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The Dance of Faith:
Spiritual Formation as Interactive Dance with Jesus and How the Examen Creates
Self-Awareness in Leadership

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submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirement for the degree of
Doctor of Ministry
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By

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DEDICATION

I am forever grateful to Brent, Sara, Michaela and Andreas. My beloveds.

Without their faith in and love for God and for me,
nothing I have done or will do would taste as sweet.

ABSTRACT

The motivation behind all of my ministry has been to walk alongside people and help them know the God in Jesus that I have come to know and to whom I grow closer. As my life has drawn me toward leadership roles my interest became more focused on the formation of leadership, particularly those in churches. The strain of leadership, and expectations on leaders in parishes, led me to search for ways to encourage healthy emotional and spiritual formation for these leaders.

My model for spiritual formation describes formation using the metaphor of dance. This model allows for the ebb and flow of our spiritual formation and led me to utilizing the Prayer of Examen as a way of helping leaders become aware of that ebb and flow in their lives. Participants used the Examen for 7 weeks, reflecting on the experience in a journal.

Participants became much more aware of the presence of God throughout their day. They also became more aware of their interactions with both God and others the longer they practiced the Examen. The main contribution this work has made to my own ministry is to highlight the importance for leaders of self-examination in the presence of God.

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CHAPTER 1 - INTRODUCTION

If you would have asked me to describe the term spiritual formation ten years ago, I would have painted a very linear picture. It might have been an analogy of aging. Much the way in which we age and become wiser we also mature and grow in our faith. One thing leads to another. I might have quoted 1 Corinthians 13:11 “When I was a child, I talked like a child, I thought like a child, I reasoned like a child. When I became a man, I put the ways of childhood behind me.” Or I may have used 1 Corinthians 9:24-27 to describe how we discipline ourselves running “in such a way as to get the prize.” There was a sense that this prize was something that would happen sometime far off in the future. All of the running, effort, discipline and energy spent was for a distant event or location. The whole time I think I considered formation to be a stepwise movement along a relatively linear path toward holiness. The funny thing is that nothing in my life has been perfectly linear, so I am not sure where that idea came from!

Coming to the DMin program is one example of the non-linear way in which my formation has taken place. I had no intention of taking on another degree. I had plenty to keep me occupied and was not interested in a title or another project. Then a friend who was in the program showed me his reading list for one of his courses. I remember taking the list and as I scanned down the pages, I thought to myself, “Read it, read it, read it. Ooh that sounds interesting! Read it.

Loved that one! I've heard that one is amazing" and so on all the way down the list. I became intrigued and started asking questions about the program, and the commitment in terms of time and prerequisites. Though I did not have any previous inclinations, that list of books made me aware my interest was already in the area of formation and I was intrigued to learn more. Thus began a turn in the road I was not expecting.

As the courses began and I engaged the reading and writing I so enjoyed the professors, the research and the assignments. The program fit like a pair of comfortable shoes I'd finally broken in to cozily wear. The courses "Listening to God" and "Space for God" fell comfortably into practices I was already observing and took me deeper into Morning Prayer, Spiritual Direction and Sabbath. The Spiritual Formation course was a beautifully crafted course which quite literally formed our cohort into a family. In the Autobiography course I began to see in my own life that there are no straight lines in my experience of God and growing closer to him. There were many times in my autobiography where "I had been debating within myself many and diverse things, seeking constantly, and with anxiety, to find out my real self, my best good, and the evil to be avoided" as Augustine of Hippo spoke in his Soliloquies (Augustine 1910, 45).

I arrived a day late to the first winter residency because I was returning from a trip to Israel. I was not a little jet lagged. I had only two months prior left my position as incumbent priest at a parish in a small town I had served for almost nine years and I really did not know what was next professionally. My physical and mental states were equally disoriented. This state of disorientation lasted a

few days. It would describe the next two years of my time in the program and in my personal, professional and spiritual life. I had believed I was line dancing with clear moves and next steps. I would discover something more like freestyle hip hop. I would not know the steps nor what was next. The music was foreign as was the rhythm.

As the second year of the program began, I had started a new job and was commuting two and a half hours one way to work. The job was completely new to me and one for which I had no training. I was left with a computer that had been wiped clean and no one to help me know how to do the job. I continued this commute for seven months until we bought a home in a suburb of the city where I now work. I stayed in the home, sleeping on a mattress on the floor for seven more months, until my husband and son and I officially moved a year and a half after beginning my new job. Our two daughters would stay in our hometown of thirty years to continue with University studies. This first year saw enormous transitions, grief, confusion and a serious encounter with a heart condition that after 22 years landed me in hospital with three cardiologists insisting on surgery. I was a line dancer showing up to a ballet competition. I had the wrong clothing, the wrong training, the wrong experience but had paid the fees and the line dancing club was closed. This complete disorientation would last until just recently as we globally have experienced the pandemic of the novel corona virus. The second year of courses on Nurturing Spirituality, Engaging Scripture and Desiring God all helped to focus my attention in ways which nourished me amid the chaos that seemed my life. They encouraged me to think about how we all

experience formation and express our faith. They raised issues of leadership formation and taught me new ways to engage and participate in scripture. They were solid ground amid a myriad of places in my life that felt like I was on shifting sand.

In the final year of the program, as I searched for ways to find meaning in all of the changes, I found the grief course to be the most meaningful. I realized in this course I had been experiencing an extended period of grief as my family and I walked through all of these changes. One of the most difficult challenges was dealing with a situation where I found myself in a place of protecting other staff as best I could with no support. The work to which I had felt a call ended up separating our family, friends, church and all we had known for 30 years. It ended up being almost unbearable. I found myself in a struggle to belong somewhere. However, as Brené Brown sociologist, researcher and professor states, “because true belonging only happens when we present our authentic, imperfect selves to the world, our sense of belonging can never be greater than our level of self-acceptance” and I was in a state of self-protection, unable to be vulnerable (Brown 2012, 73). It was disorienting.

As I walked through this program, I seem to have moved through old testament Walter Brueggemann’s orientation to disorientation to reorientation in my personal spiritual and emotional life (Brueggemann 2002, 14). I began the program with my family, home, work and life generally in a calm neutral place. The second and third year were a time of disorientation in almost every area of my life. Separated from my family, friends, home, church and all of the things I

knew I had entered a situation which made me question whether all I felt I'd given up was worth the utter disorientation I felt.

As this program comes to a close, I am beginning to see signs of reorientation. There is a sense of settling in our home, my husband has found new work. My work has become far less stressful. We have all begun adjusting to having family living in different areas and have begun to engage new friendships and find new ways of carrying on and enjoying our new space. Very little in this past two years has felt like what I thought formation was – a straight line.

All of this background is a way of saying I have myself been going through a transformation and not simply reading about transformation generally through a spiritual formation program. In the midst of this formation period for me personally I was reminded how valuable self-awareness and spiritual disciplines can be in journeying through painful and disorienting periods of our lives.

When speaking of self-awareness, I am not simply referring to knowing our habits, tendencies or personality traits. That is valuable and important. I am referring though to a deeper awareness which we find when we stay closely grafted to the One who knows every hair on our head and who knit us together in our mother's womb (Luke 12:7, Ps. 139:13). The God who knows us better than we know ourselves. In God's presence we can learn to be aware of our reactions and understand why we have them and even how to tame, heal or mold them. The other aspect of gaining self-awareness in God's presence is that we see ourselves living into the fullness God wishes for us. Our ability to see ourselves as beloved,

clearly and more fully comes from the willingness to spend time in the arms of the God who knows us and hears the ways in which we might become more fully who we are meant to be. Using spiritual disciplines like contemplative prayer, spiritual direction, praying the offices or creating a rule of life can give us a sense of who we are in conversation with the God who loves us and calls us toward our best in communion with him.

Our self-awareness with God as our companion, is also our awareness and relationship building with God. We become not only more aware of ourselves and ourselves in relationship to God. We also become more aware of God's trinitarian self. This movement of relationship between us and God, and then us and the world, has a certain rhythm.

This is why the imagery of dance became important to my model and also to my way of viewing our life of formation in general. The writing of the spiritual autobiography was the first place where I saw a pattern in the way I experienced God. There were moments of intimate closeness and others where I could barely find him on the proverbial dance floor. In the larger, shocking or paramount experiences it became obvious how I interacted or refused to interact with God and how God responded to me. Even in the quotidian rhythms which may seem dull there was an understanding of how this formed the basic pattern of interaction which then informed the larger events. Having Jesus as our dance leader/partner allows us to walk through these seemingly mundane rhythms and become accustomed to his voice, his gentle direction and corrections. I began to

see how these events created an ebb and flow between God and myself and how every day relationship informed how we danced together.

There is real gift in considering our formation not as a solo dance but one with the One who loves and leads us. If we were to attempt these things separate from him, we would then not recognize his arm pulling us back when we were about to step off the dance floor or injure ourselves. We might not know how to find the lead dancer when we choose to stop participating in the dance. Though none of this is linear there is a sense in which relationship with God and learning who we are is learned in this dance.

If the first great commandment is loving “the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength and with all your mind” then in a sense we dance with him first (Luke 10:27). That relationship guides us in the second great commandment which is to love our neighbour as we love ourselves. Our earthly dance partners get a reflection of the lead dancer when we have spent time earnestly learning the steps from him first.

Knowing ourselves without the light of Christ informing that knowledge can lead us to pride or self-deprecation. We may begin to consider all of our competencies and strengths and believe that we are important in ways far beyond the truth. We may also begin to see all of the ways in which we fail and fall short and become crippled with self-doubt. When God is invited into the equation his knowledge of us, and who we can become, guides us along the narrow path without losing hope nor becoming puffed up.

In the midst of growing into a deeper awareness of myself and God during this time, I changed positions and became aware of another aspect which would inform my research and had already informed my life in many ways. This aspect was my interest in leaders. I am interested in leadership, not the fame or attention that sometimes comes with the role a leader takes on in their life or work. What I mean by this is that some people who become famous or infamous then become leaders in their profession or organizations simply because they are well known or in the public eye. My interest is in people who either by their official role or because of being influencers are leading others.

I have personally been drawn into leadership positions. One of my cohort companions suggested that is in part because I am an INTJ on the Meyers Briggs typology and that personality type loves to find holes in the system and create solutions. When I was discerning a call to ordained ministry I had to engage with a lay discernment committee and someone who wrote a recommendation for me wrote that people naturally follow me because I am trustworthy. I have found leadership roles in my life to be both difficult and rewarding. I have fallen into the pitfalls of being overly prescriptive in decisions on the one hand to being so consultative that no decision could be made on the other. Neither extreme is ideal or helpful in a leadership position.

When I entered priestly ministry and began work in a parish, I was the only clergy leader there. I worked within a geographic region 230 km from north to south and 175 km from east to west. This area included eighteen parishes and all of the leaders from those parishes would gather once each month to pray, talk,

support and encourage one another. During the nine years serving in this area, I was the regional dean for those eighteen parishes and their clergy. This meant I organized those monthly meetings and worship times. It also meant that I was to be someone in whom those leaders could confide regarding their situations. I visited them regularly and found that their concerns, frustrations and joys had similar strains even amid very different ministry contexts. This led me to taking a course where I became a certified pastors' coach.

In that training I learned different ways to look at and experience my work, my relationship with God and with others. It also taught me how to encourage leaders.

Much of my way of looking at things comes from the way I was raised and the things I've learned or experienced in my life. When looking at these experiences it is interesting to reflect on how God has used those experiences in my life to shape and guide me. This pattern of God's interaction with me has felt like a dance in which God has led me and then allowed me to dance with others.

CHAPTER 2 - SPIRITUAL AUTOBIOGRAPHY

She's Gone...

June 30th, 1984

She laid on her back, on the sidewalk in front of the Community Hall. My Godmother Elli, a nurse, doing compressions on her chest. As I walked out of the doors, I saw the scene. One that remains etched in my mind in all its detail to this day. I was whisked away by those standing nearby. They walked me toward the beach. The air had a haze about it, as though something was warping time. I remember moments - glimpses. As though my mind protects me from the terror of that night.

The ambulance arrived and took her to the next town. We drove behind and arrived at the hospital to discover she was already dead. A heart aneurism. She had died long before the compressions started. She was dead before she landed on the ground.

I was 16. She was 53. Both of us too young to lose one another.

That night at the Community Hall the whole town was present. It was the final night of the "Miss Cherry Fiesta" pageant. I had been coerced into taking part. The other participants represented Home Hardware, the Credit Union or the Lion's Club. My family was the only Spanish family in town. The town was

wanting to redecorate all the storefronts in town in a Spanish theme. As the token Spaniard, I became the representative for the Spanish Development Society.

I was unhappy about the whole thing. I tried to write terrible speeches. I never wore makeup. I showed up barely on time. That night as they called the first runner-up and spoke my name I was stunned. I had tried so hard to mess it up! How could this be happening? I did not feel a part of this group of girls that cared so much about all of this.

When the photos were finished and the dance started, I remember my mother dancing with my brother-in-law. She loved to dance. My brother-in-law could make her laugh until she cried. They were dancing and laughing - full of life and joy. My mother was always able to suck every ounce of experience from whatever she was involved in. Moments later they would walk outside -- Compressions and ambulances and shock. Everything would change. In what was a breath, we moved from joy and laughter to emptiness and despair.

The loneliness rushed up at me like a wave overtaking me on the ocean shore. It threatened to drown me with its undertow. People everywhere. All of them telling me how sad they were. Bringing casseroles to our home. Giving us those sideways looks and awkward glances. Nobody really knew what to say. I watched all these people coming and going. None of them could do or say anything. The loneliness raged.

Funny thing, loneliness. It grabs you and holds you in its embrace convincing you that no one else around you could possibly feel the way you do. It speaks in dark, selfish tones about how you will never be the same and no one

could possibly understand what you are going through. Dangerous thing, grief. Isolating us and creating a self-centeredness in us that separates us from the world and ultimately ourselves.

A few days later my sister came to the beach where I was sitting with my friends. Escaping. I must go to the viewing, she told me. Why did I need to go see a dead body? I remember being so angry. Walking into the parlour I stood a distance away from the casket. Far enough away that I could not see inside. They told me I had to go look. I went. I looked inside.

That was not my mother.

Her mouth was crooked. Her skin pallid. She always smiled a wide-toothed smile. Her cheeks were full of colour. This woman's eyes were closed. My mothers were open, alive and vibrant. Her hands were crossed over her tummy. Those arms were never still. They gardened, cooked, cleaned, scolded and embraced me. This was not my mother. Why would they make me look at this shell? How did this make sense? This was not her. I reached out to touch her hand; it was cold. I just remember thinking over and over, "This is not my mother." I must have said it out loud as my father with a yelp as though keeping himself from weeping said, "Yes, *hija*, it's her."

Grief is terrifyingly lonely at sixteen. Nobody else understands all the thoughts going through your mind. No one could possibly understand the way everything reminds me of her. Nobody else can know how smelling freshly ironed clothing makes me keenly aware of her absence. Everything loses its lustre.

Nothing has any flavour or taste or vibrancy or light. The world becomes a series of grays. People and events float past you as if you are in a different dimension.

The next few months I spent in a daze. I am not sure what it feels like to float in outer space, but my mind, heart and soul were suspended after she left. I was alone and where was God?

I asked this question. Where is God? How could God allow my mother to die? I knew other mothers that were unkind, even cruel to their children and they were still alive. I knew mothers who were irresponsible and barely took care of the basic needs of their children. I knew mothers who gave in to every whim. They were still alive. Yet my mother died. How does God choose to leave them and take my mother?

I continued to ask the question of those who I thought might answer on God's behalf. I asked my priest and he directed me to pray. I asked my Catechism teacher and she said she didn't know (probably the most honest answer). I then wrote to my Bishop. He returned my letter encouraging me to have faith -- That God would comfort and guide me.

But what if God was not love? What if God was some cruel dictator that simply took your mother at a whim, particularly if you were enjoying her too much? How could a loving God not understand that I still needed her? I hadn't learned how to cook. I had no idea how to sew on a button. Who would I ask about being a woman, a wife, a sister or friend?

Months later my godmother Elli told me my mother asked her to make sure I kept going to church. Almost like she knew that she was leaving. Like she

knew that I might be defiant of the God who took her. I would keep going to church until graduation. After that, too many glib answers and too many weak explanations left me with a God that was not worthy of worship. A God who limped along and occasionally threw a cruel joke in to make it interesting. I was not interested in this God. We would not speak again, He and I, for seven years.

Everything in my life happened either before or after this event. No matter how big or small. No matter how traumatic or how exciting. Everything in my life has become, in my mind categorized as happening either before or after my mother's death.

What is your life? You are a mist that appears for a little while and then vanishes.

(James 4:14b)

Seven-Year Silence

In 1985, I graduated high school and moved to Victoria. I lived with a family that had moved there from my hometown. I remember only tiny glimpses of that year. My room was on the top floor of their home. I remember the rooms were along the outside wall and when you stood outside the room you could look down into the bottom floor. It reminded me of hotels where you could look down into the lobby.

I rode my bike to and from the university every day. My Psychology textbook weighed a ton. I did not make any lasting friends. I performed so badly in my classes that I was on probation - which meant I had to pull up my grades the

next year if I was to be welcomed back. I do not remember conversations or anyone who spoke into my life that year.

I returned home to Osoyoos that May. I spent the summer at home working at a Waterpark. I watched people come and go on holiday. It was the first summer I remember not waterskiing. I barely went to the lake at all. People came day after day. They bought wrist bands. I wrapped them around their wrists.

September took me to UBC in Vancouver to study Journalism. I shared a one-bedroom apartment with my friend Theresa. We attended class, read books, and walked to a great bakery down the street. We built our furniture out of milk crates we took from behind the back doors of restaurants. Except for our bookshelves. They were made from bricks we took from a building site a block away and a few broken boards we found at the same site. I rode my bike 17 km each way to school, ran 5 km every day and taught aerobics classes three times a week. I was in the best shape of my life – physically.

I joined a Scuba club and became a certified diver. I had an experience in a journalism class that taught me I had more of a heart for the people than I did for the story.

Another gray and unmemorable year. As I sought out some colour I began to consider times I was most in my element. I decided that a degree in Music and Education fit my gifts.

After doing some research on institutions, I moved to Lethbridge and began studying at the University of Lethbridge. I completed both degrees (Music and Education) in April of 1991. I remember my father attending the graduation

ceremony. He hovered around where I sat with my fellow graduates. The first child in the family to finish university. He was a proud papa.

I was hired in the Lethbridge Public School system before I graduated. I began teaching the following September. I taught music for grades four, five, and six at this first school. I remember arriving early, staying late and taking a great deal of work home.

My first school was in a poor part of town. Many of my students would go home to empty houses, no supper prepared and wearing the same shoes and clothes day after day. I had a “tickle trunk” (I called it) where kids would *magically* find their size of shoes, winter boots and coats. I also got to be on a first name basis with the pizza place close by as I often ordered food for these, my children. After two years I left that school and started at a Fine Arts school where had many educators specialized in the arts.

In the second school I leaned into the craft of teaching. These students mostly had three square meals and changes of clothes. I spent long hours there, but it was rarely with students who were hungry or went home to an empty house.

It was there that I began to know myself as a teacher. I was interested in how each of my students were forming into people. I began a practice at the beginning of every school year where I wrote the letters “W-H-Y” on the black board. I invited them to ask that question over and over. I wanted them to be unsatisfied with simply taking in knowledge. I invited them to ask the question of themselves, their motives, their actions, their words. I invited them to wonder about the reasons behind what they were being taught. Why is anything the way it

is and why do we respond the way we do and why learn it at all? I enjoyed watching eyes open when learning was really happening.

One August morning, about two weeks prior to the school year beginning I got a message from the office over the intercom. There was a long-distance call waiting for me. When I picked up the receiver, I heard a Spanish voice on the other end. I listened to the voice as it urged me to come to Spain as soon as possible. It was serious, grave in fact. The doctor had already called my sisters. He needed me to understand the situation. They had opened my father's distended belly to find it riddled with cancer. If we were to get on a plane immediately, we might make it in time. In time to say goodbye to our father.

As I prepared the lessons for the substitute teacher, made arrangements for the flight and travelled to the place where I would eventually watch him die, all I could do was replay my childhood over and over in my mind.

Before the Fall

This is the account of Adam's line... (Gen. 5:1a)

This is the account of Noah. (Gen. 6:9a)

This is the account of Shem. (Gen. 11:10a)

This is the account of Jacob. (Gen. 37:2a)

There was a time when it wasn't silent. A time before God and I had a falling out. My first eight years were, for the most part, idyllic. Something out of a 1950s sitcom. The stay-at-home mom wearing an apron, supper prepared when you returned home after a long day. There were warm cookies on the counter after

school. We had a father who worked hard to provide for all our needs. He had a comfortable recliner in the living room where you could hear him snore.

I was born in North Vancouver, British Columbia. My Spanish immigrant parents had come from Spain via South America. Of my two elder sisters, the eldest was born in northern Spain and the other in Venezuela. I was the only Canadian born member of my immediate family. I remember our cousins who all lived in Spain referring to us as the “International Cousins.” Like a mini version of the UN - all of us born on different continents.

My parents were both Spaniards born and raised in a city named Santander in north Spain right on the Bay of Biscay. It is a beautiful place which houses the King of Spain’s summer home and miles of beaches.

My father, who was trained both as a naval engineer and a denturist served his two years of military service in the Spanish navy. After marrying my mother who was a seamstress, they had their first child, Sarita born in Santander.

“*Papi*” is what we called our father. Spaniards love to put diminutives on the ends of words to create affection. My name is Pilar. Often, I would be called “*Pili*” or “*Pilarin*” or “*Pilaruca*” or “*Pilarita*” - a way of verbally giving affection. We can do this to any name and often do to show our fondness for that person.

After his military service, *Papi* joined the merchant marines as a naval engineer. On one of my father’s trips he went to South America and decided it would be a good place to open a denture clinic. He had learned the denturist trade during the Spanish Civil War. He was the second boy in a family of five children.

His father had gone to fight in the Civil War and disappeared. My grandmother was left with six mouths to feed and little ability to provide. During those lean years, my father and his siblings did whatever they could to put food on the table and help their mother. Training in being a denturist was the result for my dad.

I remember a time he reached into our fridge to eat a tiny morsel of left-over cheese. As I saw him do this, I asked him if we could by orange cheddar cheese like my friends had in their fridges. “No”, came the answer swiftly and curtly. His gaze wandered off. When he left the room a few moments later my mother explained.

“*Papi* stood in line ups for food *hija*.” She explained that he would stand with his brothers to get rations which were one small loaf and a piece of orange cheddar cheese from the United States. That was all they got for a mother and five children.

After *Papi* headed off for South America “Mami” (my mother), pregnant with my second sister, would pick up her one-year-old, pack everything she owned and embark on a six-week journey to Venezuela to meet my father and share in their new adventure. The trip was long, and she spent many nights so seasick she thought none of them would make the trip.

I often reach for her strength. How could she manage a toddler, seasickness and being pregnant for months on her own? Heading for a country she’d never been to, food she had never eaten, music she had not heard and not a soul for a friend. The only thing she would share with these people was a language. I can only imagine the number of times she sat, sick on the ship’s

rocking edge wondering about what she would find in Venezuela. I do not know if it was her youth, her love of my father, sheer determination, or a touch of insanity, that held her hand fast to the railing.

My second sister, Maite, was born after my mother arrived. Caracas, Venezuela would be their new home. New friendships formed, new recipes made, and apartments transformed into homes.

Over their next seven years the political situation in Venezuela became quite dangerous. One afternoon my father's clinic was invaded. A group of masked rebels entered the clinic armed with guns and knives. They made all the workers strip down naked and lay on the floor. They held them at gunpoint whilst they stole all the money. They also took the gold for making partial plates or teeth and anything else of value. It was also the straw that broke the proverbial camel's back and led my father to pack up his wife and two daughters and move to Canada.

