX B: Interview Protocol –Interview 1

Participant:

Date:

The pastor-directee's first encounter with God.

The pastor-directee's sense of call- how it was heard/felt and confirmed.

The pastor-directee's sense of call now that s/he is in a church.

The pastor-directee's present relationship with God.

The pastor-directee's present relationship with her/his congregation.

The spiritual disciplines the pastor-directee is presently engaging in now and how s/he sees that engagement affecting her/his relationship with God and congregation.

APPENDIX C: Interview Protocol –Interview 2

Participant:

Date:

If applicable: If the pastor-directee was in spiritual direction before this project, has there been a difference in how s/he has engage in the discipline because of the project?

Since the focus of my project is seeing how the discipline of spiritual direction connects pastors to God, their call and their congregations we're going to focus on these three areas.

Description of the ways in which spiritual direction may have helped the pastor-directee to connect with God in the last six months.

Specific story about this connection.

The ways in which the pastor-directee's view of her/his call to ministry may have been affected by spiritual direction.

Specific story about connection to calling from the last six months.

The ways in which spiritual direction changed how s/he engaged with his/her congregation. Ask for a specific story.

The spiritual disciplines the pastor-directee is presently engaging in now and how s/he sees that engagement affecting her/his relationship with God and congregation.

APPENDIX D: Reflection/Evaluation Form

Spiritual Direction Reflection and Evaluation Form:

After taking a few minutes to reflect on and pray about our last session together, please answer the following questions. Feel free to add any observations or comments that you feel are pertinent to the questions.

1. In reflecting on our last spiritual direction session, in what way/s do you feel you connected with God in the session or have been connecting with God since the session?
2. Do you sense that the discipline of spiritual direction is affecting how you connect with your congregation?

If so, in what ways are you experiencing these connections?

Do you have a short story you would be willing to share about connecting with your congregation?

3. Are you noticing ways in which the discipline of spiritual direction is impacting your other spiritual disciplines, such as prayer, scripture reading, silence and solitude, and keeping the Sabbath, to name a few?
4. In our last session, was there something done or said that was not helpful in the session?

Was there anything done or said that was particularly helpful in the session?

5. Do you have any other stories or comments? Do you have any comments or questions regarding the project and your involvement in it?

Thank you for filling out this form. Please return it to Sarah Patterson at sppatters@gmail.com.

**APPENDIX E: Time Chart of Interviews and
Spiritual Direction Sessions**

Subjects	Interview Initial	Spiritual Direction Sessions						Interview Final
		1	2	3	4	5	6	
001 "Deborah"	Feb 14, 2013	Mar 14, 2013	Apr 11, 2013	May 9, 2013	July 18, 2013	Sept 26, 2013	Dec 17, 2013	Jan 23, 2014
002 "Esther"	Apr 4, 2013	May 29, 2013	Aug 16, 2013	Sept 6, 2013	Dec 6, 2013	Apr 10, 2014	Apr 23, 2014	Apr 28, 2014
003 "Timothy"	Apr 2, 2013	June 13, 2013	July 18, 2013	Oct 3 , 2013	Oct 31, 2013	Nov 28, 2013	Feb 20, 2014	May 8, 2014
004 "Luke"	May 19, 2013	May 31, 2013	June 12. 2013	Sept 13, 2013	Oct 11, 2013	Nov 8, 2013	Mar 7, 2014	Mar 21, 2014
005 "Paul"	May 30, 2013	June 13, 2013	Sept 25, 2013	Dec 5, 2013	Feb 27, 2013	Mar 19, 2014	Apr 24, 2014	Apr 24, 2014
006 "Peter"	June 3, 2013	June 6, 2013	Sept 19, 2013	Oct 17, 2013	Oct 31, 2013	Feb 27, 2014	Apr 10, 2014	May 8, 2014

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