The apartment my family lived in required climbing two flights of stairs. My mother, nine months pregnant and taking two young girls and groceries up those stairs one day took it too far. She began to hemorrhage. My brother was stillborn that day and entered the arms of Jesus even before he took a step this side of heaven.

I was born in North Vancouver in Canada's Centennial year, 1967. My father told me my arrival was joyful. As a mother myself, I imagine the excruciating pain of carrying a child for the better part of a year, only to have to

bury that same child before you even hear them cry. A healthy baby with all her fingers and toes, working lungs and heart would have been a joy.

I was named Maria del Pilar González. The story of my name goes back to the year 40 AD where the tradition says the apostle James the greater (son of Zebedee) had a vision of Mary, the mother of Jesus atop a pillar. It is said that he was praying along the banks of the Ebro river in the city of Caesar Augusta now named Zaragoza, Spain in the year 40 AD. The pillar upon which she stood is said to be enshrined in the Basilica of Our Lady of the Pilar in Zaragoza.

When I was two, my family relocated to Osoyoos, a small town in the Okanagan of British Columbia. My earliest memory is of laying down at a preschool. It was quiet time, and each child received a small mat and laid down for a time. The children would whisper to one another. Having only known Spanish, I remember wondering what they were saying. Like an observer of this new clan, I watched in silence and wondered what their words meant.

I do not remember the transition to understanding those mat dwellers. However, English soon became my second language. I was, and am, fluent in both Spanish and English and it has proven useful at opening conversation with many more mat dwellers. Though I wonder at times whether any language has all the words we need to be fully understood.

My mother was the joy of our home. Thirty-seven years later I still remember her huge smile and the laughter which could bring all of us to laughter. It was all encompassing, and it drew you into it, like an undercurrent of joy.

She was St. Francis in the garden. There were seventy enormous rose bushes that were always blooming and healthy outside our home. Apricot, peach, apple, quince and cherry trees teaming with fruit all throughout our yard. I particularly remember weeding the row of flowers which lined our driveway. As a child I thought that driveway was the longest driveway in the world. It took forever to pick the weeds. I recall people stopping as they drove past our home to take pictures of the flowers and plants. She was a master not only at keeping them healthy and vibrant but of choosing colours and combinations of flowers that drew the eye like a Renoir masterpiece. Many fond memories happened in that masterpiece of a yard.

These years I fondly remember using a wheelbarrow as a swimming pool for Barbie dolls, climbing the fruit trees and picking ripe fruit in the summer. In the winter, the next-door neighbour and I would slide ovetop of snow-covered Juniper bushes that were on a hill between our homes.

I grew up attending St. Anne's Roman Catholic Church. My mother and I attended each Sunday and my father joined at Christmas and Easter.

I remember the ladies who sang in the choir (especially the one who sang off key and louder than anyone else). She was a tall Portuguese woman who towered over us all and had a stern look.

I can still see the priest in his Cassock, alb and chasuble at the altar celebrating the Eucharist. I remember the altar boys who helped set the altar and processed and recessed the candles as well as the Crucifer who carried the cross. I also remember being envious that girls could not serve in that way.

Every night my mother would come into my room and tuck me in and then begin the Lord's Prayer, "*Padre nuestro que estas en los cielos...*" and I would follow along. We never said grace before meals or opened the Bible as a family. I do not remember hearing that Jesus was *my* personal saviour. I don't remember being aware that he came for each of us, and all of us. Instilled in me, however, was the importance of the sacraments and *attending* church.

Apart

We have been set apart as holy because Jesus Christ did what God wanted him to do by sacrificing his body once and for all. (Hebrews 10:10)

When I was a child my mother used to tease that I would become a veterinarian. I was always saving animals that I thought were lost or found injured. I suspect that there were a few that were not injured but I simply wanted to enjoy them. I would bring them home, nurse them back to health. Then I would find their home or a new home. I secretly hoped that I would be allowed to keep them. Mostly, I was not. One dog managed to find a home with us.

He was huddled in a cut out from the building's foundation a couple buildings down from my father's clinic. I began setting out food at the opening where I first saw him. I would then watch him from the window in my father's clinic. After a few days, I put the food just outside the cut out. A few days later, another distance away. One step closer every day. I watched from the window. I slowly earned his trust enough, that he would eat while I sat close by. Each day he was more willing to come a bit closer. One day, he allowed me to pet him. Moment by moment and day by day we became friends. Eventually he became a

member of our household. After four years as my companion, he contracted a disease which struck him blind and he died shortly afterward. A few cats and birds followed, but he was the only one who made it into our home.

Trauma number one came at the tender age of eight. My parents went on a trip to Mexico. They were gone for a week and I went to stay with a family who lived just over a block away. The family was comprised of a mother, father and two boys. One boy was older and one younger than me. Every day I walked to school from their home as it was not far away.

What happened while I stayed with them froze me mentally, physically, emotionally for some time afterward. The way I froze most completely was in telling anyone about the event. My parents would never know. My sisters would find out only after I was married and had had 2 of our 3 children. A part of that lack of communication was that our family tended to avoid speaking of difficult things. Part of it was, that as an 8-year-old I did not yet have the ability to even understand how to speak of such an event. It would remain in silent paralysis for twenty-two years.

The energy that built from not speaking of it manifested itself as energy for new things. I often searched for the next plan, the next adventure, the next project. I did not sit long on any one thing and had little energy for people who spent too long speaking about the same topic or working too much within the details of a project. I accomplished a good many things as I grew. As long as no one tried to ask me anything too personal, I was quite happy to take on any challenge.

In high school, the achieving theme continued. I enjoyed being a part of all the musical ensembles and choir. I played the clarinet in the band and jazz band. I sang in the choir and took part in musicals. My friends and I relished hiking and cycling up the mountains which surrounded Osoyoos. We learned to avoid rattlesnakes and the prickly cacti as we wandered in the hills around which the town was nestled.

We water-skied year 'round. I remember waking up early to go to my friend's home. He lived on the lake as his parents ran a hotel along lake Osoyoos. We would pull on dry suits and walk out to the dock in the early dawn. The lake was perfectly still and often looked like glass. The only disturbance occurred as we turned the boat and began to ski from the dock. My favourite thing about getting up this early happened as I skied. Gliding along the surface of the water, being held only by a rope that I could let go of at any time. It was like being suspended in time. I was a part of something much bigger. Apart and yet a part of something grander and more beautiful than I could grasp. It was a place of escape for me. A place I could suspend any expectations of who I was supposed to be and simply glide along the water's surface. There were no interruptions, no questions and no expectations.

During these years I was also a part of the youth group in our church. I was then and have always been good at organizing and encouraging others. I tended to end up in leadership roles. We had a group of youth that was made up of kids I went to school with. In a small town, nothing was hidden. We were

involved in each other's lives in every way. We could not pretend piety when we arrived at a youth night.

Though I was involved deeply in the parish, when my mother died, I found it a place which lacked support. A place which offered trite answers to a deep wound. I spoke to the parish priest and got overly simple answers. I wrote my Bishop and he told me just to have faith. I was met by polite sideways glances and sympathetic looks. I was not met with any real depth. I found this so lacking in what I needed that I was drawn away from church in any way for seven years. "In their perverted way all humanity imitates you. Yet they put themselves at a distance from you and exalt themselves against you. I sighed and you heard me. I wavered and you steadied me. I travelled along the broad way of the world, but you did not desert me." (S. Augustine 1961, 32).

Getting Away

*And I say, "Oh, that I had wings like a dove! I would fly away and be at rest"
(Psalm 55:6)*

After graduation I got away. I went as far as possible. After the year in Victoria and the year at UBC I began studies at the University of Lethbridge for my Education Degree. I planned to go to the University of Brandon for a Bachelor of Music.

As usual, my plans and those that were meant for me were different. I ended up remaining in Alberta for both degrees. During my last semester, before I graduated, I was hired with the Lethbridge Public School District. I taught for fourteen years in the public system in Lethbridge.

During these years I found myself returning home less and less often. I returned in the summer to work and raise enough money to pay tuition for the following year. Otherwise, I spent very little time at home in Osoyoos.

I shared an apartment with a few different people during my time in Lethbridge and in my last year I purchased a home with the help of my father. He cosigned the mortgage. I invited three young women to come and rent a room, which paid the monthly principle.

Since I knew that I was coming back to full time employment and I had several months to prepare for my first placement, I decided to go on a trip around Europe with a couple of friends from University. We travelled to Holland, Austria, Italy and Spain for six weeks. It was a backpacking, train riding adventure which I look back upon with fondness.

I remember our last evening in Rome. We were having dinner at a restaurant which was family run. The father was the waiter, the uncle was the cook. Grandfather was the one who invited you in and took your payment while the grandson was bussing tables. The meal was delicious, and the wine flowed freely. We came to know our hosts and their lives and they ours in a short time.

At the end of the evening, we all wanted a picture with these hospitable and warm people. We stood side by side with one another and the bus boy was on my left. As the father took the picture he said to his son, "Give the one on the end a kiss" and motioned for me to turn my face. As I understood enough Italian to know what he had said I simply leaned in with my cheek.

Up to that point in the trip one of my friends had been annoyed that she had been ogled and prodded by the Italian men. I tried to lighten the mood by joking that I had been the only one that hadn't gotten any attention, woe is me! That photograph still makes me smile as I bragged about being kissed by an Italian man for months afterward.

I felt free during that trip, free from the pressures of school assignments, expectations and responsibilities. I convinced myself it was good to be free from having to be anything for anyone else.

On My Way Back

Rend your heart and not your garments. Return to the LORD your God, for he is gracious and compassionate, slow to anger and abounding in love, and he relents from sending calamity. (Joel 2:13)

Having studied music, I sang with choirs. I knew choir directors and many of the opportunities that came to sing or listen involved churches. I managed to be very good at avoiding any sort of real attendance at church other than singing in the building.

Early in my teaching career I discovered that one of my colleagues with whom I had attended University with was working as the choir director at a Presbyterian Church. St. Andrew's had hired her to work with the Adult and Children's Choir. She was a Junior High Choir conductor and music teacher by day. I came to listen to her choir one Sunday.

After that first visit something drew me back again. I would sneak into the back pew after the opening hymn had started (that way I avoided the greeter at the

door). I then knew that before the second last verse of the closing hymn I could sneak out without anyone inviting me to come down for coffee afterward.

I was not looking for a church. I was looking for a way to stop running away. I needed comfort. I wanted to return to a place where I felt whole. I had somehow lost the one who knew me best and began to search for him. I slowly began to stay until the last hymn was sung. Then I began visiting. I joined the choir and helped with the youth. Then I began to ask questions.

The minister at St. Andrew's would patiently give me books to read and put up with my endless queries about how and why there were differences between denominations. How did they begin? What was the reason for continuing them? How did this get us closer to God? What was it we were saying about this God we talked about all the time? He was infinitely patient with me, and I stayed. I have always been very grateful for his patience and his time.

I often tell people that evangelism isn't about starting a first conversation with someone by saying, "Hello, my name is..." and ending it with, "Welcome, you are now a Christian!" Sometimes you simply clarify something. The next person removes a huge boulder of doubt or fear. The next person comes along and sweeps the path of rubble from old beliefs. The next person prepares the ground, the next plants the seed, the next waters... *and God gives the growth.*

Darcy swept away the rubble for me and helped me become fertile ground for God. I will always be grateful to him for his preparing my heart. His patience and his openness to my questions and my doubt allowed me a place to heal. I began to open my heart to the God I thought had abandoned me.

I would realize later that it was not God who abandoned me. Like the prodigal son, I had left. I disowned my Father in despair. Now my heart was becoming aware of the ways in which my Father's house had much more to offer me than I was receiving as I walked alone.

My Own Clan

Behold, children are a gift of the LORD, the fruit of the womb is a reward. (Psalm 127:3)

During my second year of teaching in my first school I met Brent. We dated for three and a half years. He joined me at St. Andrew's Church. We attended regularly and became a part of many of the groups in the church. I sang in the choir and helped with planning events. I sometimes covered for the secretary when she was away. Brent was a part of a small group, and he and I were two of the adults leading the Youth Group. We made long-lasting friendships there. Most of them we continue to be in contact with and are honoured to share our lives with to this day.

A year before we were married my father, who had moved to Spain, took ill. It was the week before the school year was going to begin. I was in the final stages of putting my classroom together. I was putting up bulletin boards and photocopying what was needed for the first week. I was called into the office. My principal said that I had a phone call from Spain. When I answered the person on the other end was a doctor calling from Spain. My father's abdomen had swollen up and he was riddled with cancer. It would be a short time for his life to end and we should come as soon as possible.

Brent joined me on that trip, and we travelled to Pamplona, Spain. It has one of the best cancer treatment centres in all of Europe at the time. It is also the place which is famous for the 'Running of the Bulls'. I'm sure those two are not related...

We spent a week there and visited him every day. While we were there, Brent visited my father alone one day. He asked "for my hand" in marriage and my father gave him his blessing. It was a very chivalrous and old-fashioned thing to do which I would not find out about until months later after he proposed. My father would end up not only surviving but living another seven and a half years after that first scare. He would suffer through many ups and downs with non-Hodgkin's lymphoma during the entire time. He spent months in what seemed like good health and would then take a nosedive and spend weeks in chemotherapy and radiation again. Over and over, he would go through the process.

Over the seven or so years that he suffered we saw a transformation in him. He had spent our lives working hard and long hours. We had kissed him in the morning and kissed him at night and saw him very little in between. He spent most of his waking hours determined to do whatever he could to ensure we would not suffer the same fate as he did as a child.

During his illness however, he softened. It was deeply moving to watch his transformation. He began to pray. Suddenly a little Novena booklet would appear by his bedside. He would talk about receiving communion from the Priest when he came around. He softened in a way I had never seen before. He said "I

love you” often. When we took our children to visit him in Spain, he played with and enjoyed his grandchildren as I’d never seen. He even spoke of regretting working so hard and not enjoying family time more. Though I appreciated learning a strong work ethic from my father I appreciated knowing he saw its limitations. I remember a mixture of guilt and surety as I prayed for him to have a well-deserved rest and finally rest in peace.

November 17th, 1995 my husband proposed, and we were married on May 11th, 1996. My father insisted we continue with the ceremony though he was too ill at the time to attend. He didn’t tell me until it was too late to cancel the plans. At first, I remember being very upset and disappointed. Yet, I knew also that he would not have wanted me to hold off. He knew I would have postponed, and he could not be sure of his health at any moment. Our close family friend, who we called “Uncle Stan”, walked me down the aisle that day.

On the 17th of April the following year, our first daughter Sara was born. We named her Sara after my mother and Shirley after Brent’s mother. We wanted to honour both of our mothers and did not know if we would have another girl. She was born after three days of labour. And though exhausted, we were thrilled she was healthy.

At Sara’s birth I became acutely aware of my mother’s absence. There were so many questions I would have liked to have asked her. Many times, I felt unable and frankly unfit to be a mother I wanted her advice and wisdom. That advice came through others I knew, but it always felt to me as though she might have been better. It did, however, cause me to do a lot more research and

preparation for the baby's arrival. It also forced me into asking many more questions and connected me to more people.

One morning I was changing Sara's diaper. As I carried out this mundane task, I had a wave wash over me. It was an overwhelming love I felt for her. It was a gargantuan tidal wave that I could not contain. The love I felt for her in that moment poured out of me. I could not contain it in any way at all. It was overwhelming. I continued to change her and then put her down for a nap. I watched her as she began to fall asleep and had a sudden moment of awareness.

If I was incapable of holding the love I had for this child – how much more did God love me? God is eternal. God is love. God is omnipotent and omniscient. If in my limited way I could love someone this much – how much more did God love me, and her, and all of us.

This began to turn my attention toward the God I had sought when I snuck in and sat at the back of St. Andrew's. He had slowly been drawing my attention to him. My questions became more about knowing Him more deeply. I would look for that as head knowledge for some time. The heart and spirit would come later even though my experience was so deeply heartfelt that day at the change table. I had protected my heart for so long that I was not sure I could yet give away the key.

I went back to teaching after my maternity leave with Sara and would continue to teach until I became pregnant with Michaela. It was a hard-won pregnancy as we tried for two years to conceive. We began to visit specialists. We

had all the tests required done. Then one day the fertility specialist handed us some tablets. He told us that after my next cycle I was to take them.

Their mistake that day was not taking a pregnancy test. I was already expecting our next child. Michaela Grace would be born on March 18th, 2001. She too was a very difficult birth. In fact, we both technically died for a brief minute before being revived. We still joke to this day on her birthday, by repeating the line Princess Buttercup speaks in the movie *The Princess Bride* – “I died that day.”

We chose her name because of the meaning we understood it to have. Michaela being derivative of Michael which carries the meaning “of God.” Grace being a gift in its simplest form. We felt that she had been a gift of God after what seemed like a time of barrenness and then both of us escaping death together. She quickly became the sunshine of our home as she was (and is) always smiling and laughing. Though Sara was disappointed she did not get the brother she prayed for, they soon became fast friends. To this day they are difficult to separate and are a great support for one another.

After Michaela was born, we began to look for a church that would encourage us as a family. We began to attend different churches over one summer. Brent and I would discuss what we felt about each church and how they may or may not be a fit for our life circumstances. When we attended the Anglican worship, I was struck by the priest’s preaching. The liturgy had been much like my upbringing and so there was comfort there for me. However, it was the priest whose sermon engaged me and who upon meeting him struck me. The

words I used, “I saw Jesus in his eyes” is how I explained it to my husband. It was a mutual sense we had and that began our journey with the Anglican community of faith. That priest and community created a place where my heart was full and where they walked alongside me, watched and encouraged my journey all the way to ordination.

I moved to what would be my final school to teach grade four in 2002 after my maternity leave ended with Michaela. It was a well-respected school with a strong teaching staff and supportive administration. I enjoyed teaching there very much. The girls would often come and play in my classroom as I prepared lessons or finished marking. It was in 2003 when I was to give birth to our son Andreas that I would take my final maternity leave. It would turn into a resignation from my teaching career in 2005.

There was much joy in my fourteen years of teaching. I loved my students. I adored watching them learn and grow. I could not get enough of that moment where you knew you had engaged them, and they were eagerly soaking in the learning. My biggest frustration was watching them suffer. I could teach them to add and subtract. Reading and writing were no problem. Musical appreciation and differentiating between tonic and dominants – no issue at all. I could even help them how to cope and work through relationships at school.

I could not keep them safe at home. I could not make sure they had enough food on the table or proper clothing. I could not guarantee that their parents would spend enough time with them and nurture them. I did what I could

but could only help to a certain point. The work that really needed doing, I realized I could not really do as their teacher.

When Andreas was about to be born, I had applied for a Master's in Education. I was accepted into the program but decided not to attend. I knew somehow that it was not meant for me to do. I would not know until later that it was one small turn God was giving me instinctively. I would indeed study at that level, but not in the field of Education. "*Be strong and take courage all you who wait for the Lord*" from Psalm 31:24 was a passage that I read one morning as I had just prayed to God about whether to go ahead with the Master of Education. It helped me to decide and feel confident that not attending was the right decision.

For about three years after Andreas was born, I took on the challenge of a home-based business. I knew instinctively that it was not what I would do long term. However, it gave me the flexibility to work from home. It allowed a decent income and communication with others. It gave me an outlet without returning to the structure of the classroom. My attraction to this company was the philosophy they held. They encouraged prioritizing God first, Family second and Career third. This business helped me learn strong leadership and business skills. I have always been a capable organizer. This extended those gifts.

Again, my frustration was wanting to move beyond the business aspect and really work with some of these people in their lives. I had the freedom to talk about my faith during meetings. I did not have the freedom to really work in the transformation of lives. At least not in the way that felt satisfying. The moments I

looked forward to most were those I had at church. Stephen Ministry, Stephen Leadership training and Alpha were the highlights of my week.

There came a point where I would either become a “National Sales Director” or would need to decide what area of study to continue. The learning bug had caught me again and I would harken to that restlessness that occurred a year prior to our son’s birth.

I began to search again and was struck by something one of National Sales Directors in the company said at a sales meeting one day. I was about to give a speech about how I had accomplished certain things over a particular period of time. In the introduction to these gatherings there was often a bit of the person’s biography given. When this National Sales Director introduced me, she described me as a person of “deep faith and commitment to God.” I had never thought of myself that way. This began in me a deeper look at what was giving my life meaning. It began to show me the ways that I was being transformed and how others saw these things in me.

Drawing Closer

Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light. (Matthew 11:28-30)

The Fall of 2005 would have Brent attending a Cursillo weekend. He spent time with a group of men. They prayed, worshipped and listened to talks on faith. He had been invited by people at our home parish. During the time he was away, I was invited to go to the women’s weekend.

I resisted it mightily. In part these people seemed to be, well, just a little too eager. In another sense they seemed to be a part of what seemed almost like a secret society. They kept speaking about surprises. They talked about the weekend in hushed tones but assured me I would love the experience. I was very reticent. I did not (do not) enjoy surprises. It bothered me how they went on about it and so I had decided I would be too busy with my business to attend.

When Brent returned there was something different about him. He had a light in his eyes, a change in his demeanour that I could not pin down. I did not understand it, but he kept urging me to go. “You’ll love it,” he said. Somehow all my appointments ended up either being changed or cancelled and I decided to go.

On the first night we were sent to bed for a silent portion of the retreat. We were to spend the rest of the evening and next morning, until after morning prayer in silence. The idea of an entire evening in silence scared me half to death.

In the middle of the night, I woke up. I thought my roommate had spoken my name. She was fast asleep. I got back into bed. A few moments later I thought I heard her again. When I got out of bed to look over at her, she was fast asleep. The third time I got up and went outside of the dormitory. When I got outside, I went for a walk. It was a walk which would change my mind, my heart and my attitude toward a great many things.

I walked outside the door and followed the path to a large patch of grass. The area was dimly lit by the lights of the retreat centre. I would stand there for some time. I kept hearing the phrase “Be still and know that I am God” (I would not realize until later where that was in scripture). I would hear the phrase

repeated over and over as I walked closer to the trees that edged the open green space. As I edged closer to the trees I called out to God, “I do not like the dark!” but had a physical sense of being pushed toward the trees. “I do not want to go there, I’m scared,” I said to Him. “Be still and know that I am God” would come the reply.

As I walked toward the trees, resisting – being urged and reminded of stillness – I found myself standing on a small bridge. As I looked down one side of the water was calm and almost still. On the other side of the bridge the water was raging. I saw places in my life that seemed more like the rushing waters popping up in my mind. I yearned for the calmness of the other side. It was a yearning like nothing I’d ever known before. I turned around to go back and felt an overwhelming presence of warmth and light and heard, “I am the light of the world.”

On the return back to the retreat centre I could not feel the ground under my feet in the same way. It felt spongy. It was as though I was barely touching the ground. I felt none of the rocks or twigs or stones I’d noticed on the way into those trees. It was as though I was being carried.

Before I returned to my room, I walked around the retreat centre and a light went off on one of the buildings. I assumed it was an automatic light that would sense my presence and turn on at my movement. However, I moved my arms, and it did nothing. When I moved it remained off. When I stood still, I would hear “I am the light of the world, be still.” As soon as the phrase ran through my mind I would stand still, and the light would shine again.

When I made my way back to the lodge, I felt compelled to open my bible. I went to my room and brought it downstairs. I sat outside on the bench just outside the lodge and opened the bible. I saw in the darkness a wolf walk across the grassy area between the lodge and the retreat centre in front of me. He did not look at me. I looked down at my bible and it was opened to Philippians. Specifically, chapter 3 verses 2-3. *Beware of the dogs, beware of the evil workers, beware of those who mutilate the flesh! For it is we who are the circumcision, who worship in the Spirit of God and boast in Christ Jesus and have no confidence in the flesh.* The dog passed by me and I heard once again, “Be still and know that I am God.” I sat on the bench for a few moments trying to absorb what I had just seen and read. I heard again, “Be still and know that I am God.” I returned to my room astonished that I had been outside, alone in the dark for what felt like hours. I have been terrified of the dark my entire life. This entire experience had just happened in the dark. For the first time, as I lay in bed I was completely at peace.

The next morning, we awoke and joined together as a larger group at the retreat centre in the gathering room. After we had prayed Morning Prayer together, we were led in a guided meditation. At this point, the silent period ended.

The leader sat on the floor and said he was going to lead us through a meditation on scripture. He would chant the entire line once. Then he would remove a word at a time until left with only one word. He would then leave

silence. He went through it once to help us. He sang each syllable using the same note and left long silences between each.

Be Still and know that I am God... (I could not contain the tears)

Be still and know that I am...

Be still and know ...

Be Still...

Be...

I awoke that morning wondering whether it had all been a dream. Perhaps it had been imaginary. All in my head. The morning devotion had said otherwise. It was not in my head at all. God had spoken clearly. Reminding me to be still. To trust that He is God. To know that in all situations He is the light. Even when things look the darkest, when the *dogs and evildoers* are doing their best. I can be still and know. I can be still and trust. I can be still and be assured that God has the situation, the outcome and me in His loving hands.

In later retreats, I would work on the team that organized the weekend for others. I would slowly be drawn into speaking, and into working as a Spiritual Team member.

During a weekend where I was working on the team I asked one of the clergy what made him consider the priesthood. He smiled at me and told the story of his call. When I returned home after that weekend, I became aware of the types of books I'd been reading. What I was reading had changed over time. I had

books by CS Lewis and Walter Brueggemann on my shelf. Also littering my shelves were Henri Nouwen, Teresa of Avila, Richard Foster and Dallas Willard.

From Bookshelves to Classrooms

But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, He will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all that I said to you. (John 14:26)

One day after the encounter with my bookshelves, I was chatting with a friend. She is an Anglican priest and had several times previous to this day mentioned to me that I should go ‘take some courses’. When she spoke of courses, she meant theological school. She would often comment on her alma mater and how much I would love it there. I had thus far just brushed her off. This time, I started to connect the dots that God seemed to be making more and more obvious. I decided I would just take a course and see what this was all about.

I spoke to our parish priest about the possibility of study. He said he had been waiting for the day I would have this conversation with him. When I asked what he meant, he explained that he knew this decision had been “niggling” at me for the last four or more years. He proceeded then to point out several key moments where he felt God was working in my life and it began to seem a bit like a jigsaw puzzle coming together.

I did some research on different schools, including speaking to some of my friends who had attended different schools. I then phoned the Registrar at Wycliffe College. I asked him if I could just take a course. He asked me if I was thinking of applying to a degree program. My answer was ‘wishy washy’ at best. I told him that possibly I might eventually, but for now I would just like to take a

course. He pursued with, “Well, if you *were* going to choose a degree path, which would it be?” I told him the MDiv. He suggested I apply for the degree program anyway, “It couldn’t hurt,” he said, “and then you have one more thing out of the way.” I pointed out to him that I was almost 2 months past the deadline. He said that he was the registrar and that he could waive that requirement.

I began the application process. The application required three written references, which were quite lengthy. I was to write six essays. I needed to get my transcripts in from 2 different universities. I was given until the end of the following week to submit all the documents. The essays and references were complete. I was told by the universities sending transcripts that even in a rush it would take ten days for Wycliffe College to receive the marks.

I was in no particular hurry (in fact resistant), so I simply proceeded knowing that the application would have to be for the following fall term. Two days later (2 pm to be exact), I phoned the University of Lethbridge to see if the transcripts had been sent. It had been sent early that morning. At 2:10 pm, I received a phone call from Wycliffe. It was the Registrar. He told me that my application was complete. I told him that of course he had everything *except* the transcripts. He replied that he, in fact, had the transcripts in his hands!

“That is impossible,” I said to him. He assured me he had *everything* he needed was in his hands. We both marveled that this could be happening, but it was. Somehow the impossible was seeming more and more possible.

The next hurdle was that my application had to go to the admissions board. The board was comprised of a group of professors who gave the final

acceptance as to whether a student would be accepted or not to a particular degree program. They did not officially meet for another week. That would be the only hold up. I thought again that the studies would begin in the fall. I was not in any hurry to begin.

Two days later I received another call. The board had had an unscheduled meeting, considered my application and had accepted me. In the same phone call, the registrar said that they had already signed me up for my first online course. I would begin in two weeks.

He said, "It looks like this train has already left the station and you just need to jump on the last car." I thought it an odd comment but considering that it seemed everything was falling into place without any real help from me I had to agree that it seemed the train had indeed left the station!

Later the next day, I stopped by the church to tell James and Andrew, priests in the Anglican church we had been attending about the amazing experience and to thank them for their references. I did not tell them what the registrar had said about the train simply that I was to begin in the spring semester. Andrew said, "Sounds like this train has already left the station and you just needed to jump on the last car."

Needless to say, I almost had to sit down. Later that day 1 Corinthians 2:10 kept coming to my mind, so I looked it up. I was clearly part of God's divine choreography and was learning the 'steps' as I went along. *God has revealed to us through the Spirit. For the Spirit searches everything, even the depths of God.*

1Corinthians 2:10 I noticed later that the number of the chapter and verse was the same as the time of day I received the confirmation phone call of my admission.

I began my MDiv at Wycliffe and took my first two years of courses either online or as intensive courses. For one course I took on the book of Genesis, I drove up to Camrose in Alberta. I spent a week there with a few other students. One of the Wycliffe professors instructed us during the day, and we were then sent home for a few months of time writing papers and completing online assignments. The school was supportive in the ways I attempted to creatively complete expectations while staying close to home.

In my final year I had to attend a residency for the full school year. Being away from Brent and the children was the hardest thing I had done, and I often threatened to come home. Michaela once replied to one of my sad little rants by saying, “Mom you can’t come home yet.” When I asked her why she replied, “Because God said you had to finish.”

I would later ask her how she knew that God had said that. She simply told me that he wouldn’t have sent me there just to quit. Once I completed that interminably long year, I returned to complete my field placements and hospital chaplaincy at home in Southern Alberta.

One of my favourite ways that Wycliffe showed its flexibility toward me was in allowing a pilgrimage to Spain to become an independent study course. I walked the Camino de Santiago prior to my residency in Toronto. I learned some history and wrote a daily journal. I ended up with a reflective paper on “The Camino, as Road to Emmaus.”

The Camino would become for me a place I saw Jesus on the road.

Walking Alongside

... two of them were going to a village called Emmaus, about seven miles^a from Jerusalem. They were talking with each other about everything that had happened. As they talked and discussed these things with each other, Jesus himself came up and walked along with them; ¹⁶but they were kept from recognizing him.

He asked them, "What are you discussing together as you walk along?"

... As they approached the village to which they were going, Jesus continued on as if he were going farther. But they urged him strongly, "Stay with us, for it is nearly evening; the day is almost over." So, he went in to stay with them.

When he was at the table with them, he took bread, gave thanks, broke it and began to give it to them. Then their eyes were opened, and they recognized him... (Luke 24: 13-17, 28-31)

In May of 2007, I travelled with six others to Spain. We walked the Camino de Santiago. It is the Way of St James. There are several possible routes of which we took what is named the Northern Route. We travelled 250 km of that route.

We arrived in Ponferrada, Spain with our backpacks ready and hiking boots on eagerly ready to begin our trek. We had nothing but time and space before us. There was an electric energy as we set off following the yellow arrows as we embarked on this adventure.

For the first two days we were noticing every sheep, every yellow arrow and the lovely scenery. On the second day we checked in at an *albergue* (hostel) and our beds were on the second floor. In the middle of the night, I got up to use the bathroom which was on the lower floor. As I made my way down the tile

steps, I lost my footing and fell. For the rest of the trip, I would walk on, what I only discovered four days later, was a broken big toe.

After four days of walking on this broken toe we met a nurse in the hostel we were at one night. I had my sandals off, and she could see my foot. Her name was Pilar, and we began to chat in Spanish. She asked if she could look at my foot. When she examined it, the toe was swollen, and the nail was lifting. It was a mess. She told me it was almost certainly broken and very infected. I needed to go to a doctor as soon as possible. She alerted me to a pharmacy where I could begin using an antibiotic to get a head start on the infection.

I went to the Doctor the next day. I managed quite easily to get to the hospital, knowing the language. The visit to the doctor was quite amusing. The doctor used a lot of humour. He came in and examined the foot. He saw the pads of my feet and heel covered in blisters. No doubt from the 25,000 steps each day as my feet pounded the ground over and over. Some of them from the adjustment I was making because of the broken toe which caused me to step differently than normal inside my shoes. My toenail was lifting because when I broke my toe, I had created a lesion under the nail. There was indeed a bad infection underneath the nail. He drilled the nail to allow the puss to escape. As he looked at my wretched feet, he kept shaking his head and asking why we pilgrims all do this to ourselves. He said to me, "*Te has hecho un Cristo! ¿Porqué?*" ("You've made yourself a Christ! Why?") He kept shaking his head and wondering what on earth would make me want to do this.

He bandaged me up as best he could and told me to go home, to Canada. I just smiled at him. He shook his head and told me I was crazy to keep going. I didn't feel there was a choice. I took one day off.

While the others walked, I took a taxi to the next town and waited for them. I visited a monastery in the town of Samos. The monastery, like all the buildings there, was tucked in around the curves of the hills. I sat in the monastery. For hours I sat on the hard benches of the sanctuary. There was a eucharist in which the priest preached a homily which was deeply comforting to me. I rested my foot. I found rest for my soul.

I spent the entire day slowly working my way around the monastery. Sitting for long periods of time both inside and on the grounds outside. On a few occasions a Benedictine monk would come to me and ask if I needed anything. I kept saying that honestly, I had more than I deserved. They would smile and leave me to sit.

In one of my stops, I had entered the vestry behind the sanctuary. This is the place where they keep and prepare the vessels, linens and paraments needed for communion. As I walked around the room, I came upon a glass case. It had inside of it a thigh bone. The small brass plate on the outside claimed it came from St Benedict himself! I wondered whether it was only a small part of his thigh bone as it was quite a small bone. Perhaps he was even shorter than I was!

When my friends arrived toward the end of the day, they were tired and weary from a day full of ups and downs. Although I was glad to see them it was

hard to leave the monastery. Hard to leave the peace of that place. Hard to continue a journey that I knew was going to continue being physically painful.

I carried myself in a different way along *the way* after that day. The Camino is often referred to as “The Way.” The link for Christians to “The Way and the Truth and the Life” is unmistakable. My journey in the monastery would continue to fill me through some difficult hikes. It would sustain me as I was draining blisters. It encouraged me as I watched some become impatient with one another. It led me somehow to hold the entire experience with an acknowledgement of God’s presence in every situation.

After that day at the monastery, I remember in particular watching people as they experienced their walk. I could see them missing home. I could see them amazed at the beauty of creation. I saw them with new eyes. This happened for me not only with those who travelled in our group but with those we met along the way.

I began to see more clearly the patterns that God uses to this day when leading me to a place he is calling. Prior to the Camino, for example, during my parish discernment process one of the people on my committee used a phrase about me having a certain skill that would serve me in my call as a priest. Later, someone unrelated who did not know that person, used the same language with me. Again, several months later yet another person used the same language. When I heard it for the third time, I came to the realization that God was speaking. This pattern of speaking in threes has repeated itself numerous times as God calls me to different ministries.

Many days we spent walking the winding roads. Some of them up steep hills creating blisters on our heels. Some of them on downward slopes creating blisters on our toes. Watching animals, shepherds, trees, vineyards, and lush countryside flank us on every side. We walked through towns and some cities. All of them full of people and places that recognized us as pilgrims, acknowledging us with the call “ultreya.” “Onward,” they would say. It means more than that, of course. It implies that we should keep going, not give up, keep up our spirits. And we did that. We encouraged one another and those we walked with, and they us.

One woman who we met on the road joined us just after my trip to the doctor. She was from Belgium. She travelled alone and when she had begun the journey, she had been propositioned for sex by men in the hostel she stayed in as well as harassed by other hikers. During the first week of her hike, she had received a call from her husband saying that he wanted to be separated. She continued to walk alone until she met us.

Ruth stayed with us until the end. She shared her story. She cried and lamented all her distress. She had moments of walking with each of us. We discussed why things happen and came up with some satisfying and some glib answers. Each of us listening, laughing, encouraging and hoping for her healing. By the end of the trip, we would see hope in Ruth’s eyes. We continue to keep in touch to this day.

The end of the Camino is dramatic. You arrive in the city of Santiago and walk through its winding streets. Many times, you are simply following the arrows painted on the sides of the buildings or spray painted on the road itself.

The streets are narrow, almost claustrophobic as you make your way toward the Cathedral. When you turn the corner into the Plaza it opens up into a massive space. One entire side is the Cathedral and its main entrance. The opposite wall is a museum. The third is a hotel and the fourth offices. All of them in ancient stone and speaking tales from centuries gone by.

Once we had visited the Compostela office, we received our official stamped Compostela certificate. In order to receive this, we showed our books which displayed each of the stamps we received in each of the hostels where we stayed along the way. Once completed, we attended the Pilgrims' Mass at the Cathedral.

We entered through the massive doors to find a worship space that was the length of a football field. Two transepts flanked the sanctuary at the front of the church. During the communion service we would see the largest thurible in the world swing all the way across one transept over top the altar and into the opposite transept. It took six clergy to lift it and begin the swinging process.

As we walked through the cavernous place, we saw people from every country, race and nation. We saw many we had never met. We met those we had seen at the beginning of the journey but never again until now. We came across those we had met in the middle and stayed with us until the end. We saw those who we had met toward the end. We shared with them all the joy of finishing well. All of us joining together and looking back at our journey, our "way" and realizing that though we had each experienced it differently, we had been walking

together the whole time. Our paths had crossed when they needed to and by God's grace here, we were together in the end.

The priest called out "Italy" and the Italians would cheer. Then he called out, "Canada" and we all cheered. Country after country he would call and people from around the world responded joyfully. We celebrated mass together as a United Nation, a Body of Christ joined together as a heavenly chorus. It was glorious. It made me wonder – will this be heaven?

Sight

For we live by faith, not by sight. (2Corin. 5:7)

The past ten years have seen a lot of changes and a great deal of turbulence.

My husband started a company in 1998. He is a commercial pilot with an undergraduate in Business Management. When he opened the company, his goal was to provide the local population a route to Edmonton which is the provincial capital. He began the company with three pilots, an administrative assistant and an office the size of my current ensuite bathroom. We spent the first four years living on my salary because he did not take one so his employees would be paid well. He grew the company from the tiny office into one that had offices in two cities with over sixty employees. On the verge of becoming larger he brought on someone in the company who would change the direction of his career life forever. A person who my children would call "uncle" affectionately and who stayed in our home many times. A person who claimed undying loyalty to Brent and even referred to him as his brother. That person would become the man who

would underhandedly create a hostile takeover of the company my husband built from scratch over seventeen long years.

One summer day in 2015, we were camping in Montana. We barely had a phone signal and could only get tiny blips of Wi-Fi to retrieve emails. He opened up his phone one day and said, "I just got fired." We all sat in shock as we tried to figure out what had happened. Over the coming weeks and months, we would be astounded at the ways in which he had been handled and tricked into losing the company he had worked so hard to build.

Our children printed off bible verses and put them up all around the house to encourage us and keep us from despairing. "Be strong and take heart, all you who hope in the LORD" (Psalm 31:24). Isaiah 40:31, Isaiah 43:2 Prov. 3:5-6, Psalm 16:8, Isaiah 41:10, 1 Peter 5:7 and others were taped up to the walls in our bedroom. They hung off our bedside table lamps and on the mirror in the bathroom. We would find them tucked into our wallets and on the dash of our cars. Our children had sight for us as we walked in the darkness. Another blinding moment would come that same year.

I had been having strange symptoms for some time. Dizzy spells, double vision, verbal aphasia, headaches that would go on for days at a time, buckling legs, numb feet and a tremor in my right hand were all included in the list.

When I went to my doctor, she ran a series of tests. She took blood samples, X-rays, and scans. Nothing she took answered the reason for all these symptoms. She sent me to an internal medicine doctor who sent me for an MRI of my brain. He suspected Multiple Sclerosis.

Within a span of a month, I was back in the internist's office with the diagnosis. I did not have MS. That was the good news, he told me. The bad news was that what I had he knew nothing about. In fact, all he knew was that I would have to be referred immediately to a Neurosurgeon.

My condition is called Chiari Malformation. It is essentially a narrowing of the skull at the base around the Foramen Magnum. It causes the Cerebellum to be under constant pressure and it herniates that part of the brain outside of the skull. The surgery involves cutting a portion of the skull away and creating a sling for the Cerebellum portion of the brain to be supported and relieve the pressure.

I spent an entire year going to Neurologists and Neurosurgeons. My symptoms worsening to the point where I was using a cane to walk because I could not trust my legs. My headaches were continuous day and night. I had MRI's all down my spinal cord to ensure that there were no other pathologies which they might have to deal with. It got to the point where I was only able to have about four productive hours in a day. The rest of the time I spent laying on our couch.

As my symptoms worsened my husband and I stood looking at the altar in the church one Sunday after church. There were 3 steps up to the chancel area. There was another step to the sanctuary where the altar was set. It was clear to us both that one day soon I would no longer be able to use my legs to climb those steps.

About a week later I attended a Cursillo weekend as the Spiritual Director. This meant I was the leader of the team of support clergy, giving talks, leading

worship and providing pastoral care for the team and participants over the weekend.

I went prepared with my cane, my pain medications and my talks all written. My symptoms began to worsen over the first 3 days. On the last morning I had to give the final clergy talk of the weekend. It was given late in the morning, after breakfast. I awoke that morning with a blinding headache. My legs were particularly weak and were buckling more than usual. My feet had gone from tingling to completely numb. My eyesight failed me for anything beyond the length of my arms.

At 7 am, I made my way to the prayer chapel and asked the women there to pray over me. I then slowly walked toward the retreat centre sensing someone behind me. I could hear them speaking softly. I could not make out what they said, but I assumed they were praying.

When I arrived at the doors of the retreat centre my Bishop saw me and a grave look of concern came over his face. "Oh dear, you look terrible."

We stopped right there, and he found some anointing oil, laid hands on me and prayed. I was then sent down for breakfast and not allowed to do anything until I absolutely had to give my talk.

When I returned to give my talk, I began using notes and showing slides I had prepared. Suddenly I looked over and saw my cane over by a table that was far too far to reach easily. I had this inner moment of panic. Then I realized I didn't need my cane. My legs felt strong. I looked up and realized I could see the entire prayer team lined up against the back wall of the retreat centre – much

farther than what I could see only hours prior. I moved my toes in my shoes and could feel them - no tingling.

As I became aware of myself and began noticing my symptoms dropping one by one I looked over to where my Bishop was sitting. He mouthed the words, “Can you see me?” I nodded in reply.

I stopped my talk and shared with the team and candidates what was happening. They were in tears as they had seen me all weekend and knew that something miraculous was happening before our very eyes.

After that day I counted every day that I did not have a headache. Day One, no headache. Day two, no headache. Day three... I would go on counting for months. Today when I have a headache I count the days I do *not have* a headache after that day. A completely different outlook.

This entire experience happened at the same time my husband’s company had been taken and as we were awaiting a neurosurgeon to plan a date for my brain surgery. He was working for a truck company to help financially and we had no clue what was next for him professionally. Amid all of these things, God saw us.

About three months after my symptoms had been in remission I was on my way to pick up my son from school. I was in a hurry and rushing through the house as I was late. As I rushed past the living room I stopped as the couch caught my eye.

I stood in a trance staring at the place I had spent so many hours. For so many days unable to move, exhausted from trying to be normal for a few hours

each day. Many of those days unable to move my legs at all. Over and over again reciting the Psalms and raging against the condition which I could not control. Lamenting to God about the situation I was in and begging him to help me make sense of it all.

I stood there staring. I struggled to move. Every fibre of my being wanted to curl up on the couch and stay there. I had to go get my son! But that couch was drawing me to it like a magnet. It took every ounce of energy in me to pull myself away and go to pick up my son. “What kind of mother longs for the couch when she needs to pick up her son?” I asked myself.

The kind of mother who found God there. The kind of mother who had nothing left but to lay all of me into his arms. The one who found his embrace in the cushions of that couch.

Today

When this Spiritual Autobiography was originally written I was working as a priest in a small-town parish. The parish had 120 or so members and we averaged over 60 on a regular Sunday and over 110 on special Sundays. The parish had a pastoral care team, a healthy youth group and Sunday School program as well as a choir, band and occasionally a handbell group. It was a place full of many wonderful, faithful folks and I was pleased to serve them as their Pastor and Priest.

In my time as a parish priest, I also served the clergy as a Regional Dean. This meant that I gathered the clergy of our region, which included eighteen parishes for regular monthly meetings. It was my role to touch base with the

individual clergy and leaders to support them in their ministries. During this time in ministry, I became certified as a Pastor Coach. This certification challenged me to think differently about how to support my fellow leaders. I was able to help them reach their goals and encourage them in healthy spiritual and practical habits.

A year after writing this Autobiography as an assignment I was appointed to work at the right hand of the Bishop of the Diocese as the Executive Officer. This meant a move away from parish life and a focus on providing support for the Bishop, as well as the clergy and lay leadership in parishes across the diocese, which encompasses seventy-one parishes.

This change in role enhanced my ability to support clergy across the diocese. It allows me access to all clergy not just those in a particular geographic region of the diocese. In this role, I can support, encourage and walk alongside clergy in their ministries. I discovered very quickly in this new role, that much like my role as Regional Dean and Pastoral Coach, I enjoyed walking alongside leadership and helping them in their spiritual formation. I found that those in leadership are close to my heart because they carry a heavy load of responsibility and they can often put the needs of others before their own. It is important to me to support them in that leadership and to provide ways in which that leadership can be nurtured and informed by a healthy spiritual life. This prompted me to engage a project that gave myself and participants an insight into how a healthy spiritual life might be sustained.

CHAPTER 3 - A MODEL OF SPIRITUAL FORMATION - DANCING OUR WAY TO JESUS

My spiritual autobiography began when I was sixteen years old. I then went back to tell the story of the first fifteen years of my life through the lens of the year I turned sixteen. There is a flow between our past and present. A movement between memories and current experience, each of them influencing the other. Amid the rhythms of hours and days as they pass there is connection between yesterday and today.

Much like a couple in a ballroom dance, these past experiences whether they be fulfillment or pain give us a lens through which we interpret our current steps. We are people who have learned steps, experienced injuries and exhilaration while dancing through life. These inform who we are in the present. An autobiography makes us aware of all these movements in our lives and how they relate to one another, flowing one into the other. Allowing Jesus to lead in our formation we are privileged to see ourselves through the eyes of love. We become aware of how our past informs our present and how our God can help transform our lives through an intimate dance.

The metaphor I chose in my model was dance. This intimacy one shares in ballroom dancing informs not only how we dance with the One who leads, but

also makes us more aware of who we are and who we are called to become. Our relationship with our lead dancer not only transforms us but helps us in guiding others who cross our paths.

In order for church leaders to be effective in a positive way they should have an emotionally healthy spirituality. This requires that the leader engage in the dance of spiritual formation and allow that to inform their leadership.

In 1992, John Michael Montgomery debuted a single on his album called “Life’s a Dance.” It used the metaphor of dance for life. The chorus rung:

Life’s a dance, you learn as you go
Sometimes you lead, sometimes you follow
Don’t worry ‘bout what you don’t know
Life’s a dance, you learn as you go. (Montgomery 1992)

The lyricists, Allen Shamblin and Steve Seskin use the verses in between to give more wisdom on how to live our lives.

The longer I live the more I believe,
You do have to give if you wanna’ receive
There’s a time to listen, a time to talk
And you might have to crawl even after you walk
Had sure things blow up in my face
Seen the longshot win the race
Been knocked down by the slammin’ door
Picked myself up and came back for more. (Montgomery 1992)

There is a movement in dance that echoes life. There are times in our lives where we lead and times we follow. As we age, we learn new steps and there are always new dances to experience. Moments in our lives are painful just as it is when we lose our step, stumble, or someone steps on our toes; or worse yet we fall and break a bone or pull a tendon. Those are times we may choose to step off the dance floor, to disengage ourselves. I would argue that while that may be our

privilege it is to our detriment. I believe those moments often teach us a richness about life and ourselves that can be missed otherwise. Life has a rhythm which we all recognize. Leaders are intimate participants, but they also must be good observers.

Leaders are on a dance floor with others, all dancing at the same time. In couples' dances, the lead is responsible for guiding them and initiating transitions. The lead dancer keeps abreast of new steps so as to guide others. It is a tricky thing to navigate both learning and leading. Leadership in a Christian ministry setting provides its own challenges as leaders navigate between the Christian and secular paradigms. Leaders also navigate between encouraging their own spiritual formation and encouraging the formation of others.

There was a story I heard once from a colleague in ministry who reminded me of this responsibility. My colleague left their parish to work in another Diocese, a change of dance partners, if you will. The next priest to come to the parish they left had a degree in business. There was hope on the part of the church that this knowledge of business would help to grow the parish numerically. Perhaps this new dance partner would teach them new steps? Within three years the parish was under threat of being closed down. This story has repeated itself several times in a variety of situations. All of them sharing one thing in common; when a new leader came in attempting to improve the congregation with a business model, it shrank instead. There is a sense that the one who leads must know the dance and understand the style and music if they are going to lead well. Dr. David Paul Yonggi Cho, a Christian minister from South Korea once

remarked that when he met a Christian leader, he met a businessman but when he met a Buddhist leader, he met a holy man. Though this may have been a throw away comment, it carries a deeper question. What does one who leads a dance need to know— particularly if the dance is with people of the church?

I hear these stories and they carry truth about the paradox of leadership and how it might be best embodied in the church. The scripture take leadership very seriously. Acts 20:28 reminds us to “Pay careful attention to yourselves and to all the flock, in which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to care for the church of God, which he obtained by his own blood.” Proverbs 16:12 reminds us that “It is an abomination for kings to commit wicked acts, for a throne is established on righteousness.” Leadership is important to the writers of scripture, as the ongoing formation of a Christian leader affects an entire community. Whether leading a business, non-profit, teaching or ministering in a congregation, leadership clearly affects everyone in the organization.

There is the chance that we may not want to dance. There is also a chance that when we as leaders are attempting to dance others in the community may not be willing to dance. There are times when this resistance can deform or delay healthy spiritual formation in the community. It is the responsibility not only of the leader but of all of us to engage in our own formation and that of our community. If communities are resistant to being led it does not matter if a leader knows the steps or what to wear.

My question is: how does a leader form into a holy person? Further to that how are we, as leaders, to lead others in that holy formation? My contention is

that a healthy spiritually formed leader forms a community in a spiritually healthy way. If our lead dancers keep healthy habits and practice their craft, they can teach us to be healthy as well. When we “live and move and have our being” in God (Acts 17:28), we form others in this way.

Emotionally Healthy Spirituality

A key element to the idea of being spiritually healthy is being emotionally healthy. Someone recently asked me what I thought about the tragedy of abuse that has plagued the church. They were referencing the Roman Catholic scandals, though they happen in other denominations. My answer included the idea echoed by author, previous minister and founder of New life Ministries, Peter Scazzero’s book *Emotionally Healthy Spirituality* which states “Christian spirituality, without an integration of emotional health, can be deadly – to yourself, your relationship with God, and the people around you” (Scazzero 2017, 9). When we build our knowledge in one area of our life, we cannot ignore the other areas. Leaders cannot walk onto the dance floor wearing a parka and large boots expecting to dance the tango well; no matter how well they know the steps, the extra clothing will cause difficulties. When Jesus said we must be born again he did not mean for us to ignore all the things that brought us to the point of acknowledging our need for Christ. If we ignore what we bring to the dance floor we may dance well for a while, but it will end in exhaustion and possibly injury to ourselves and those around us.

So then, we must, along with knowledge of God come to know ourselves. “Awareness of [ourselves] and [our] relationship with God are intricately related”

(Scazzero 2017, 39). If leaders do not take time to “put off your old self... and put on the new self, created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness” we may end up bringing forward into the present our old dance habits, creating problems for ourselves, our partners and everyone else on the dance floor as we live out of our false selves (Ephes. 4:22, 24). Much like Jesus faced temptations in the wilderness we are also tempted to care what others think, to concern ourselves with possessions or position in life as well as other distractions. In order to live into our authentic selves, we need to follow the God who “invites us to remove the false layers we wear to reveal our authentic self, to awaken the ‘seeds of true self’ he has planted within us” (Scazzero 2017, 62). An important area to begin is in self-reflection. We may know a lot of dance steps, but sometimes our old habits, beliefs and injuries may surface and begin to make the dance difficult. A practice like the Examen, created by Ignatius of Loyola, allows us to see ourselves dancing in the mirror and how we are reflecting Lord of the Dance. The Examen provides a space for us to review our day, our attitudes, our thoughts and feelings in the light of a God who loves us. A God who draws our attention to who we are presently and who we can fully become in God’s grace. As theologian and statesman John Calvin writes in the first chapter of his Institutes, “Without knowledge of self, there is no knowledge of God. Our wisdom, insofar as it ought to be deemed true and solid wisdom, consists almost entirely of two parts: the knowledge of God and of ourselves. But as these are connected by many ties, it is not easy to determine which of the two precedes and gives birth to the other” (Calvin 1960, 32).

The self-reflective piece is important for leaders because, “Emotionally healthy spirituality is about reality, not denial or illusion” (Scazzero 2017, 71). We cannot ignore the winter parka whilst we try to dance the tango. We cannot pretend that our family of origin, our experiences, our traumas and our joys have not had deep impact on who we are in the present. We can live joyfully in the present, but it requires us “breaking free from the destructive patterns of our past to live the life of love God intends” (Scazzero 2017, 71). The reason to look into patterns in our lives is not only because they have formed us in ways we may not even realize, but also a first step in avoiding compartmentalization. We do not want to become a part of a disconnected spirituality in which we look like a Christian on the outside, but our faith life is not integrated into the other areas of our life. We can learn “how to pray, read Scripture, participate in small groups” but “rooting out the deeply ingrained messages, habits and ways of behaving especially under stress” proves to be more complex (Scazzero 2017, 79,80). For this possibly difficult piece, we need trustworthy dance partners; spiritual directors, mentors and mature friends to help us along the way. Many in scripture were asked to leave known lives and move to into the life which God called them. Esther was asked to live and marry outside her culture and risk her life for her people. Moses and Joseph were both taken from their families only to have influence in another culture which saved many in Israel. The disciples all left their labour and homes and followed an itinerant preacher named Jesus. It is a difficult road we must take if we want to lead others in the dance of life, if we want to avoid leading others out of our dysfunction and theirs.

What does an emotionally healthy spirituality look like? It is not about “telling people to love better and more... They need practical skills incorporated into their spiritual formation to grow out of emotional infancy into emotional adulthood” (Scazzero 2017, 168). We do not begin as an accomplished ballerina. We begin by sitting at the feet of a master dancer who instructs us. We take small steps and become more and more comfortable with the nature of the dance until one day we find ourselves, not perfect, but gliding across the floor with ease and confidence.

Some of the qualities of healthy emotional spirituality include recognizing not only that we bear the image of God but that everyone we encounter does as well. Treating others with dignity, acknowledging they are separate from us and we respect and value them is another sign of health. We do not demand that people see the world the way we do but rather “the separate space between us becomes sacred space” (Scazzero 2017, 175). We recognize in these approaches toward others that if each of us is made in the image of God, then between us is a space that is Holy and inhabited by the One who made us both. We then begin to treat each interaction with the other person as a way of encountering God. Much like the silence in between notes of music, the space between dancers is as important as the steps they take.

In my experience, another sign of healthy spirituality is the facing and working through of conflict. Finding tools, we can use to listen, speak and find solutions while speaking the truth to each other are ways we can resolve conflicts.

Learning to resolve and reconcile situations in healthy ways helps us as leaders to help others face and fix problems rather than avoid them or pretend, they are not happening. We are also then able to help others work through conflicts of their own.

In the end, we seek freedom as the goal of an emotionally healthy spirituality. We want to freely love and freely lead others well. We are able to do this when we see ourselves as we really are as God sees us. We do this when we have removed the barriers which keep us from whole, healthy, emotionally mature spirituality. When we do this emotional work as leaders, we can lead others to both spiritual and emotional health as well.

Spiritual Formation

Having considered healthy emotional spirituality, what is spiritual formation? Professor Jim Wilhoit helped me with the definition which we will use for the purpose of this: spiritual formation is an intentional and communal process of “growing in relationship with God and becoming conformed to Christ through the power of the Holy Spirit” for the sake of the other (Wilhoit 2008, 68). We will take each item one by one.

Spiritual formation is *intentional* because we are engaged in relationship and relationships, which like dance, require us to take part. The intention comes from God and from us. The first relationship is with God. God is love and we are God’s beloved. Love does not force itself on its beloved or it would not be love but a relationship of power or dominance. Therefore, there is an element of agency on our part in our relationship with God. We cannot by force or by chance

be drawn into a formation which is contingent on the relationship of love in and with Christ. It is not something we muster up or conjure. It is not a self-improvement program. Rather it is relationship entered into intentionally. We come to the dance by choice. The Holy Spirit always inviting us to the dance. Though God does not force God's-self on us, by God's nature The Holy Spirit is always waiting and willing to enter when we are ready. When we have come to realize that in God, we "live and move and have our being" (Acts 17:28) as leaders, we are able to hold others learning the dance more tenderly.

Spiritual formation is also by its nature *communal*. Theologian, missiologist and author Lesslie Newbigin states, "It is surely a fact of inexhaustible significance that what our Lord left behind Him was not a book, nor a creed, nor a system of thought, nor a rule of life, but a visible community. He committed the entire work of salvation to that community" (Newbigin 2008, 78). We do not dance alone. Christian Spiritual formation involves the relationship between us as individuals and God. If each person can have this relationship with God, then it automatically connects us humanly if only because we are each relating to God and then one another. It is particularly so, if we recognize in those relationships the God who is in each of us and between each of us as we engage one another. One final aspect of the community is that if we are all in relationship with God, which affects our character and growth, it will then affect every other person with whom we are in contact. If it changes us, it changes, or at least, affects everyone with whom we share life. Our initial dance partner is Jesus, but

he invites us to dance with others in a human-divine dance with billions of others on the dance floor.

Yet another aspect of community is found in *a relationship of awe*. The sixth chapter of Isaiah beautifully describes the sense of awe we experience when we see “the Lord sitting on a throne, high and lofty; the hem of his robe fill[ing] the temple” (Isaiah 6:1). When we are in relationship with God, we often find ourselves in awe of this relationship and in awe of the many ways our God acts, creates and loves us. This awe finds its expression in Christian worship which is also reflected in Isaiah 6 when the seraphs sing “Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts” (Isaiah 6:3). Our joy in worship is reflected in Psalm 122; “I was glad when they said to me, ‘Let us go to the house of the LORD!’” for as we go, we become aware of God’s presence. It also appears in teaching, counseling, spiritual direction, spiritual disciplines, and sacraments. These all have formational elements or aims but not everything we do is necessarily formational in a positive sense. We might say that worship is formational in a positive way. We might have to think more deeply to suggest that a rummage sale is formational in terms of building our relationship with Christ or with one another. In order to be formed individually and as community into Christ, we need a community of virtue: a place to anchor ourselves.

A community of virtue is essentially a community of brothers and sisters who live according to the virtues found in scripture. A place where we can be authentically ourselves and be called by one another to live into who Christ calls us to become. Where forgiveness is regularly given and amid our brokenness, we

encourage one another to becoming healthier and where we show the fruits of the spirit: “love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control” (Gal. 5:22-23). A community of virtue aims for Holiness.

The word holy or holiness often conjures pietistic images of kind and decent folk who never swear. Though there is an element of moral purity connoted in the word, the most basic meaning being used here is to be set apart or dedicated to God. In a sense it is to belong to God. Holiness, then, requires relationship with God. We intend to keep in step to the rhythm of the music as we dance. To be a community of virtue means we aim for Holiness insofar as it defines us as people set apart for and seeking God. Leaders are particularly important in this aspect because those who follow are watching as the leader models the steps and missteps of living toward virtue.

In John chapter 14, we hear Jesus say, “Shalom I leave you. My shalom I give to you; not as the world gives, do I give. Don’t let your heart be troubled nor let it be fearful.” When we are dancing cheek to cheek with the Prince of Peace, we cannot help but be transformed into holiness and in turn know his peace as we face whatever else happens on the dance floor of life. Peace becomes then another marker of a leader and community living in holiness, within a community of virtue. A leader dances with Jesus first and is then able to guide others as they dance.

Not that any community is completely or perfectly all of these things but rather it generally moves in that direction. It lives with no illusions that it is perfect but aims to “run with endurance the race that is set before us, looking to

Jesus, the founder and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God” (Heb. 12:1a-3).

This intentional relationship building is not magical. It does not necessarily start with a grand, life altering moment followed by a series of amazing events throughout our lives. It may look very ordinary on the surface and not especially attractive or exciting. It is easy to take for granted. It is sometimes difficult to assess. How can we measure how many families did *not* break up or which child did not have an adolescent melt down or which marriages are healthy all due to conscious and intentional people seeking Christian spiritual formation? (E. B. Howard 2018, 16). We must seek to dance with our main dance partner and teacher, Jesus. Not simply to learn steps but to build relationship so that we dance as one as we learn new dances in the different stages of our lives.

In this relationship to Christ, we are *conformed to his image*. We can get caught up in one particular way of being formed but neglect to pay attention to the ways in which they are all linked. We may love practicing *lectio divina*, but never consider how the practice of lectio encourages the community or how it connects us to a broader sense of the Word for example. The ways in which we are formed will vary. There is a myriad of factors which influence formation. “We all - whether naturalists, atheists, Buddhists, or Christians - see the world through the grid of an interpretive framework - and ultimately this interpretive framework is religious in nature, even if not allied with a particular institutional religion” (J. K. Smith 2006, 54). Being aware of these frameworks and our own tendencies,

biases and brokenness helps us to notice which practices help us to be formed in healthy ways. As Paul reminds us in Romans 12:3 you should “not think of yourselves more highly than you ought, but rather think of yourself with sober judgment in accordance with the faith God has distributed to each of you.” This is not intended to belittle us or encourage us to think less of ourselves. But we find that “Increasingly, we recognize that mere external knowledge and skills are not enough to ensure the effectiveness of the leader... [W]ho the leader is—the personhood of the leader—is the central and most critical issue in leadership” (Bennet 2018, 54). So, rather than to criticize or find fault, this is an attempt to have us consider ourselves completely and thoroughly that we might know our strengths and weaknesses. That in the working out of our calling we would know what gifts to use, what sins to confess and areas we need to work on in our character. In the end, we may learn how to use these gifts to the glory of God.

We are all gifted in different ways by one Spirit. This is not a reference to supernatural or extraordinary gifts such as the gift of tongues, discernment of spirits, word of knowledge or miracles we see in 1 Cor 12:1; 8-11. Not that the supernatural gifts are not relevant. Giftedness for this purpose includes the, perhaps more regularly recognized gifts described in Romans chapter 12.

Just as each of us has one body with many members, and these members do not all have the same function, so in Christ we, though many, form one body, and each member belongs to all the others. We have different gifts, according to the grace given to each of us. If your gift is prophesying, then prophesy in accordance with your faith; if it is serving, then serve; if it is teaching, then teach, if it is to encourage, then give encouragement; if it is giving, then give generously; if it is to lead, do it diligently; if it is to show mercy, do it cheerfully. (Rom. 12: 4-8)

This is not an exhaustive list of gifts, of course. It simply allows us to consider the ways in which God has given us qualities and abilities that allow us to live full lives as we follow Him.

When we know ourselves, we may choose ways which help us grow, overcome our fears or encourage our strengths. Spanish Carmelite and mystic nun Teresa of Avila suggests: “If we turn from self towards God, our understanding and our will become nobler and readier to embrace all that is good: if we never rise above the slough of our own miseries we do ourselves a great disservice” (Avila 2013, 23) Knowledge of self and our particular gifts, through the enlightenment of communication with God, allows us to see the ways that different parts of our lives and the practices we embrace are all linked in the way we are formed.

If we return to the definition: *It is an intentional and communal process of growing in relationship with God and becoming conformed to Christ through the power of the Holy Spirit for the sake of the other*— we see that there is a portion for which we are intentional and responsible to provide and a portion which the Holy Spirit contributes to us, mysteriously and beyond our command. We intentionally enter the dance with the master who guides and teaches us. Keeping ourselves attentive to Him, we take on His qualities and begin to move as He moves and reflect what we have learned in our lives. There is also the milieu of which we are a part which gives us either a healthy or unhealthy climate within which we are formed or de-formed.

Culture for Growth

One could argue that a church has a culture for spiritual formation to happen or not to happen. We might ask certain questions about what the ideal culture might include for Christian Spiritual formation to be encouraged in a church and by individuals. There are a few things that might be signs of a culture which lends itself to formation. 1) Expecting growth – harkening back to a sense of *awe* - when we are in a relationship with the God who created all the heavens and the earth, we can expect that will encourage us to find ways to continue growth. 2) Other orientation – when we are in relationship with the God who is love we are orientated toward others and not focused solely on ourselves. Remembering the God image-bearer in the other and the space between us inhabited by that God. 3) Another sign of a culture that welcomes spiritual formation is when there is Gospel centeredness in all that is done. A centering on the Gospel message of Christ reminds us that God’s grace is all you need, as “my power” Jesus says, “is made perfect in weakness” (2Cor. 12:9). If there is a focus on the gospel of grace and peace there will more naturally be a tendency to grow into relationship with the One who causes our peace and gives us hope. 4) The imitation of Christ is one sign of the culture being one of healthy formation. The goal and means of Christian formation are to imitate Christ. As Paul said, *be imitators of me, just as I also am of Christ* (1Cor. 11:1). There needs to be the right climate to grow papayas. They will not grow in the Arctic. The right *climate* or culture is needed to grow Christians. British Archbishop and author Stephen Cottrell reminds us that we do not need more sophisticated theologians or

legalists. We need more disciples (Cottrell 2008, 23). Our capacity for continually growing in Christ and being intentionally formed in Him is to remind ourselves that we never outgrow our need to continually hear and apply the Gospel to our lives. It requires some humility and a community striving for virtue.

As individuals of a Christian Community, we are commanded to “Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength and with all your mind; and ‘Love your neighbor as yourself”” (Luke 10:27). This calls us to holistic growth. We are expected to love with our mind, our heart, our strength and soul. With everything we are and have been given we worship and love the God who created us. There is more to dancing than simply learning steps. We involve our minds, our bodies and spirits. It is a holistic endeavour. A community of people all working together to love God with mind, heart, soul and strength will nurture, encourage and “admonishing one another with all wisdom” (Col 3:16). Though we want to focus on positive healthy spiritual formation, it is important to remember that as broken and sinful people our natures will lead us down paths where our God and our community can help correct our path and where we can learn humility as well as ways of guiding and encouraging others. The gospel similar to choreography – all of our different steps working together to form on large coherent dance. The culture within which we live is like a dance floor. When we dance on a proper dance floor with correct lighting and the music is at a good volume, we have the surroundings which allow us to carry on with the dance. Having a healthy culture makes it much easier for leaders to have healthy spiritual formation.

Formation of Leaders

Is the spiritual formation of leaders different than it is for everyone else? Do they need to pay attention to different things? When people find themselves in a leadership role it becomes important to consider themselves as models and understand that their formation may become a model for another person or an entire group to follow. James 3:1 Not many of you should become teachers, my brothers and sisters, for you know that we who teach will be judged with greater strictness.

However, there are aspects of being a leader which require particular attention. Scriptures show leadership to be profoundly important as it could lead others toward truth or away from the truth. There are ways in which the leader is formed *intentionally, communally* and in a relationship of *awe* which are valuable to them but also to all who are led by them. Isaiah 6 provides us with a reminder of both how we come to our tasks with “unclean lips” and yet how God provides us with the “live coal” which gives us the remedy we need to continue on so he can send us to say and do the things we are called to say and do (Isaiah 6: 5-8).

Intentional

How might a Christian leader intentionally contribute to their personal spiritual formation and take notice of the intentionality of the Holy Spirit? If we use the image of dance and consider the dance instructor, they would be much more aware of how they train, practice and even hold themselves; understanding that it is not only their own dancing that will be affected, but that of everyone on

the dance floor. An emotionally and spiritually healthy leader knows that and also knows that the state of their own soul and relationship with God must be continuously nurtured if they are going to remain healthy amid the extra pressures of leadership. Intentionality in the life of a leader includes choosing spiritual disciplines which feed them, challenge them to grow and provide rest and nourishment for their own lives. It means intentionally dancing with their first and most important dance partner – Jesus. There is nothing that can or should replace the intimacy between a leader and their ultimate leader. This intentionality in the life of a leader sets the tone for how they model Christ and carry out leadership amid the community they serve.

Communal

Leaders not only live in community, as we all do, they stand out in front of that community. They establish the pace of the group they lead. Leaders are certainly growing alongside the community they lead as well. There will be times during a Bible study, or leading worship, or being part of a project where they can, and do, learn from others in the community they lead. In a sense it is like leading a line dance, and though the lead knows the steps, they may discover a slight turn or twist from a member of the group which enhances their own ability to dance and lead. They are, though, looked to by others to be setting the bar which others follow.

Loneliness is an aspect of leadership which I neglected to touch on in my research and in my model but is a very real and important topic for leaders. This loneliness is something I observed in my own ministry and have heard other

leaders speak about. It is partly due to our ecclesiology and the fact that clergy are often the only ones with their specific training in the entire parish. It is partly because many clergy are the only ones in their municipalities who do their type of work. There is few, if any others who share the same way of seeing the world around them. Much like Moses, we begin alongside people who start a journey with us. We all are on the same page and can taste the milk and honey of the promised land. Then the journey becomes long, tiring, rigorous and people begin to lose their energy. Ruth Haley Barton who is an author and founder of the Transforming Centre speaks to this saying, “The loneliness of leadership is knowing that the buck stops” with us as leaders (Barton 2008, 155). There is a moment in the life of a leader when “whatever the promised land is for us – a church of a certain size, a new ministry, a new building... - pales in significance when compared with our desire for God” (Barton 2008, 159). We may have achieved a great deal in ministry or personally but there comes a time when no-one around us understands that vision as clearly as us and God. So, we can feel very alone.

The communal aspect of spiritual formation for a leader is enriched, or not, by those who influence them personally. It is important to have one’s own spiritual director, counselor and/or confidant who will encourage, convict and walk alongside them. This is important for the leader as the work of leadership can be lonely and it can lead us into temptation in ways that may derail our own emotional and spiritual health as well as those we lead.

Relationship of Love and Awe

One temptation of leadership is what I have often referred to as “buying our own press.” Some state this as “believing our own hype.” When we have featured as the main dancer in a ballet and the newspaper hails us as the next best thing to Russian born Mikhail Baryshnikov, we can begin to think of ourselves more highly than perhaps we ought. We begin to inflate our value and are on the verge of the final temptation Christ faced in the desert, where the devil offers Christ all the kingdoms of the world in exchange for worship of him. When we begin to consider ourselves more important than what God has put in front of us to accomplish, we are “buying our *own* press” rather than reflecting in God.

Andrew Tix, a professor of psychology, wrote an article on awe for Christians in which he describes awe as “one of the most significant emotions that humans experience” (Tix 2015, 52). He explains awe as an experience where we are “overwhelmed by the glory” around us and realize “in a fresh way that the majesty” we observe is “only a small part of the grandeur of the entire universe” (Tix 2015, 1). It is vital that we as leaders learn to cultivate awe. He goes on to explain that awe is not simply being doubly blessed by a really great day. Awe creates something in us which leaves us “vibrantly alive” (Tix 2015, 5). Many of the biblical descriptions of awe describe people as being terrified. We can see this is Matthew 17:6, Mark 16:8 and Acts 9:7. When we consider those who have experienced the presence of the Holy Other in scripture, we use words used like ‘terrified’ or ‘speechless’. The people often seem confused or amazed. Psalm 111 reminds us that the “awe of God is the beginning of wisdom” (Ps. 111:10). This

awe and fear comes from being in the presence of something overwhelming and mysterious. We may more closely define the word awe with being astonished or dumbfounded for example.

Psychological studies have proven that those who experience awe are more likely to be patient, have higher church attendance, relate better with others and show higher levels of wisdom - in other words they are “cultivating the Christian virtues” (Tix 2015, 1). Not only would all Christians benefit from practices which elicit awe, but leaders who practice them could better guide a community to embark on understanding themselves and others in relation to our amazing God.

The formation of the leader here again mimics a dance. When the God of the universe is our partner and we find intimacy first with the triune Lord, we cannot help but be transformed. As we embark intentionally toward our own health, our own healing, our own growth in Christ we can then turn to the others on the dance floor and share the music, moves and direction we have received in Christ. In awe we move to the music in such a way that it transports us to an other-worldly experience of the music and movement.

A leader’s formation matters, in part, because others are following. This dancer has others watching to learn the steps. This is true in both the Christian and secular worlds. It is an interesting consideration as to what the secular world considers in regard to leadership and how the church and world intersect in their thinking regarding the formation of leaders.

Secular Leadership

Stephen Covey, Simon Sinek, Dale Carnegie, Brené Brown, and John Maxwell are among many well-known and respected authors who write about leadership. They have published hundreds of books, blogs, videos, workbooks and teaching materials for us to learn what makes a great leader.

Author, speaker and pastor John C Maxwell tells us that the success of a leader is when you are “successful in raising up other leaders” (J. Maxwell 2016, 61). His advice to those who want to lead well is to recreate themselves by raising up, coaching and encouraging other people to become leaders. Though Maxwell never claims money is the end result for which to aim, he does clearly state that investing in people to perpetuate your leadership is the sign of a successful leader.

Simon Sinek has become a sensation both online and in print around the topic of leadership. He speaks a great deal about inspiration being important for leaders. “There are only two ways to influence human behavior: you can manipulate it, or you can inspire it” (Sinek 2009, 32). In fact, “great companies don’t hire skilled people and motivate them, they hire already motivated people and inspire them” (Sinek 2009, 45).

Stephen Covey the famous author of *7 Habits of Highly Effective People* defines leadership as “a choice, not a position” (Covey 1998, 68). Among many solid pieces of advice for living a healthy, well balanced work life this author expresses the idea that leaders choose to perform, learn and lead in certain ways. Leaders, if they spend enough time learning about themselves and some basic skills can create a healthy workplace for themselves and others.

Dale Carnegie, another best-selling author, speaks a great deal about controlling our thoughts. If, as leaders we can find happiness and joy in our lives and in our work “by controlling [our] thoughts” we can create healthy, productive workplaces and enjoy success in our endeavors (Carnegie 2009, 74).

Much of the focus in these works is on results. Results include how the leader fares – how much did the leader accomplish or how much they are respected by others. These gurus ask questions like, “What kind of legacy will you leave?” The fact that you might leave the institution or particular people better off is the result of what a good leader you have been. The goal revolves around what will make the leader or the organization successful. To use the dance metaphor, one might think of the lead dancer as the most important. When a successful ballet is spoken of in the media, we hail the lead dancers. We recognize the winners of dance competitions. We speak of them as having achieved their accomplishments alone.

Most of these leadership books sound very noble in their goals. John Maxwell says, “Achievement comes to people who are able to do great things for themselves. Success comes when they lead followers to do great things for them. But a *legacy* is created only when leaders put their people into a position to do great things without them. The legacy of successful leaders lives on through the people they touch along the way. The only things you can change permanently are the hearts of the people you lead” (J. Maxwell 2016, 67). This sounds noble, as though the intent was to simply raise up others to be their best selves. However, I would argue that the fundamental and undergirding reason to lead in the secular

paradigm is to create success for the leader and company long term. Often success is measured in financial gain of some kind. If we have accomplished a higher bottom line in the financial ledger or increased our pay substantially, this is considered successful. In the church we too often consider success when we have grown the size of the congregation – numbers, budget or influence.

Management of Organizational Behavior tells us that it is all about retention. “What is the number one reason people stay with an organization? They work with a good leader. This is the good news. But the source of the bad news is the same. The number one reason people leave an organization is that they work for a bad leader” (Hersey, Blanchard, and Johnson 2011, 63).

The authors go on to explain that one of the consequences of bad leadership is that “it costs 10 times more to recruit and train a follower than to provide the leadership environment to retain them. So, learning to be an effective leader benefits you, your people, and your organization” (Hersey, Blanchard and Johnson 2013, 12).

All of these leadership gurus provide good strategies and help us set visions, goals and inspire people, which any of us in church leadership would benefit from knowing. They show us how weak or poor leadership ends in difficulties within the organization and amongst its people. In the end, the underlying premise seems to be about creating success for the organization and therefore leaving those who follow with someone to look up to as an example to continue. Success is measured in dollars, cents and reputations. Deeply ingrained in our North American culture is the idea of legacy. You need only attend a

funeral in order to see this. The eulogy given for the person includes some anecdotes about their birth, childhood and adult years. This is then followed by a list of their accomplishments. We are thoroughly impressed with those who have multiple degrees or who have sat on many committees and received multiple awards. We value deeply the idea that we would leave our mark.

Though many of these leaders give us good strategies and inspire us to grow in our skills and abilities they are all looking for the leader to be remembered as successful in earthly terms. Because this goal can be used for both good and evil, there must be another way to consider leadership and the formation of Christian leaders.

Biblical Leadership

Unlike the secular paradigm, as Christian leaders we should work to the best of our God-given abilities but “it is not your excellence that decides the value of the enterprise” (Cottrell 2008, 77). We look at Jesus for our personal formation and even the formation of our communities. What does it mean to say that Jesus is our Leader and therefore our model? Is being a leader in a secular business or institution the same as leading in the church? People like former lawyer and founding pastor of Connexus Church Carey Nieuwhof, for example, use much of the secular leadership language around success and legacy but sprinkle it with Jesus language. One example is “You don’t need to die to your dream, because God hasn’t died to his” (Nieuwhof 2012, 26). I would argue that not all of my goals and dreams are reflective of Jesus but rather of my own selfish motivations. This is not to suggest that Christian leadership coaches like Nieuwhof and others,

are not teaching some very good skills. It is clear that we all need to be aware of the cultural assumptions and underlying beliefs that have diluted the Gospel. Awareness of enculturation where gospel influences culture, but where culture also influences church in ways is vital. I would argue that the best way to consider what Jesus showed us about the dance of leadership is to read the gospels.

In Matthew 20:26 we hear Jesus say, “any among you who wants to lead must be servant of all.” He gives an example in Mark 10: 42-25 of the way other leaders lead in unhealthy ways.

And Jesus called them to him and said to them, “You know that those who are considered rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their great one’s exercise authority over them. But it shall not be so among you. But whoever would be great among you must be your servant, and whoever would be first among you must be slave of all. For even the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many”.

Jesus shows us again in John when after washing the disciples’ feet he says, “You call me teacher and Lord, and you are right, for so I am. If I then, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another’s feet. For I have given you an example, that you also should do just as I have done for you” (John 13:13-16). We are reminded over and over that “the greatest among you shall be your servant” (Mathew 23:11).

We see Jesus choosing followers and future leaders as disciples who had no position or seeming giftedness for leadership. In the synagogue, there was no course being taught on leadership. He did not offer simple or programmatic answers on how to lead. He did not recommend best practices for organizing our calendar appointments or meetings. As we follow through the Gospel narrative,

we see Jesus disappearing at times to pray and at other times being distracted by people in crowds whom he later heals. He tells parables that are sometimes clear but more often confusing. In the end, perhaps it is impossible to use Jesus as a template for leadership. After all, he *is* God incarnate and we certainly cannot replicate omniscience or omnipotence. So, what is it about Jesus that makes him the kind of leader we want to emulate? My observation of the Gospel stories tells us there are at least three things Jesus shows us about leadership that are crucial: leaders pray, leaders love, and they multiply themselves in caring relationships

First, leaders pray. Jesus models prayer for his disciples and for us when “very early in the morning, while it was still dark, Jesus got up, left the house and went off to a solitary place, where he prayed” (Mark 1:35) and “after he had dismissed them, he went up on a mountainside by himself to pray” (Matt. 14:23). At another time, Jesus “often withdrew to lonely places and prayed” (Luke 5:16) and even “told his disciples a parable to show them that they should always pray and not give up” (Luke 18:1). Even when things were difficult: “Then Jesus went with his disciples to a place called Gethsemane, and he said to them, ‘Sit here while I go over there and pray’” (Matt. 26:36). Jesus’ example of prayer is not only modeled but he gives directions and requests for prayer throughout the Gospels. If we consider prayer as intimate conversation, it might remind us of when two ballroom dancers are cheek to cheek and moving as though their entire being is communicating as one.

Second, leaders love. Jesus shows his love for those who follow him and those seeking him. When the woman touches the hem of his garment in Luke 8,

she trembles in fear at his feet, but Jesus calls her daughter and bids her to go in peace. When he is confronted by the Canaanite woman who was annoying the disciples in Matthew 15, Jesus appreciates her faith, and her daughter is healed in the moment. After Peter has denied Jesus three times, he returns to Peter after the resurrection to reinstate him (John 21). Jesus heals the sick, he raises the dead, feeds the hungry and casts out demons all to restore people to their full human potential. This love is ultimately found in the cross as he lives into the words, he speaks in John 15:13, “No one has greater love than this, to lay down one’s life for one’s friends.” In this ultimate act of love, we see “there is one God, and one mediator also between God and men the man Christ Jesus, who gave himself as a ransom for all” (1Tim. 2:5-6).

Third, leaders create leaders. As we see Jesus pray and we see him love deeply, we also see him raising people to more than they themselves see as possible. We see him choose uneducated fishermen to be his disciples. We see him use a five-time married Samaritan woman to spread the gospel to an entire village in John chapter 4. He patiently waits for Nicodemus to discuss his teachings (John 3:1-21). Then we see Nicodemus attempting to change the minds of his colleagues in the Sanhedrin (John 7:50-51). Finally, Nicodemus after time observing and learning from Jesus ensures that Jesus will have a proper burial. Over and over again we see Jesus approaching those who others considered unclean, unhealthy or untouchable and after healing them or restoring them they become followers and go on to lead others to faith in him.

Jesus shows us as a leader to pray, to love those who follow and to pay attention to people and see where they need God's love and healing. This turns them to Christ and then the pattern of praying, loving and leading becomes a pattern which repeats itself in the lives of more and more people. If we look to Jesus as our master dance instructor, we grow in skill and relationship so that as we dance and lead others, we pass on not only specific dance steps but the way in which we encompass all of ourselves in the dance when we lead.

When we look at Jesus, we can see the kind of things a Christian leader might espouse. If we consider Paul's words about following me as I follow Christ and pressing on toward the goal "to win the prize for which God has called [us] heavenward in Christ Jesus" (Phil. 3:14), we can see two qualities that are important for Christian leaders. First, we seek to imitate Christ so that those who follow might participate in the best of what we imitate. Leaders set an example by their behaviour more so than by what they teach or preach about how others might behave. Second, Christian leaders have perseverance. This would also come from a mature Christian as they have built a relationship with Christ and have endured testing, knowing that the grace of God ultimately triumphs. Paul reminds us that "just as God has shown us mercy, we do not become discouraged" (2Cor. 4:1). Instead, we are reminded that "we do not proclaim ourselves, but Jesus Christ as Lord, and ourselves as your slaves for Jesus' sake" (2Cor. 4:5). The emphasis in Corinthians of the role of Christ in the process reminds us we cannot persevere, except in Christ. We become so connected to Christ we begin to look like him and

emulate him. Our moves remind others on the dance floor that we are following Jesus.

Paul makes it clear that leadership involves sacrifice and even suffering. “Three times I was beaten with rods” (2Corin. 11:25). He was stoned and shipwrecked and “in peril of robbers” (2Corin 11:26). He often suffered for lack of food was in “cold and nakedness” (2Corin. 11:17). His life was threatened in Damascus (Acts 9:23) and he was opposed and made the center of a controversy in Acts 15:11. There is no question that Paul suffered not only physical pain but humiliation and more. He shows us how to interpret these things when he tells us “I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in needs, in persecutions, in distresses, for Christ’s sake. For when I am weak, then I am strong” (2Corin. 12:10). Again, we emulate Christ in all things.

A Christian leader however is not devoid of the qualities which secular leadership gurus suggest. Paul would say that a leader should be well versed, if not experts in their subject matter. 1 Peter 3:15 we are reminded that “in your hearts sanctify Christ as Lord. Always be ready to make your defense to anyone who demands from you an accounting for the hope that is in you.” We might also agree that leaders should be able to manage their time well and be good at resourcing out the areas in which they are not naturally strong. They should certainly know some of the helpful skills around organizing, scheduling and running meetings if that is the kind of leadership they will be involved with. All of those skills can be helpful.

Leaders generally need to take the focus off the particular and put it on the broader, bigger picture. They are the ones who remind everyone of the 50,000-foot view. Heifetz's construct of the balcony view speaks of leaders needing to go up to the balcony to see how the dance is progressing overall (Heifetz and Linsky 2017, 212). Leaders need to occasionally view the dance from a different perspective to guide the community. A leader will take an overarching view of the community of faith and know that this community also forms us as individuals.

However, none of those skills should come before virtue, love and prayer. None of these abilities should allow leaders to become "puffed up with pride" (Rom. 11:21), but rather a centeredness in Christ giving them a sense of humility. How do we use the gifts God has given us to build up the Body of Christ and further the Kingdom of God? We cannot base everything on acquired skills. Some of the things we need will be gifted to us by God. One key piece in the recognition of one who is a healthy Christian leader is evidence that the person is growing in grace, made evident partly by the gifts of "love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control" (Gal. 5:22-23). Growing in grace is a marker of someone growing into the likeness of Christ (Wilhoit 2008, 68).

A Moment on Suffering and Courage

Prayer, loving those we lead and raising others to be their fullest selves is part of leadership if we choose to reflect Jesus. This list is not exclusive or exhaustive. Within these actions leaders take, including casting a vision we see that there is a real possibility for failure. Whether that failure is because plans fell

apart or we executed a program or plan in an unwise manner, there are times when leadership is truly difficult. Not difficult because a plan did not turn out the way we intended but because we love those we lead. It is painful because we enter into relationship and mentor people.

Someone once told me that ministry would be easier if it wasn't for the people. This was a glib remark but looking deeper it is about suffering. We love people. This means that we will hurt with them when things in their lives are challenging. When they are suffering an illness or grieving the loss of a loved one, we walk alongside them. Because we love people we suffer when they hurt us. When they behave poorly or make choices which hurt others, we suffer. Sometimes the world shows us how broken it is and there is nothing we can do but walk alongside the pain. When we love deeply, we hurt deeply. John says, "Let us love because God first loved us" (1 John 4:19). The love of God gives us grace amid the difficulties of life. Dutch priest, writer and theologian Henri Nouwen writes, "The love that often leaves us doubtful, frustrated, angry and resentful is the second love. That is to say, the affirmation, affection, sympathy encouragement, and support we receive from our parents, teachers, spouses, and friends. We all know how limited, broken and very fragile that love is" (Nouwen 1989, 40). Henri Nouwen goes on to explain that the broken love we receive from others is a "broken reflection of the first love... offered to us by a God in who there are no shadows" (Nouwen 1989, 40). In loving those we lead we must stay anchored to the first love, knowing all the while that we will suffer when we see, feel and experience the brokenness of ourselves, the people and world around us.

Suffering appears again when we pray. We lament with the Psalmist when the pain of people overwhelms us. We cry out, “take me out of the net they have secretly set for me, for you are my tower of strength” (Ps 31:4). When we are concerned that we “have become a reproach to all my enemies and even to my neighbours” (Ps. 31:11). There are times our prayers reflect deep suffering because those very close to us have turned away from us or have turned against us. “For had it been an adversary who taunted me, then I could have borne it; or had it been an enemy who vaunted himself against me, then I could have hidden from him. But it was you, a man after my own heart, my companion, my own familiar friend” (Ps. 55:13). These moments of suffering are expressed in our prayers as laments. There are times when leadership is lonely and with the writer of lamentations – “Bitterly she weeps at night, tears are on her cheeks. Among all her lovers there is no one to comfort her. All her friends have betrayed her; they have become her enemies” (Lam. 1:2). Prayer allows us not only to pray for those whom we love. Prayer allows us to lean in to the first love of our life, drawing us closer to our lead dancer and focusing us only on him. Spiritual disciplines are tools we can use as leaders which help us build resilience.

Another aspect of leadership which can sometimes be the cause of suffering is uncertainty. We lose confidence or are not certain of next steps. The chaos theory suggests that everything tends toward disorder. It is easier for us to simply leave the laundry on the floor than to fold, iron and put it away in our closets. There is in Mathematics, Physics and even Sociology, agreement that to a degree things tend toward disorder. This interdisciplinary theory speaks to the fact

that even though these situations apparently seem random, once we look more closely, we see underlying patterns. The butterfly effect is part of this chaos theory. This concept states that a butterfly flapping its wings in Brazil could potentially cause a hurricane in another part of the world. This theory finds its way into a variety of fields including meteorology, anthropology, road traffic, climate patterns, computer science, biology and even philosophy. There seems to be something fundamentally in the universe which is telling us that even our small decisions matter, yet we cannot truly know the outcome until it happens. This uncertainty can cause a great deal of stress in all of us and particularly in those who are attempting to lead. Margaret Wheatley, American writer and management consultant who studies organizational behavior speaks of uncertainty saying, “It takes a lot of bravery even to consider that uncertainty is not a threat, that in fact it’s creative and powerful” (Wheatley 1994, 121). A powerful antidote to chaos and uncertainty is for leaders to provide a non-anxious presence. The Rabbi therapist, Edwin H Freidman spoke of leaders being “someone who can be separate while still remaining connected, and therefore can maintain a modifying, non-anxious, and sometimes challenging presence” (Friedman 2017, 16).

It is this way in the spiritual life as well. If we use the language of sin or brokenness in place of disorder, we see the need for something to draw us into wholeness. When we discipline ourselves in the practices of Morning Prayer or *lectio* or Sabbath we are working against the disorder or brokenness of our lives. We become like the butterfly who pays attention to the flapping of our wings. Leaders who acknowledge and understand their brokenness as well as the

brokenness of the world, and work toward wholeness set the example for others to grow toward that wholeness.

There could be no real discussion on suffering as a Christian leader without looking at the cross. There are some who would eliminate the image of the cross. Why spend so much time speaking about the suffering of Christ? We are an Easter people after all. Yet without the weeping of the cross the joy of the empty tomb is not as sweet. Without the work of hiking up the mountain we do not really appreciate the view from the top. Eugene Peterson, a Presbyterian minister, scholar, theologian, author, and poet reminds us “The hard work of sowing seed in what looks like perfectly empty earth has a time of harvest. All suffering, pain, emptiness, disappointment is seed: sow it in God and He will, finally, bring a crop of joy from it” (Peterson 2012, 100). There can be fruit in suffering. The seed must see darkness before it pushes through the soil to become the flower, vegetable or plant it was meant to become fully and totally become. “Shared suffering can be dignifying and life-changing” when it is done alongside the one who first loved us and with trust that all is ultimately in God’s hand (Peterson 2011, 86). Christ’s work at the cross is a host of things. It is redemption for our sins and those of the world. It is a glorious obliteration of sin’s ultimate effect on us. It is Christ reaching into our deepest darkness and standing in solidarity with us.

Yet we know that Easter arises out of the darkness of the tomb. My experience of suffering from Arnold Chiari Malformation and the constant migraines, tremors, collapsing legs, verbal aphasia all created a dark place in my

life. For over a year and a half I found it hard to do almost anything for more than a couple of hours before needing to lay down. I got to know intimately the Psalms of lament, the book of lamentations and I cried out to God every day, “My God, my God why have you forsaken me? And are so far from my cry and from the words of my distress? O my God, I cry in the daytime, but you do not answer; by night as well, but I find no rest” (Ps. 22:1-2). Day and night, I begged God to heal me, to restore me to health. How could I be of any use in this state, I wondered.

After a year and a half, I was about to see the Neurosurgeon for the third time. We were going to discuss the surgery which would cut open my skull and allow my brain the space it needed. The week prior to this appointment I had gone to a prayer retreat and been prayed over (as I had many times before over the previous two years). Within hours I was in the middle of a talk I had to give when suddenly my symptoms began to disappear. I could feel my feet. I noticed my cane a fair distance from me and yet felt oddly steady. I could see to the back of the room. As the days went by, we counted each one where there was no headache. One day, two days, three days, until it turned into a week, two weeks.

Several weeks after I began to live almost symptom free, I was rushing out the door to pick up my son from school. I was running late. As I grabbed my bag and began heading toward the door, I caught a glimpse of my couch. I turned to look at the place where I had spent countless hours. Hours of exhaustion, pain, despair and fear. Seemingly endless days of wondering when it would end. I found myself deeply wanting to go and lay on the couch. It took every ounce of energy in me to convince myself to go and pick up my son. I longed for the

couch. How could I want to return to that place and how could it be such a draw when my own son needed to be picked up!

Of course, what I longed for was not the couch. What I longed for was the embrace of the God who had held me through all of the pain, fear, despairing, loneliness and isolation. There was a realization over weeks of prayer and reflection about that moment. I found, amid my suffering a deep connection with the One who is love. In the midst of pain, my primary dance partner was taking the lead, allowing me to stand on his feet, as a small child might with their father, while he took the lead. The One who created me and knows my inward parts. The One who needs nothing from me and yet knows my every need. I share this very personal story here not to say that suffering is desirable necessarily. But in suffering whether our own or alongside others, we are reduced to trusting “that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord” (Rom. 8:38-39). When the suffering eases or is healed there is a view of the world that moves from black and white to technicolor. As the British Jesuit priest and poet Gerard Manley Hopkins writes in his poem *Pied Beauty*:

Glory be to God for dappled things –
For skies of couple-colour as a brinded cow.
For rose-moles all in stipple upon trout that swim.
Fresh-fire coal chestnut-falls; finches’ wings’
Landscape plotted and pieced – folk, fallow, and plough;
And all trades, their gear and tackle and trim.
All things counter, original, spare, strange;
Whatever is fickle, freckled (who knows how?)
With swift, slow; sweet, sour; a dazzle, dim;
He fathers-forth whose beauty is past change:

Praise him. (Hopkins 2003, 25)

There is, then, a kind of beauty that emerges from having endured suffering. Like the flower that emerges from the plant that spends weeks pushing through the dark, damp ground. We can learn to behold the beauty around us more deeply. We recover from our wounds to appreciate more deeply every step we take on the dance floor both with our Lord and with those around us.

Another ability that can emerge from suffering is a kind of impartiality. ‘Holy Indifference’ was something that St. Ignatius of Loyola, the Spanish priest and theologian who founded the Jesuits, suggested in his fundamental principles of the Spiritual Exercises.

Man has been created to praise, reverence and serve our Lord God, thereby saving his soul. Everything else on earth has been created for man’s sake, to help him to achieve the purpose for which he has been created. So it follows that man has to use them as far as they help and abstain from them where they hinder his purpose. Therefore, we need to train ourselves to be impartial in our attitude towards all created reality, provided we are at liberty to do so, that is to say it is not forbidden. So that, as far as we are concerned, we do not set our hearts on good health as against bad health, prosperity as against poverty, a good reputation as against a bad one, a long life as against a short one, and so on. The one thing we desire, the one thing we choose is what is more likely to achieve the purpose of our creating. (Loyola 1963, 22)

His sense of creating an impartial attitude like Friedman’s self-differentiation was based in the idea that “The Lord is a great God, and a great king above all gods. In his hand are the caverns of the earth, and the heights of the hills are his also” (Ps. 95: 3-4). When we trust that God with our lives, our plans, our hopes, we can let go of our own control. We can trust that the God who first loved us and who knows the future will hold us in the hands into which he has “engraved” our names (Isa. 49:16). It allows us to stand apart from the pride which suggests that

we are in control. This can be frightening in leadership when we are expected not only to be in control but to know what is coming around the next corner.

Ronald Heifetz who a lecturer at Harvard and the Founding Director of the Center for Public Leadership along with Marty Linsky a professor on leadership at Harvard university wrote the book, *Leadership on the Line*, where they tell us “In order to work toward something bigger than our own eyes can see we need courage. At the heart of danger is loss” (R. A. Heifetz 2017, 12).

Amid suffering whether that be our own, aligning with the other or facing our own pride, fear and the unknown of where we are going there is a vulnerability. Vulnerability is not weakness, rather “it’s having the courage to show up when you can’t control the outcome” (Brown 2018, 20). One major difference between lessons in secular leadership and Christian Leadership is that suffering, and vulnerability are central to who we are and who’s we are. It makes us lead completely differently than someone who is meant to have all the answers.

In order to retain some sense of balance amid all of this talk about suffering and vulnerability one must find some cord to hold on to for stability. We must have an anchor with which we are steadied amid turbulent seas. The practicing of spiritual disciplines is a way in which leaders stay healthy and centered and more able to experience Holy Indifference.

How Leaders Acquire Christian Virtues: Spiritual Disciplines

How might the Spiritual Disciplines enter into this discussion of formation? What, if any disciplines are those which leaders in particular should enter into? How are they relevant? James K.A. Smith a Professor of Philosophy at

Calvin University reminds us “Our ultimate love/desire is shaped by practices, not ideas that are merely communicated to us” (J. K. Smith 2011, 34).

Spiritual disciplines are the “process of being formed in the image of Christ for the sake of others” says Robert Mulholland who was a professor at Asbury Theological Seminary and author (Mulholland 2016, 42). They are not simply things we do to pass the time or to help us to feel superior or pious. They are not necessarily the way to earn a relationship with God. We do not earn God’s favour by completing a certain number of disciplines or practicing them a number of times. They are not a way to be forgiven for our sins. These things have all been accomplished in Christ. The question is not what we do in order to become worthy or more holy. The question is, as respected professor of philosophy Dallas Willard phrases it; “What is the next thing I am to do?” (Do the next right thing you know you ought to do) because nothing “drags us into the kingdom of God more than doing the next right thing” (Willard 1999, 86). Another way to phrase it is stated by Paul Pettit, the director of spiritual formation at the Dallas theological seminary, “the ongoing process of the triune God transforming the believer’s life and character toward the life and character of Jesus Christ – accomplished by the ministry of the Spirit in the context of biblical community” (Pettit 2008, 62). Or in other words Spiritual Disciplines help us to ask “What’s the next most appropriate step for me in my walk with Christ? How do I continue to grow in Christ whilst leading others to do the same?” How do we become emotionally healthy spiritually formed?

When a dancer prepares to learn a dance, they focus on posture, music, rhythm and other technical aspects. The Spiritual Disciplines, like the techniques of dance, lend themselves to intentional formation. In terms of focusing on the love and awe of God spending time intimately in a regular practice of Sabbath, Morning and Evening Prayer and Worship are ways in which we keep in step with Christ. Regarding our continuous awareness of our own missteps and remembering joys include a variety of spiritual disciplines such as Daily Examen or keeping a journal which documented our moments of gratitude and awe. This list, though not exhaustive, includes disciplines which keep us in step with Christ and nurture our formation as leaders.

According to the Flourishing Congregations study at Ambrose University in Calgary an active spiritual life is one of the top seven characteristics of a flourishing congregation. Also, the practices of pastors tend to drive those of their congregations. So, if a leader has an active spiritual life, they will encourage their churches to flourish (Flourishing Congregations Institute 2017, 186). If the spiritual life of the leader in a church tends to drive that of congregations, it would follow that the healthy integration of spiritual and emotional lives in leaders would also do the same.

Model Limitations and Advantages

A model of Spiritual formation would need to describe the way in which people are formed in Christ. A recipe you might say. Pop in the right ingredients and voilà, you have a spiritually formed person. The limitation of a model is exactly that, as we cannot simply write a recipe for something like this. The Holy

Spirit of God is involved. This means that the answers are not always neat and tidy. However, the advantage of this model is that the metaphor chosen invites multiple interpretations and when others consider the model, they can see other aspects of the metaphor applying in different ways. One cannot cover all facets or account for everything in a model. The following is a perfect example of this. I have not, for example, discussed what different genres of music or styles of dance might indicate in the model. I have not suggested who in the model chooses the music for the dance. I hope that the advantage for others is that they see something in my metaphor which helps them appreciate the mysterious and multiple ways in which they might find the model helpful.

Dance

In the end a dance is the model which for me shows the formation of a Christian Leader best. We learn, slowly at first, the steps, music, and spacing as we dance standing on his feet as we do when learning from our parent. If we imagine ourselves in a grand ballroom full of other dancers, we can imagine a context where we share space and time. Some more experienced dancers who help lead. Some less experienced, learning. This back-and-forth flow in relationship comes directly from the Godhead.

Perichoresis, the Greek word derived from *peri*, meaning around or circular and *choresis*, which means to make room for or contain. It is a word used by both the early church fathers like Gregory of Nazianzus as well as more recent scholars such as John Zizioulas and Miroslav Volf. In the words of Baxter Kruger a theologian, writer and director of Perichoresis ministries, the image of a dance

allows us to avoid considering God as a “faceless, all-powerful abstraction” (Kruger 2000, 22). It shows the Trinity to be a “circle of shared life” as the “Great dance is all about the abounding life shared by the Father, Son and Spirit” (Kruger 2000, 22). Kruger goes on to tell us that the Trinity is “the great dance of life and glory and joy shared by the Father, Son and Spirit” (Kruger 2000, 23). God is relational within God’s very self. Even though God does not *need* us it is the very nature of God to desire to share in that dance “so that their great dance of life could be extended to us and played out in our lives” (Kruger 2000, 25).

That is the logic of creation. First, there is the Trinity and the Triune life, the fellowship and joy and glory of the Father, Son and Spirit, the great dance. Second this God speaks the universe, the earth and humanity and all things into existence. And the gracious and astonishing purpose of this creative activity is to extend the dance to us. The Father, Son and Spirit created us so that we could participate in their life together, so that we could share in their knowledge and laughter and fellowship, in their insights and creativity and music, in their joy and intimacy and goodness, so that all of it could be played out in us and in our ordinary lives. (Kruger 2000, 26)

In the incarnation Jesus becomes human and draws us into the dance. Within this intimacy we can become fully and truly who we are called to become in Christ.

There is no program or perfect pattern one must follow to be formed spiritually as a Christian Leader. There are many unknowns, and a Christian leader will not know what the next step may be. So, it is crucial to have a dance partner who knows the music, the steps and can be trusted to lead us. Life and leadership are unpredictable, but we have a Triune God who knows us and knows what is coming. So, in the unpredictability of life and leadership, the Triune God leads us as we lead His people. Earlier it was noted that Jesus shows us that he

prays, he loves, and he mentors or walks alongside his followers. These were three aspects of observing Jesus as our lead dancer on the dance floor of life.

The most important part of ballroom dancing is to know one's partner. When we spend time in prayer, we begin to know Jesus intimately. As we spend time with him learning the dance we can then begin to step away and dance with others. Allowing Jesus to be our main and most intimate partner, we can learn through spiritual disciplines how best to use our gifts. We can discern what steps are next for our church or group we lead. We can be assured of Christ's peace as we venture into the unknown, knowing that the Spirit remains with us regardless of the outcome.

There is a sense in which Jesus mentors us, much like the mentoring model I learned from Dr. Sherbino, professor at Tyndale University, where the people follow the pattern: I do, you observe, I do, you assist, you do, I assist and finally you do, I observe. Some examples of where mentoring others could be in things like how to chair a meeting or lead a bible study.

As we dance with Jesus, we learn to trust him. He may twirl us or dip us in a way which requires us to let go of our hands and allow him to keep us safely from hitting the floor. In learning to trust him as he leads, we can be free to attempt new steps without fear of failure or repercussion. When we step on His toes, we can be assured of his forgiveness and his loving, gentle correction.

Though Christ is our main partner, we dance with others. We may consider this a time to teach others to dance. It may be a time when others share their experience of the dance with us. We can learn from those with more

experience in the dance and from those learning how to dance as we journey together. The steps we learn from Jesus we can teach those others on the floor who may have had fewer dance lessons.

The dance can become distorted. We can lose our step or fall and injure ourselves. We can become frustrated at not learning quickly enough. We can become overly independent and stop paying attention to the lead dancer. There can be others on the dance floor who bump into us or make it difficult for us to dance freely. The beauty is that Jesus has come to “help us discover the truth, he works to expose our stupidity, our bondage, our self-destructive entrapment in the darkness, to walk us through the pain of acknowledging our legends and their destruction” (Kruger 2000, 86). So even when we make mistakes as leaders, our ultimate leader will not give up on us as our first dance partner. We are drawn back in by the Spirit of truth to recover and renew ourselves in the dance.

The flow from dancing with Jesus to leading others in the dance is crucial. The ongoing spiritual formation of a Christian leader has great impact on the community they lead. So, it is important that as leaders we stay intimately connected to Jesus as our main dance partner through prayer, meditation and other Spiritual Disciplines.

When we fail and generally get out of step, we need to take hold of Jesus again and allow him to heal us, forgive us and strengthen us to continue on with the dance and with others on the dance floor.

Though there will be times of suffering, our partner, Christ, knows intimately our brokenness and that of every other dancer on the floor. He will

create something beautiful from the pain and by trusting him in this we can share this as part of our teaching others the dance.

In the end the goal of the dance is to have everyone on the dance floor. Whatever style of dance God teaches us, we can as leaders invite others on to the dance floor to learn, grow and be leaders themselves. As we duplicate ourselves as leaders, we widen the dance floor. May God lead us all to become Christian leaders who live transformed lives, who pray, love and dance alongside others to lead them to be their fulsome selves in Christ.

The dance of formation speaks of relationship with Jesus and how knowing Jesus intimately reveals who we are and who he calls us to be. Having these relationships be the original dance steps in our lives, we are better able to interact with others on the dance floor to reflect the love and grace we have found.

How do our experiences, failures or joys inform how we dance with Jesus and others? Becoming self-aware is important but I am convinced that self-awareness without God's perspective on that awareness can be demoralizing. Therefore, my research used the Examen to focus on the intimate place between God and each of us as individuals. My hope was that the Examen would show us who we are and who we might be in the world, while in the presence of the God who knows us and all we come in contact with best.

CHAPTER 4 - USING EXAMEN

Introduction

This project was intended to be the first step in what will become a larger project toward supporting the overall wellness of clergy. It began when I met a priest from the Church of England one summer, five years ago. His entire work was centered around the welfare of clergy in his diocese. He created a system which enables care for the spiritual, emotional, mental and physical wellbeing of the clergy. It showed a regular investment in the formation of the clergy in that Diocese. I believe wholeheartedly in supporting and encouraging health and wellbeing of clergy and so it began a search for me to seek out ways to encourage that wellbeing. When I first met this English clergy person, I was still in parish ministry. Since then, I have transitioned into the role of Executive Officer and Archdeacon for our diocese, where I can now envision creating a space for clergy to increase their wellbeing.

Opportunity or Problem

The work of a parish priest in the Anglican Church is demanding. In my experience as a parish priest, as a Regional Dean and now as the Executive Officer, I have seen many priests who work longer hours than what is healthy, for a variety of reasons. Sabbath and quiet prayer time are often replaced with

funerals, meetings and prepping for worship services or other events.

Priests are often presented with many projects. One important skill is the ability to say no. Yet, this is difficult for most priests to do. Sometimes this has to do with external demands put on the priest. Sometimes the demands come from within. Eugene Peterson once criticized the church for “turning each congregation into a market for religious consumers, an ecclesiastical business run along the lines of advertising techniques, organization flow charts and energized by impressive motivational rhetoric” (E. Peterson 2011, 113). His criticism is, in part, that clergy are taking on the wrong things as pastors. He critiques our time spent on balancing budgets or creating clever and relevant liturgies. Considering this, it is important to take the time to pray and be aware. Without awareness of ourselves in relation to God, we do not find the best ways to remain healthy. I believe that a self-aware priest is a healthy priest. As each of us becomes more self-aware we become aware of our worries, weaknesses, and brokenness. Henri Nouwen echoes this when he says, “The Christian leader of the future is called to be completely irrelevant and to stand in this world with nothing to offer but his or her own vulnerable self. God loves us, not because of what we do or accomplish, but because God has created and redeemed us in love” (Nouwen 1989, 68). Using the Examen, we place ourselves before a loving and gracious God. We see our worries and vulnerabilities from the perspective of a sovereign God. This self-awareness in the presence of God creates a healthy balance. We must understand what ways we are being unhealthy in order to be able to take any steps toward health. We do that best when we are placing ourselves in the gaze of a loving

God, who knows us better than we know ourselves.

The Examen is an important tool to use for a few reasons. First, it is simple and takes very little time. Secondly, it does not require any additional learning. Thirdly, the resources needed are few. The ease of use of the Examen is only one reason why it is useful. The other is that it creates an awareness of ourselves in relation to God, as mentioned above. Cardinal Bernardin, the late Archbishop of Chicago, shared in his book *The Gift of Peace*, that he was a chronic worrier. He explains that practicing the Examen was a huge help in curbing his anxiety. He came to realize that eighty percent of things he worried about never occurred and that those that did happen, God gave him the resources to face (Bernardin 1998, 57). By becoming aware of our own weakness and God's abundant grace, we may be granted greater peace. As leaders we can pass this peace to others. Henri Nouwen speaks of this beautifully when he describes that when "we claim and constantly reclaim the truth of being the chosen ones, we soon discover within ourselves a deep desire to reveal to others their own chosenness" (Nouwen 2002, 72).

According to the Flourishing Congregations Institute the practices of pastors tend to influence those of their congregations. So, if a leader has an active spiritual life, they will encourage people in their churches to flourish (Flourishing Congregations Institute 2017, 186). If the spiritual life of the leader in a church tends to influence that of congregations, it would follow that the healthy integration of spiritual and emotional lives in leaders would also influence the lives of congregation members. An example of this might be that if parishioners

have a priest that spends a lot of time speaking about scripture, using it in conversation and being seen reading it, we will find that a higher percentage of parishioners in that church are reading and engaging scripture.

The opposite correlation then is that unhealthy priests will also tend to possibly influence the parish in unhealthy ways. For example, if a priest has the practice of neglecting sabbath rest, oftentimes the parishioners also tend to set aside the sabbath. In my experience as a priest, I have seen both healthy and unhealthy priests and would agree that their health influences the health of the parish in a variety of ways. In fact, parishes who have the same priest for a long period of time tend to begin sounding and mimicking personality traits of their leader. An example of this was a parish priest who was in a parish for twenty-seven years and was very worried about everyone being upset about every decision made. When he left that parish, the search committee used similar phrases to him and was also constantly worried about anyone getting upset over a decision.

Response or Innovation

I introduced the Ignatian Examen to eight clergy. The Examen is a simple tool to use and it allows one to review their day in a non-threatening way. The Examen had them consider thoughts, emotions and experiences. They reflected on God's presence in those thoughts, emotions and experiences and how they related to God throughout the day. The participants noted these thoughts in journals and shared anything they learned about themselves as they practiced the Examen over seven weeks.

Supervision, Permission, and Access

I am a priest, the Executive Officer and Archdeacon for our Diocese.

Though I have worked alongside many of the priests and deacons in the Diocese, I now work in the synod office (main office) and am in a supervisory role over the clergy. My Bishop, who is the leader and pastor to all the clergy, gave his support and hopes the Examen will become a tool for us to encourage health among all the clergy. The Anglican church is episcopally led and synodically governed. The Bishop, who is the episcopal authority, leads the entire diocese and has the authority to license clergy, discipline them and must assent to all decisions made by the synod for them to be carried out. The synod provides governance and guidance for the diocese and is made up of representatives (Lay and Clergy) from each geographic quadrant of the diocese.

Context

The Anglican Diocese of Calgary is a group of Anglican parishes in the southern geographic half of the province of Alberta. In the Diocese there are seventy-one parishes. Approximately sixty of them are in rural areas, the rest in urban areas. The parishes vary in numbers of parishioners. There are some with as few as ten and some with as many as 300 or more.

I conducted my research among the clergy in the Calgary Diocese. They reside as far north as the town of Rimbey and as far south as the border with Montana. The borders of the diocese from west to east match those of the province so that the western most edge is British Columbia and the Eastern most

edge is Saskatchewan. The total geographic area is 210,000 square kilometers. These leaders included four from small parishes to medium size parishes in rural areas and four from larger more urban centres and churches. A small parish by Anglican standards refers to one who has less than forty attending. A medium parish would average 40-100 and a large parish would have 100-300 parishioners in total.

My project focus is on leadership, so I invited those in leadership positions in parishes as part of the research. In this case, I focused on priests and there was one deacon. Generally, priests in our denomination are the ones who are in the lead role of a church as opposed to deacons who tend to be in assistant roles. I allowed one deacon to take part because they play a leadership role within the diocese. In total there were seven priests and one deacon who agreed to be a part of the study. There were three female clergy and five male clergy. Three had less than ten years' experience. There were three with over twenty years of experience and the final two were between ten and twenty years of experience in ministry.

Priests are often trying to be priest, teacher, leader of change, worship organizer, resolver of conflict, and a host of other things. Add to this the expectations of parishioners and family commitments, and you have a recipe for burnout. They can forget that "as those who are chosen, blessed, broken, and given, we are called to live our lives with a deep inner joy and peace. It is the life of the Beloved, lived in a world constantly trying to convince us that the burden is on us to prove that we are worthy of being loved" (Nouwen 2002, 12). This is particularly true if the priest is not aware of their own emotional health and

ongoing spiritual formation.

As Anglicans we often refer to ourselves a “prayer book” people. Much of our theology, polity and approach to faith is reflected in the orderly fashion of our liturgical life. There is an encouragement for all people to practice morning, mid-day and evening prayer. Our catechism, our liturgies for ordinations, marriage, baptism, confirmations and even prayers with the sick and dying are all framed out for us. Practicing a somewhat new spiritual discipline should not be difficult, assuming that clergy are already practicing the daily offices. I suspect, though I cannot statistically prove this, that the average ordained person does not practice these daily rhythms of prayer. My personal experience is that many clergy are so caught up in the multiplicity of tasks in the parish that, I ask about how their prayer life is, too often I hear it is lacking or non-existent.

The difficulty for me is to be cautious not to create anything for the clergy that will feel like more work. The Protestant work ethic can be quite robust in our denomination and that is not something I want to encourage. In our tradition, once people are ordained there is an unspoken rule that they now lead the church. There is also a part of our polity which places the priest as one of the legal corporation of a church alongside a few others. For these reasons I wanted to exercise caution so as not to overload these leaders.

Models and Other Resources

As I wrote my autobiography I noticed that I often took on leadership roles from adolescence onward. I led the youth group in my church and took on many leadership roles through my undergraduate degrees. I began with teaching

as a first career and then ran a home-based business before being called to ministry. I am interested in those who are healthy and seeing how they are managing to lead from a healthy place. Writing the autobiography also reminded me of how often I say that if people were more self-aware they might carry themselves differently in the world.

My model began by comparing secular and Christian leadership materials. These materials did not differ a great deal from each other. Both addressed how a leader could make a difference in their organization by their own talent. The model of a leader being formed by engaging Jesus led me to consider a different model. Dance became a metaphor to describe how leaders interact with Jesus in prayer and using other spiritual disciplines, and then move about the ministry dance floor to engage their work. A regular movement back and forth, like dance, was what I suggested was a healthy model of ministry for leaders. The Examen reflects a dance-like movement in that we interact with God in a mutual way. We become aware of God's presence then lay before him the events of the day. We then hold on to God as we listen to God's response to our events and await His reinterpretation. Much like a dance, we intimately move back and forth in giving of ourselves and receiving from God.

Many of us know a minister/leader/clergy person who burned out or is on the verge of burnout. Too many clergy have an Asherah pole, like the one in Deuteronomy 16:21, which in our context is busyness. We are so afraid of not being important that we fill our days with many tasks. Henri Nouwen spoke of this as the "temptation to be relevant" (Nouwen 1989, 27). This is not the model

Jesus shows us and so we need to find ways for our leaders to return to holistic health. My model discussed ways that clergy can use spiritual practices like Sabbath, daily prayer, the Examen and other practices to enhance their own emotionally healthy spirituality.

The scripture passages that have informed this project include Luke 3:21; 5:16; 6:12; 9:18 Matthew 14:23; 26:36-39, 44 Mark 1:35; 6:46. All of these passages speak of Jesus going away to pray or arising early to pray. If our leadership model is Jesus, then we might consider it good practice to model his prayer life. Prayer was a regular practice and often he set himself apart to pray. In this way, Jesus is the one leading as our dance partner.

In Matthew 7:16-20 we read “You will know them by their fruit.” A healthy tree tends to produce healthy fruit. If we are rested, we respond from that rest. When we spend time in scripture and prayer, we are more likely to respond in ways that are scripturally and spiritually informed. Further, 1 Thessalonians 7:17 tells us to “pray without ceasing.” The more time we spend in prayer, and in the presence of Christ, the more we understand ourselves.

A theology of leadership must include a discussion about how Jesus led his disciples. Though servant leadership immediately comes to mind, Jesus modeled more than that. He did not heal every sick person. He did not raise every dead person. He took time to pray and rest. He chose to lead by first allowing prayer and reflection to guide his actions. Of course, Jesus, was dancing within the trinity before dancing with us. He knew who he was and entered ministry opportunities from a foundation of strength and place of relationship with God.

Our culture tells us that leaders who are frantic, exhausted and overloaded are important and valuable. This is not the Christian model. In his book *Let your Life Speak*, Parker Palmer says, “Self-care is never a selfish act – it is simply good stewardship of the only gift I have, the gift I was put on earth to offer others” (Palmer 2000, 30-31). We hear the Psalmist ask God “Search me, O God, and know my heart; test me and know my thoughts. See if there is any wicked way in me and lead me in the way everlasting” (Ps. 139:23-24). This is an inclination Jesus follows and invites us to carry out as his followers.

In the *Anglican Prayer Book*, we find admonitions to take part in regular morning and evening prayer, to write a Rule of Life for ourselves. It makes clear that worship and prayer are an integral part of our lives. However, there is little about reflecting on the working of what God has done and is doing in our lives. The Ignatian idea of not allowing a day to go by unnoticed is missing. Emotionally healthy spirituality is key to the formation of leadership in the church. The question of how one obtains and remains in health, as formation is happening, is one of praxis.

Our Anglican tradition can sometimes lean toward clericalism. This means that we can, at times, elevate clergy and rely on them. This sounds generous on the surface, but it has tended to create an atmosphere where clergy are meant to have all the answers and be involved in every area. This, in part, has led to a strong focus on academia and highly theologically trained clergy. Clericalism has also led to a circumstance where we find clergy trying to be all things to all people rather than setting examples of a healthy and balanced spirituality,

sometimes doing for others instead of empowering others to live into their own calling. Adopting secular models of leadership and overlaying them onto the life within the Body of Christ rather than seeking to find an ever-deepening relationship with and guidance from God, has been a downfall of our practice.

Other Resources and Cases

In order to find resources for this research I began by looking at leadership materials, both secular and Christian. I found that the study from Ambrose University's Flourishing Congregations was helpful as it looked at healthy parishes, which are generally led by healthy clergy. Materials on the Examen and how to use it were found on the *Ignatian Spirituality* website and related books.

The core materials referenced regularly include Peter Scazzerro's book *Emotionally Healthy Spirituality*, along with materials from the Ignatian Spirituality website, and Evan Howard's book *A Guide to Christian Spiritual Formation: How Scripture, Spirit, Community and Mission Shape our Souls*. (Scazzerro 2017) (Manney 2009) (E. Howard 2018).

These core materials were related to each other in that they described how an emotionally healthy spiritually formed person behaves and what types of fruit are evident in their lives. The Examen tied into this as it provided a practical way to gain awareness of the places within which we are spiritually healthy and unhealthy. The Examen formed the crux of the entire research as it was the single practice that was used by all participants.

These sources helped analyze and interpret findings by focusing only on the concept of emotionally healthy spirituality in the participants and how

increase in self-awareness helps to this end. By remaining close to a few texts, I focused on how the regular practice of the Examen and increasing self-awareness allowed for a movement toward emotionally healthy spirituality.

One new resource I used was the coding program called NVivo12plus. It helped to code the participant journal responses into categories and gave a sense of the kind of language groupings used by participants to reflect upon their experience of using the Examen.

Project, Methodology, and Methods

In this section the project is described in terms of context and approach to the research. The field, methods, methodology and scope are discussed, as well as ethical questions and logistics.

Field

This project took place within the Anglican Diocese of Calgary. The participants were clergy who are actively leading or co-leading parishes throughout the Diocese. In particular, the focus was on priests who oversee parishes. The exception was one deacon who is a leader within the Diocese and a co-leader in a parish. The participants participated in the Ignatian Examen daily. One of the participants had attempted the Examen before. Three participants had heard of the Examen but never attempted to use it. Participants kept track of how many days each week they took part. They participated for a period of seven weeks, beginning the 20th of October and ending at the beginning of December 2019. Once a week they were asked to reflect on the experience of participating in

the Examen in a narrative way using a journal. A journal page was sent to them where they circled the number of days they had completed the Examen and asking them to respond to two questions about their experience.

I arranged for a third-party to collect the journals written by the participants each week. This was to allow for the anonymity of the participants and encourage transparent feedback. The third-party coded journals with an alphanumeric code and names associated with codes were kept in a separate location. At the beginning of the week, participants were sent an email to ask them to return their reflection on practicing the Examen from the previous week. Journals were not always returned in a timely fashion. There were a few participants who started later or ended earlier and so it became a logistical issue for the third person to keep these organized.

My relationship with participants for eight of the past ten years has been as a colleague. Currently I am working in a role where I act on the authority of our bishop. This means that, to a degree, I have authority over them. They must return all official paperwork to me, including their licenses, tax information, plans for retreat/ holidays, and expenses for approval. Official disciplinary measures are the responsibility of the bishop.

I hope to use this experience, building on previous relationships, to create a program with a larger mandate that encourages emotionally healthy spirituality in clergy. There was no time to do a larger group discussion at the end of the study. Due to the delay in the ethics board response, the study ended in early December when clergy are remarkably busy. However, I did meet with

participants, in pairs or groups of three, for a conversation about their experience.

Scope

The project explored how much the Examen helps clergy be aware of themselves in relationship to God. I understand myself, my call and my work more clearly when connected with God and see things more easily through God's eyes. The Examen was intended to draw that perspective out. This short exercise provided a prayerful reflection on the day, people or situations that elicited gratitude and a way to see themselves and their day through God's eyes. Often clergy spend their days giving to others and do not have or take the time to reflect on their own physical/mental/emotional/spiritual wellness. The Examen is a simple way to reflect on this. The participants took part in the practice as often as they were able and, as mentioned above, reflected on the experience weekly.

I hoped that the Examen would make them aware of God's presence. I also hoped that, over time, they would see ways in which practicing the Examen changed how they approached activities and people.

I considered age, gender, race, culture, ethnicity or personality type in the research and results. I attempted to have a range of ages, and a balance of genders in the study. In short, this is meant to be a practice which raises the clergy's soul awareness. I imagined originally that it would make clergy aware of how their spiritual practices affect their parishioners, as well as of their own daily journey with God.

Methodology

The approach to collecting the data was qualitative in nature. Clergy participated individually but their contribution was collaborative in the sense that they contributed toward something which showed how the Examen affected the participants overall. The concept of possibly creating something larger from this research was discussed prior to the participants beginning the study. The approach to the collection of data (and the interaction with the participants) was done in a detached way with a third-party to enable collecting all materials. The hope was as Ernest Stringer author and lecturer explains, was to reflect decentralization, deregulation, and a cooperation in execution of the research (E. Stringer 1997, 5).

The problem (how can we help people be more self-reflective) was tackled collaboratively in the participatory action research, with several people weighing in on their experience and sharing together their journey of discernment through the process. My belief is that researcher and participants are all affected by this process of inquiry and all influence it (E. Stringer 1997, 12). We all have a common purpose in all aspects of the investigation, so the collection of data and its analysis needs to be done with the wider community in mind (E. Stringer 1997, 14). Based on this I believe this research is ethnographic in nature, in that it explores a cultural phenomenon from the perspective of an individual.

I began my research thinking that I was conducting action research and went along merrily believing that accurately described my study. However, in an email from our professor we were informed that none of us were actually conducting action research and that we would need to more accurately describe

our work. David Coghlan professor Emeritus at the Trinity Business School, Trinity College Dublin, Ireland and Teresa Brannick lecturer at the Michael Smurfit Graduate School of Business at University College, Dublin, Ireland help us understand that although community-based action research seeks to “enact an approach to inquiry that includes all relevant stakeholders in the process of investigation” it also intends to “provide people with the means to take systematic action” toward changing something” (Coghlan and Brannick 2005, 14). My research addressed the first portion of the definition but not the second and was not therefore deemed action research. One could possibly argue that my research was a reflective practice which “refers to how individuals engage in critical reflection on their own action” (Coghlan and Brannick 2005, 19). In my research paper I connected my research to the methodology of ethnography. At the time, I struggled to find a research methodology which fit neatly into what and how I had chosen to research. My research was definitely qualitative in nature as opposed to quantitative. Based on my understanding that qualitative data analyzes the way people think, feel and act in their environment, I still believe qualitative is the best descriptor for the research I conducted (McCombes 2019, 1).

My methodology only became clear in retrospect. First, I pondered how I was analyzing the data collected. Considering content, thematic and discourse analysis it seemed that content and thematic analysis which track words, phrases and main themes or patterns respectively was the best way to analyze the data I had collected. However, this did not answer the methodology question. The literature seems to generally agree there are five or six methodologies within

qualitative research: ethnography, narrative, phenomenological, grounded theory and case study.

Mary Clark Moschella, who is a Professor of Pastoral Care and Counseling at Yale University School of Divinity says that ethnography is “a way of immersing yourself in the life of a people in order to learn something about and from them”, which seemed appropriate to the task my research undertook (Moschella 2008, 4).

I believe using journals as my mode of observation recognized “the importance of storytelling as a hallmark of human experience” and spoke to the observation piece of ethnographic methodology (Moschella 2008, 5). Although Tim Sensing, Dean of ACU graduate school of theology writes, “ethnography normally asks the observers who participate in the social life of the context observed to maintain cognitive distance in order to do scientific work” this was a challenge, as I shared the same profession and call in the same region as the participants (Sensing 2011, 94). Moschella speaks of “Ethnography as a pastoral practice [forming] and informing religious leaders in the art of co-authoring the future in and with a community of faith” (Moschella 2008, 237). The intention of her book is to encourage leaders of communities to work alongside those they lead, I believe my context of leading alongside other leaders and wanting to co-author the future with them has a definite symbiosis.

Ragunath, an assistant professor at the Symbiosis Institute of Media and Communication in India: “anthropological approach to conducting qualitative research is one that allows the researcher to embed himself or herself in the

natural setting of the subject he or she tries to study. The researcher is immersed in the living the lives just like the subject being studied, experiencing and interfacing with them” (Raghunath 2018, 1). This most intricately linked what I was doing in my research to a methodological framework. I am immersed in living the life of the participants in my study. I both intimately knew the life they were leading as well as wanting them to be a part of something that could be applied in a larger framework with all of our colleagues in ministry.

One of the pieces which is critical in ethnographic study is understanding our own “story, voice and theology in the narrative” as a researcher (Moschella 2008, 23). Ethnography is a methodology which is not clear cut and requires the researcher to be aware of themselves as a person and how their own story informs the research and response to the research. Self-awareness became an important aspect to pay attention to for myself as I read through the journals.

Though narrative research, where the inquirer focuses on the stories told from the individual and arranges these stories in chronological order, was another option regarding methodology I opted for ethnography. The reason for this was that the focus in ethnography is on setting the individuals stories within the context of their culture and this matched better the methodology I used.

Methods

I had planned to provide a brief explanation on the Examen and then provide the participants with a small card to follow the practice of the Examen each day. Due to delays, I cut this brief teaching out and simply provided them with the card and explanation through an email.

Once consent letters were received from participants, I made no further contact with them. I used a third party to collect journal entries and forward any information. This third party is a lay person who takes care of ensuring the official records of the entire diocese are in order and so has the requisite skills for keeping the records of this project. She signed a confidentiality agreement with the diocese and understands the importance of ensuring confidentiality.

At the end of each week, participants were emailed a journal entry page which had the week named on the top of the page (week one, week two...) and their participant alphanumeric code (A1, A2...). In the email they were directed to give a brief narrative response to the guiding questions, which were on the page. They were also told that if they felt they wanted to say more or less about something, they were to feel free to do so. These journal entries were emailed back when complete, to the third-party data collector.

In the final week, I had intended to have them fill out a different type of journal entry. This final narrative response was to reflect on the overall experience over the previous six to seven weeks of having practiced the Examen. However, again, due to time constraints and the time of year being pre-Christmas we eliminated this final journal along with the first. The participant observation was not completed in person, but through journaling, which I reviewed for repeated patterns or experiences (Sensing 2011, 137).

The data was analyzed by comparative analysis. I compared responses from each of the weekly journal entries. In other words, each of the week one journals from all participants were compared, then all of the week two journals

from each participant and so forth. Though there were some differences, I found some similarities as well. As more time passed participants observed, reflected upon and considered different things. There were similarities in the frustrations and difficulties people had at the beginning of their practice in week one and two, which seemed to become less so as they moved to week five and six. This method allowed me to see similarities and differences between a typical week across the participants. It also allowed me to see how participants compared as they progressed through the weeks.

As these reflections were considered, units of meaning (perceptions, experiences) were identified. Because the participants were asked to consider their thoughts, feelings and prayers, the responses were coded as to how they fit into these categories. Participants were also asked to consider what they learned about themselves each week in light of having practiced the Examen. These responses were considered for how they typified or summarized the experiences of the participants (E. Stringer 1997, 139). Identifying discrete ideas concepts and experiences that were incorporated into the written responses supplied were important in isolating meaning from the information provided (E. Stringer 1997, 141).

One of the ideas in Stringer's work was to use a photocopy of the original data then block out each identifiable unit of meaning and literally cut them out and paste onto cards which are grouped into units of meaning or categories (E. Stringer 1997, 142). The themes were listed on a larger board and the cards

tacked under each category to see if there are any common thread among all participants.

In order to save on paper, I used different coloured highlighters for the thoughts, feelings and prayers. I then used a pen to circle any statements which had to do with having learned anything about themselves. I followed this up by using a program which helped to code the journals according to these categories.

As I read through the journals, I saw patterns as well as changes in their thoughts, prayers and learning emerging. Patterns included repeated phrases, words and thoughts. One example was using word clouds which showed repeated words like me, myself, church at the beginning but the word clouds changed to include words like prayer, silence and God more often toward the end. It was interesting to compare each weekly entry between participants to see how they experienced the practice and time progressed. I chose to use journals because I felt they would allow for a wider range of responses and ensure that they could be more personal. My concern with asking prescriptive questions was that participants would read into them what they thought the answer *should be* and answer that way, rather than be honest about their personal experience. Although data collection begins with setting boundaries (Sensing 2011, 91), I wanted to be cautious not to lead participants toward a particular response after practicing the Examen.

Phases and Timetable

First steps included considering and then inviting participants. The Hawthorne Effect explained by Sociologist Henry Landsberger, describes what

happens when a person knows they are being watched and thus changes their behaviour (Landsberger 1958, 95). Being wary of the Hawthorne Effect, I needed to consider clergy (as they met the predetermined criteria) who were able to be purposive as they provide depth to the data (Sensing 2011, 83).

Once participants were chosen and agreed to take part, any questions or concerns that were raised either went through the third party or were sent directly to the professor. Data analysis occurred in late December and January once all of the information had been gathered.

Table 1: Timeline for Examen Practice

Date	Task	Note/length of time
August 10	Requesting participants to take part	Several hours as each participant contacted individually by phone or in person.
August 20	Contact potential participants for decision	
September	Waiting for Ethics board approval	
September 15, 16	Discussion with third party to establish protocols and sign non-disclosure document	This took a few meetings to discuss the project and explain the role. 2.5 hours
October 3	Research Ethics board approval	Received by email
October 4	Consent letters sent to participants	Completed by email took 30 minutes

October 10	Consent letters received First Journal entry blank sent	Received most by email or hand delivered. One week.
October 20	Week 1 Journals collected	Email reminder was sent prior to each week. 15 min
October 27	Week 2 Journals collected	*Average interaction with third party person took 20-30 minutes each week.
November 3	Week 3 Journals collected	15 min
November 10	Week 4 Journals collected	15 min
November 17	Week 5 Journals collected	15 min
November 24	Week 6 Journals collected	15 min
December 1	Week 7 Journals collected	15 min
December 8	Any leftover journals not previously collected (or late) were collected	Several hours individually tracking down entries.
December 15	Journals printed and first coding began.	2 hours to organize/print
December 17	Thank you email sent for participation	30 minutes
December 20 – 30	NO work done on coding/reflection/report writing. (three funerals and Christmas services)	
January 2- 18	Coding, Writing, Reflecting on Research	

Prior to beginning the research, there were general conversations with potential participants as to whether they might be interested, as well as a

discussion with a third party to handle the journal responses. This timeline begins with the official asking of participants. I asked them in August so they could think and pray about whether they wanted to take part. This was one of the only times I interacted directly with the participants. The second time was at the end of the study where we chatted briefly about the overall experience. Questions used for that conversation can be found in Appendix 4.

In order to be ready to begin the study and while we waited for approval from the ethics board, there were a number of things that were prepared. All of the consent letters were printed in case we saw the participants in person. All of the individual emails with the consent letter attached were written up and kept in a draft folder. The Examen steps and a brief introductory page were also written and attached to initial emails so that once approval was received, everything could move quickly. The alphanumeric coding for each participant was created by the third party. The templates for each of the weekly journal entries were titled with the week and alphanumeric code so that there were no identifying markers when I received them.

Ethics in Ministry-Based Research

I was sensitive to the power differential with the change in my authority since taking on my new role. I was cautious in asking them to partake in the study and ensured they knew participation was voluntary and would not have any repercussions in terms of our working relationship. When I invited participants to take part, I framed the research as something which will hopefully lead to developing solutions and creating healthy practices for all the stakeholders

involved (E. T. Stringer 2014, 10). I explained to them that once we received the consent letter, I would not be aware of who was responding because of the aforementioned alphanumeric coding. I also was not keeping the key to whose name was coded with which code. Furthermore, each of the journal entries would be typed so I could not identify handwriting. I had arranged with the third-party help that they would type out the journals if any were handwritten. The only way that participants might be identified by me was if they, themselves, named family members or churches or included some other identifier within the bodies of their journal responses. This way I ensured participants that their responses would not affect our relationship, nor create a situation where they would benefit or suffer professionally from participating. This did not eliminate the power dynamic, but it was my attempt to mitigate that differential.

Managing the dual role as leader and researcher took some thought. I have a very healthy and collegial relationship with my fellow clergy. My wish for them is for health and wellbeing in every area of their lives. I hope that I communicated clearly that my goal is for their ultimate health and for us, together, to find ways to become emotionally spiritually healthier. I believe that taking the extra steps to be as unaware as possible of who was writing which journal entry, gave further confidence that I could continue my relationship with participants without their journal responses influencing our interactions.

I can do nothing without the explicit permission or direction of the bishop, but I do have a level of authority over participants. In the informed consent it was made clear that they are free to say no to participating. They were also told they

may leave the project at any time, with no explanation, and that neither their participation, leaving nor their responses will have any consequences in their work with me. Since participants were coded, I was not aware of those who were handing journals in late, or had started late, or did not partake at all.

I received permission from my Bishop to proceed with the research. We discussed the time frame, the potential participants and how this work might potentially impact my work and future programs. He was pleased to encourage me in this research and, in fact, began the practice himself, though not officially as participant. The breadth of my ministry responsibility includes the welfare of the clergy and so this research fits well.

Identifying and managing expectations of participants required some organizing. I initially established a separate email contact for this project to use for participants to email questions, journal responses and any other communication regarding this project. As well, participants all had my phone number and my email but instead they were asked to contact the third-party with any questions or concerns and not to contact me directly to establish distance. All weekly reminders about returning journal entries and fielding of questions was done through the third party.

Findings, Interpretation, and Outcomes

In this section, the data collected is shown and interpreted. Outcomes are considered and discussed.

Findings

Table 2: Data Collection

Data collected	When collected	Who collected from	Analyzed
Journals from 6 separate participants	Collected at the end of each week after giving participants a template on which to write reflections	Clergy who are in leadership positions in the Diocese and had agreed to be a part of this study. Person collecting was a third party who was not related to any of the participants.	All the journals were analyzed at the end of the 7-week period. They were analyzed all at once. They were coded for words and phrases which fell into the categories in which they were asked to write.
Notes from Conversations post- research.	In February in 3 different gatherings, I met with the participants over a meal. This had to be done at 3 separate times due to schedules	All of the participants	I took notes of the responses given to me and compared the responses from all the participants.

How Can Your Data Be Summarized Concisely?

- Narrative Journal Responses to guided questions. Questions included:
 1. How many times per week they participated.
 2. Second question asked them to reflect on feelings, thoughts and prayers while using of Examen
 3. Third question asked what they had learned about themselves
- Notes from post-research conversation, grouped into theme

The following chart shows the alphanumeric coding for the participants and how many journals completed in a given week.

Table 3: Participants' Average Weekly Responses

Participant	Wk 1 # times Examen done	Wk 2 # times Examen done	Wk 3 # times Examen done	Wk 4 # times Examen done	Wk 5 # times Examen done	Wk 6 # times Examen done	Wk 7 # times Examen done	Avg # done
A1	Not Rec'd	0						
A2	5	4	4	4	5	5	5	5
A3	2	5	4	4	4	4	Not Rec'd	4
A4	Not Rec'd	0						
A5	4	5	5	4	Not Rec'd	Not Rec'd	Not Rec'd	5
A6	6	6	5	5	5	5	4	5
A7	4	5	2	4	4	3	Not Rec'd	4
A8	Not Rec'd	4	5	4	5	Not Rec'd	Not Rec'd	4
Average number of responses weekly overall: 4.5								

*Removed two participants (A1 & A4) who didn't take part. Averages are based on active participants

Average Number of Days Practicing the Examen

We see above the average number of times participants took part in the Examen each week. The average was calculated by dividing the number of weeks they took part in the research by the number of days each week they stated they practiced the Examen. The average of each participant engaging the Examen was 4.5 days per week.

Of the eight participants who agreed to take part, six actually participated. This is 75% of the total number of participants who were invited. Of the six participants who took part, they returned responses 80% of the time. Two participants responded 100% of the time, or every week of the study. One reason for only 80% response rate is that two of the participants started late others had to end early and therefore did not return all the weeks responses.

Qualitative Data

A third set of data was the coding of words and phrases used to answer the questions in the journal entries. Each participant's entries were read through individually. Then all the Week One journals were read through, all the Week Two journals etc. until completed. The two participants who did not participate were not included in results. Of the six who participated, two of them engaged in lengthier journal responses than the others. By comparison their responses were a page or two in length, in contrast to the other four who wrote one to two paragraphs at most. Those that wrote lengthier responses gave more detail about specific situations. Longer responses tended to include interpretations of events

and God's actions than shorter responses. The table below shows the word count for each journal entry and an average for each participant.

Table 4: Average Word Count in Journal Responses

Participant	Wk 1 Word Count	Wk 2 Word Count	Wk 3 Word Count	Wk 4 Word Count	Wk 5 Word Count	Wk 6 Word Count	Wk 7 Word Count	Avg Word Count
A1	Not Rec'd	0						
A2	165	150	175	300	350	400	380	274
A3	300	325	400	550	600	680	Not Rec'd	475
A4	Not Rec'd	0						
A5	100	89	120	115	Not Rec'd	Not Rec'd	Not Rec'd	106
A6	500	550	620	680	700	710	900	665
A7	530	550	620	710	800	830	Not Rec'd	673
A8	Not Rec'd	250	290	378	500	Not Rec'd	Not Rec'd	269

Each week's journals were compared across participants for similar language, themes and responses. A software program was used to code language usage and word clouds were created to see how often certain words were used across weeks and in comparing one participant to another.

Journals were read and highlighted in different colours depending on criteria in the questions. Feelings were highlighted blue, prayers or mentions of God were highlighted pink and things learned about oneself were underlined.

Responses were coded in the following categories which emerged:

1. How often did participants mention God (Father/Jesus/Holy Spirit), Prayer or reference relationship to God in their written responses?
2. What phrases are used which indicate how the practice of the Examen itself was experienced? (was it easy to fit into the day, what challenges did it present)

3. What indications were given of how the Examen helped them personally?
4. What, if any, future did they reference? (did they think of taking part in other activities, seek forgiveness, think of a new practice based on their experience with the Examen)
5. What, if anything, did they learn about themselves?

How Often Did Participants Mention God, Prayer or Relationship to God?

Table 5: Categories of Repeated Themes

Participant	God's action	Prayer	Relating to God	Challenges of week	Challenges of Examen	Examen helpfulness
A1	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
A2	10	4	7	3	2	3
A3	14	17	9	2	2	2
A4	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
A5	16	12	5	4	0	4
A6	12	8	17	4	0	6
A7	11	14	12	8	0	4
A8	N/A	11	15	5	0	3

All the candidates mentioned God, Prayer or referenced relationship to God at least once over the weeks they wrote journal reflections.

In the first category participants mentioned God's action with comments such as -

- "God showed me"
- "I saw this a bit more from God's perspective"
- "I began noticing where God had been in previous actions"
- "God has placed teachers in my life in unexpected places"
- "God has drawn me closer in prayer"

A second category was in participants request of or reference to prayer -

- “Lord grant me peace”
- “Lord give me the gift of administration!”
- “Grant me grace to match my task”
- “Lord, how can I disciple my family better?”

A third category was participants relating or seeking to relate to God -

- “I was feeling distant from God”
- “I am seeking God”
- “I felt a level of love for God that surprised me”
- “I prayed for renewed connection to God”
- “I have a desire to enter more fully into the heart of God”

In the fourth and fifth categories were challenges. These included challenges with the week or with the practicing of the Examen.

- “I just could not focus”
- “I was frustrated with...”
- “I felt embarrassed to admit this...”

All participants included references to God and prayer more frequently the more often they took part in the journals and the Examen practice. The more they engaged the practice and reflected, the more they mentioned God or prayer. Toward the end of the practice, they also showed less frustration with both the practice and in their daily activities.

Phrases used which indicate how the practice of the Examen was experienced.

The information gathered here was logistical. How did they find the practice of the Examen in terms of practicalities? Was it easy to incorporate into their lives? What, if any challenges did, they find?

Only two mentioned any struggle in the practical use of the Examen.

Comments included:

- “It was difficult to get going on this practice”
- “I was challenged in finding the right time”

Of the two who mentioned difficulties, by the third week, there was no mention of logistic or practical issues using the Examen. It was interesting that two of those who experienced trouble had tried using the Examen in the morning which is contrary to the instruction given. This seems to prove that the Examen is best used at the end of the day.

Table 6: Themes of Post-Research Discussions

Participant	Overall Experience	Plan to use in future
A1	N/A	N/A
A2	Positive	Yes
A3	Positive	Yes
A4	N/A	N/A
A5	Positive	Maybe
A6	Positive	Yes
A7	Positive	Yes
A8	Positive	Yes

In the post-research conversations, I invited participants to share any comments about the overall experience and what, if any plans they had going forward. All the participants felt the overall experience of using the Examen was positive. In terms of using the practice in the future, five out of six planned to continue using it, and one as still considering its use. Two participants mentioned being interested in taking on a spiritual director as an option.

Indications given of how the Examen helped them personally

All the participants commented on how the Examen had helped them in some way. Some spoke of growing closer to or more aware of God. Others spoke of being grounded and more able to interpret the previous week as well as feel positive about the coming week.

What, if any, future did they reference?

The project resulted in five out of the six participants verbalizing a commitment to continue the use of the Examen on a regular basis. They expressed that it gave them a better sense of their days in terms of how God saw the events that occurred. They expressed a sense of comfort in becoming more self-aware as they practiced the Examen.

There were several things that participants mentioned they wanted to do based on learning they had experienced. They wrote wanting to:

- Begin or return to writing a Rule of Life
- Start a regular exercise regimen
- Practice more silence
- Find ways to be more focused on the heart of God
- Become more mindful
- I need to plan regular time away/off
- Continue to weigh events through the example of Christ
- Want to learn more about relationship between personality and styles of prayer

What, if anything, did they learn about themselves?

There was a wide range of things that participants wrote in terms of what they learned about themselves which I categorized as learning about their behaviour and learning about their thoughts or emotions in relation to God.

In terms of behaviour participants recognized actions they were taking and began to wonder about why they were taking those actions. They began to pray about them and bring those things to God becoming curious about their behaviour.

In regard to thoughts or emotions this was much like behaviours observed. Participants were motivated to be curious about where these were coming from. They asked questions in their prayers and wondered openly with God how these thoughts and emotions might inform a deeper relationship with God.

Interpretations

Context of Data

The data collected regarding how many times participants completed the practice weekly and how often journals were returned provided a sense of how consistently they engaged the Examen. One assumption based on my experience of working with clergy is that any lack of participation could be due to high workload and over-commitment, which was one reason for my interest. In a 2014 study by Daniel Sherman, a former pastor who started an online ministry for pastor burnout, data showed that 20-40% of clergy left their positions due to burnout syndrome (Sherman 2014, 1). The data I collected does not show levels of burnout, but it does show how often they were able to participate and to what

depth. Since the intention was to see whether the practice would result in higher self-awareness a lack of participant engagement in journal responses hindered this knowledge.

We do not have data which explains why participants did not return journals in a week, or what kept them from practicing the Examen every day of the week. However, I also did not provide a way for that information to be communicated. According to Roger Sapsford and Pamela Abbott, nursing researchers quoted by the authors of *Doing Your Research Project: A Guide for First-Time Researchers*, “confidentiality is a promise that you will not be identified or presented in identifiable form, while anonymity is a promise that even the researcher will not be able to tell which responses came from which respondents” (Bell 1987, 51). Due to the need that participants remain anonymous, there was no method to ask this question unless they volunteered it in the post-research conversations or in journals.

Logical Ordering Explaining What is Seen in Data

In terms of the participation level, the data shows that there was high engagement with both the practice of the Examen as well as the returning of the journals each week. Participants averaged four to five days out of six in the practice of the Examen, which is higher than the two to three I expected.

Participants also had an overall positive experience of the practice and most intended to continue. Reading their responses, it is reasonable to surmise that they learned something about themselves and many articulated a sense of growth in their relationship with God.

How Are the Different Themes or Categories in the Data Related to Each Other?

The statistics which show how many journals were submitted and those showing how many days each week the Examen was practiced show a level of commitment or dedication to the process by individual participants. It also shows how participants compare in their ability to commit to the practice. The depth of comments from the journals correlate to the regularity with which a participant took part. Comments tended to become more personal and relate more to the participants relationship with God, the more frequently they took part in the practice. Those who wrote less often, tended to include less commentary on their relationship with God. The longer the participant took part, overall, the more comments there were regarding a deepening relationship with God.

The relationships above show that the more consistently the participant practiced the Examen, the more they became aware of themselves and the more they became aware of themselves in relationship to God.

The data could be organized in a number of ways to develop a model of what happened in this research. For my purposes of understanding whether the participants grew in self-awareness in relation to God there are two basic models that helped. First a longitudinal approach to each individual participant journal gives a sense of how the individual grew in self-awareness in relation to God. Secondly, comparing the journals of each participant in each individual week gives a sense of what similarities there are in participants in terms of longitudinal practice.

Outcomes

One outcome was that 100% of those who took part carried it out to the end. This shows a gratifyingly high engagement within the project. This gives me hope that should this be attempted more broadly; strong participation may be expected. The response rate was 77%, meaning that 77% of the time journals were returned with comments and reflections on their experience of the Examen.

Ways in Which Outcomes Were Similar or Different From What Was Expected

I hoped that everyone would take part regularly and consistently. I imagined the difference that it would make for each of them to become more self-aware and God-aware. I based this assumption on my own experience of having used the practice. As Calvin writes in the first chapter of his Institutes, “Without knowledge of self, there is no knowledge of God. Our wisdom, insofar as it ought to be deemed true and solid wisdom, consists almost entirely of two parts: the knowledge of God and of ourselves. But as these are connected by many ties, it is not easy to determine which of the two precedes and gives birth to the other” (Calvin 1960, 32). Not all those who took part did it each day, though the percentage of responses and average number of days each week that the Examen was practiced was higher than expected, especially considering the time of year it was engaged. Another hope I had was that participants would come to realize how their self-awareness in relationship to God affected those around them. Though no one mentioned how their use of the Examen affected others, I believe practicing it over a longer period might have drawn this out.

Participants had to begin at the end of October, and this extended the study into December. This meant that these clergy leaders were in the midst of Advent and preparations for Christmas. The fact that they completed as many responses as they did was impressive.

Has the Project Led to Positive Development in the Ministry?

This project has brought to the forefront that the Examen can and does raise self-awareness in relationship to God. Our Bishop is very interested in creating an overall method of encouraging regular spiritual practices across the Diocese. I would like to try using the Examen with newly ordained clergy as part of their post-ordination training to see how it raises their self-awareness in relationship to God and how it correlates to what they choose or choose not to do within their ministry context. We have discussed the possibility of using the Examen as part of this method and are beginning to look at a system that would incorporate spiritual disciplines, supervision and support from pre-ordination to retirement.

Conclusion and Implications

Concise Summary

This project was intended to engage clergy leaders in a practice to bring them to a higher level of self-awareness. To create a space for emotionally healthy spiritual formation, I believe that self-awareness is the first step in that journey. If we are self-aware in God's presence, then God guides us to know the places we need to grow and the places we can celebrate.

To this end, a group of clergy who were in leadership positions were asked to partake in practicing the Examen each day. At the end of each week, they were invited to reflect on that practice. They were given guiding questions for these reflections. They were asked to do this for seven weeks. There was to be a gathering at the beginning and the end to establish the practice, to answer any questions and receive overall feedback. My belief is that if time had allowed for an initial gathering it would have built a sense of community among the participants. A large final discussion may have allowed participants to feel that they were not alone in their experience.

Once all the journal entries were gathered coding began. Due to the time of the liturgical year, the gathering of the final few journal entries was a challenge. We were late into the Advent season and clergy are very occupied at this time of year. However, the percentage of journals received was higher than my expectations despite timing delays and schedules interrupting. A series of meetings with two or three participants at a time occurred in late February.

Hoped for Outcomes

This project exceeded one of my expectations in terms of engagement by participants. The participants all eagerly agreed to the practice and there was no hesitation in terms of the parameters of the study. They were all very gracious with time constraints, delays and asked questions freely. One of the things I had been concerned about was that having a third-party dealing directly with them, they would feel disjointed, distanced and perhaps uncomfortable asking questions. There was only one indication that this happened with a participant. All the

participants seemed to appreciate that using a third-party was best in terms of keeping certain biases from entering the results.

This project will be useful for me in future as I work on a way to create programs and systems to encourage clergy's all-around health and emotionally healthy spirituality. The differences I saw in the participants over the course of the study leads me to believe that this may indeed be a good first step in engaging clergy in increasing toward health. It is a good first step because of its ease of use and being an unthreatening practice. If step one is becoming more self-aware of our own spiritual movements and God's interaction with us, what then is step two? This question leads me to wonder about a next step in encouraging healthy spiritual formation. Some examples that seem appropriate include writing a rule of life, a spiritual autobiography, exploring spiritual disciplines that fit their temperaments and taking on a spiritual director.

In particular, the study was helpful in a few ways. Participants found it difficult at first to engage the practice. It took an average of three weeks for it to become more comfortable. This is good to know for future research. If people are willing to engage this practice, I will be able to share with them that they will need to engage the practice for at least three weeks before it begins to feel more natural.

A second way the study was helpful was in the observation that over seven weeks of engaging the practice regularly, participants became more self-aware and aware of God's presence. Participants began to speak less about specific events and more about how they saw themselves interacting with God. This led

me to believe that in future a recommendation of two to three months of this practice is helpful in focusing participants becoming aware of their prayer dialogue.

A third way that the study was helpful and exceeded my hopes was in the way that participants noted their experience affected others. Several participants commented that they began to consider differently how they spoke to family members, children and friends. Others commented on how other people in their lives were noticing a difference in them. One participant stated that a parishioner said they seemed calmer and wanted to know what the participant was doing differently. One participant spoke about a spouse asking if they could try the Examen as it seemed to be having a positive effect on the participant's mood. This reflects the findings in the Ambrose study mentioned earlier. This outcome was not something I expected or hoped to happen. This was something that I believed would happen long term. I am very pleased, however that the glimmers of these ultimate hopes were seen even in this short study.

Additional Questions Raised

The first question raised was, "What might happen if this were to carry on longer?" How would participants experience their lives, their interactions with others and their interactions with God if they were to continue with the practice? Would it create in them a sense to want to go deeper with other formation practices? What other practices would help them go deeper?

In terms of the study itself, what would have happened if everyone took part each day? What would have happened if they wrote longer journal entries?

What would have happened if they hadn't been in a busy season of church life as they finished? Might entries have been even more thoughtful? Would there have been more engagement? Many of these questions may help to consider framing future research into possible practices and their effect. There was nothing to be done about the delays in the case of this study. In fact, life is often full of delays. So how does one continue with a practice like the Examen when there is these unplanned delays or protracted times of interruption? These 'what if' types of questions will be considerations in future study.

Another framework of questions revolved around what other practices might be follow up practices? If I am to look at creating an all-around set of practices which encourage emotionally healthy spirituality in clergy, what other practices, methods, and overall approach will work to encourage this?

A third set of questions involves wondering about how to go about gathering next steps. Is there a place for another study? Is there a way to engage an informal study or do we want to officially go through an ethics board again? Is there perhaps a way within systems that already exist in the church and seminary to engage in practices and input as to an overall system for spiritual health?

Along with the questions about gathering information rose a set of questions about what other organizations might be engaging these questions? Would it be useful to go to some of the universities like Ambrose that are studying healthy congregations, to see what they have done in terms of clergy health? Is there a Diocese which has already engaged some of these questions or implemented systems and strategies to keep clergy healthy? I would be interesting

to engage para church organizations, such as Wycliffe College, and it's longitudinal study which may be focusing attention on the positive ways to encourage health in clergy, rather than simply studying the burn out rate. Is there a way to ask questions about sleep habits, stress level, mental focus and other markers that show us signs of burnout at the beginning and then again at the end of the practice to see change?

One change I will make moving forward is more confidently recommend the practice of the Examen to other clergy and church leaders.

Another change I will make in my ongoing life of ministry is to ask these participants to be part of a larger conversation about clergy formation and health. In the beginning I saw the potential larger vision as something I would create or at least establish and then introduce. Now I see it much more as a group effort. I believe that the input others will give a richer and fuller sense of where we might go as an entire Diocese to encourage practices that seek emotionally healthy spirituality.

CHAPTER 5 - CONCLUSION

Conclusions seems very final to me. If I were to provide an appropriate title for this final portion I would choose “Conclusions thus far.” Although there are some conclusions I have reached as a result of my time in this doctoral work, it is also clear that as time progresses and I continue to reflect, read, study and pray, I have and will discover different learning and perhaps even change my mind in some areas.

As I continued from the spiritual autobiography and model, I became more aware of my own formation, my role as a leader, and my care for fellow leaders. I began to overlay the idea of spiritual formation with the formation of spiritually healthy leadership. What did the healthy spiritual formation of a leader look like? I was to discover a great deal of information on leadership in the secular and Christian worlds including a great deal of advice for how to lead and what qualities a good leader had. There were studies like that of Ambrose which pointed to how leadership influenced those that follow. Gabriel Bunge, a Russian Orthodox priest and theologian writes about spiritual fatherhood speaking of “transcending one’s own individuality in the encounter with an ‘other’ who bears the age-old name of ‘father’, because in this transcendence this other becomes the ‘begetter’ of individual personhood” also spoke of a kind of leadership which helped form others (Bunge 2016, 9). I felt then and still do, that although it may

not be a straight line, the formation of the leader is vitally important to the formation of those they lead.

One conclusion that was confirmed by my research was that self-knowledge and self-examination in God's presence is vital to leadership. I believed this and still do because

a natural outcome of time spent in the safety of God's presence is that [it] becomes quite natural to engage routinely in a rhythm of celebrating who we are in Christ and the work of transformation that God is doing in our lives, as well as inviting him to show us those places where we are still living in bondage to sin and negative patterns. Without the regular experience of being received and loved by God in solitude and silence, we are vulnerable to a kind of leadership that is driven by profound emptiness that we are seeking to fill through performance and achievement (Barton 2008, 126).

Some of the aspects of the research I became aware of in hindsight included timing the schedule for the research. I kept the study going longer than I should have to make up for the delayed start and ran right into a very full season in the liturgical calendar for clergy. If I were to do it again, I would not avoid having the first conversation with participants as I had no real way of comparing how they began the process to how they ended. I did not have the full story. I would think more carefully about questions asked before and after the study as well as the guiding questions in the journals. I would, in future ask questions about how the clergy person sees themselves prior to the practice and at the end. I do believe that a future research project would be for clergy and a few of their parishioners to carry out the practice at the same time.

The research and the work through the nurturing spirituality course, leadership reading, and my model all ramped up my own awareness and desire to

look after clergy. When I began, I assumed that upon completion I would begin creating a program which would follow a clergy leader from the point they are ordained to their retirement. This arc would have support, encouragement and tools for priests and deacons to attend to their spiritual formation along the way. At the end of this venture, I am less convinced that a programmatic or systemic way is the only answer to nurturing the healthy emotional spiritual formation of clergy leaders. I am more convinced that using the structures which are already in place may provide us small inroads to address this issue. This allows for larger systems or programmatic approaches to come if and when some of the smaller changes begin to create culture changes around spiritual formation.

Instead of creating a whole new system or series of practices, I wonder now about using things we are already doing like search processes, discernment processes, clergy days, post ordination training, clergy retreats and conferences to work on building greater awareness and capacity in clergy so that they can better attend to their own spiritual formation.

Most clergy were trained to teach others the faith through preaching, bible study and courses like baptismal preparation or preparation for marriage or confirmation. They were not guided as to how their own spiritual formation was vital to the formation of others in their relationship with God. One example of this is the subtle change in language. The schools we attended to prepare ourselves for ordained ministry used to be called *seminaries* they are now called *theological colleges*. Like it or not, the enlightenment and its emphasis on logic and reason is partly responsible for this subtle change. The theological training received in

these institutions is often top notch while the spiritual formation is either assumed or is lacking unless it has been something students are personally dedicated to nurturing. So, we can end up sounding pious with no real spiritual depth.

In the words of Eugene Peterson,

I don't know of any other profession in which it is quite as easy to fake it as in ours. By adopting a reverential demeanor, cultivating a stained-glass voice, slipping occasional words like 'eschatology' into conversation and *heilsgeschichte* into our discourse – not often enough actually to confuse people but enough to keep them aware that our habitual train of thought is a cut above the pew level – we are trusted, without any questions asked, as stewards of the mysteries. (Peterson 1987, 6)

Our parishioners have a “need to be reassured that someone is in touch with the ultimate things” and we as clergy “set out to risk our lives in a venture of faith” (Peterson 1987, 6, 10) but somewhere along the line we were given a job and the call to be a holy presence transformed into a list of tasks. Even for those clergy leaders who are trying to pay attention, the institutional and social structures take over. Peter Drucker the famous management guru was credited with saying, “Culture eats strategy for breakfast.” He was not dismissing strategy but understood that culture is a larger controlling feature of an organization and “empowering culture was a surer route to organizational success” (Ross n.d.). The culture of busyness including calls, meetings, tasks and emails steer us away from maintaining a sense of pastoral vocation in the midst of a community of well-intentioned and good people who are hiring us to “do religious jobs” (Peterson 1987, 13). Seminary leader and senior consultant for the Alban Institute Roy Oswald affirms this stating that staying “healthy spiritually remains a significant challenge for clergy” (Oswald 1991, 12). In this milieu it is difficult to justify

paying attention to our spiritual formation, even if we are convicted at some level that our formation influences those we lead.

A study conducted by Drs Laurie Santos and Tamara Gendler from Yale University debunked the phrase “knowing is half the battle” (Santos 2020, 1). The phrase was spoken by GI Joe a cartoon character. The suggestion was that once you knew something you would change your judgment or decision and therefore your actions. In fact, this is not true. They coined this fallacy the GI Joe fallacy because knowing is “not half the battle for most cognitive biases” (Santos 2020, 1). This was a helpful learning which happened as I was preparing for my presentation. It further confirmed that any change requires active and intentional practice. As leaders, we must be intentional about our spiritual disciplines.

Another challenge in paying attention to our spiritual formation as leaders is that when we are committed to our own formation the forces of culture, society and job expectations from those around us can lead to people sabotaging our formation attempts. The difficulty of

sustaining one’s mission is that others who start out with the same enthusiasm will come to lose their nerve. Mutiny and sabotage come not from enemies who opposed the initial idea, but rather from colleagues whose will was sapped by unexpected hardships along the way. (Friedman 2017, 247)

The expectations of those who want us to be simultaneously administrative geniuses and deeply holy people can be as difficult to navigate as walking against a river rapidly flowing the opposite direction. The truth is, says Abigail Johnson, author and previous director of Ministry Based Ordination Program at United Theological College in Montreal, “You cannot outmuscle a river, but if you read

the water accurately and use the right technique, the river does the work for you” (Johnson 2007, 16). When expectations lead, Morris Dirks a previous pastor and founder of SoulFormation says it means that “commitment to the nurturing of the leader’s spiritual health is the missing component in most churches and Christian organizations” (Dirks 2013, 167).

If we want our leadership “to flow from what is going on in [our] own soul” then we need to stay connected to the reality of God in our own lives as we attempt to help others in their walk (Barton 2008, 22). One of the qualities which allows a leader to attend to their own soul and deal with the expectations, hardships and loneliness that leadership can espouse is differentiation.

Differentiation is “the ability to remain connected in relationship to significant people in our lives and yet not have our reactions and behaviour determined by them” (Johnson 2007, 20). It is an ongoing process of self-awareness which allows us to stay grounded in our own purpose and remain in God’s peace. While remaining clearly in that peace and purpose we can face difficulties and difficult people knowing that these ‘rapids will soon pass. The understanding of differentiation and how it related to the practice of the Examen, which works in a similar way was also something learned after conducting the research.

The Ignatian concept of holy indifference is in my opinion the spiritual version of differentiation. Louis Puhl a Jesuit priest and writer tells us that Ignatius describes in his spiritual exercises that “indifference means being detached enough from things, people, or experiences to be able to either take them

up or to leave them aside, depending on whether they help us to praise, reverence and serve God” (Puhl 1951, 12). This ability to set things aside and remain in the situation mimics differentiation with the added bonus of allowing God’s presence to guide us. The Examen, which asks us to review our day in God’s presence helps us to see ourselves and our situations in the light of a loving God who can give us a view of eternity and give us a perspective that no one else can. It allows the perspective for Holy Indifference.

In my current job working with churches as they were choosing new clergy leadership, I learned that parishioners are infrequently aware of how to take care of their pastors. They are not asking the pastor how their prayer life is going. They do not ask how clergy are being led by Jesus and where their personal growth edge is as a leader. There is an assumption on behalf of parishioners that clergy have it all figured out in terms of formation and so they must not need anyone else to pay attention to that need. This is one of the areas where rather than creating a new system I intend to take the opportunity to help people in parishes to begin to understand the importance of spiritual formation for themselves and for their leaders.

This leads me to another discovery around available literature. If one wants to find books on leadership, there are a plethora. There are secular leaders who write from the different perspectives of transactional, contingency or transformational theory. They give us a wide range of information from how to create a vision to inspiring those you lead. Most of them see leadership occurring when “one person attempts to influence the behaviour of an individual or group”

whether that is in a business, organization or family (Hersey, Blanchard, and Johnson 2011, 4).

If you want to find books on clergy burn out there are also a great deal of these. H.B. London vice president of outreach ministries for Focus on the Family and Neil Wiseman church consultant and preacher share that there are frightening statistics like 90% of us feeling that we are “inadequately trained to cope with ministry demands” or 80% of pastors saying “they have insufficient time with their spouse” (London and Wiseman 2003, 82). Some of these books will advise us on how to return from burn out or avoid going down that road. Senior pastor of New Hope International and author Wayne Cordeiro reminds us to rest, eat well, prioritize our time so that the “voracious appetite of the vision” does not consume us (Cordeiro 2009, 23,128,169). Though many are very appropriate in terms of self-help suggestions they are not specifically aimed at spiritual formation.

A third area where there is a great deal of literature is in spiritual formation. We can find books on any spiritual discipline, autobiographical books written by the giants of the faith, guidance on discernment and even comparisons of how formation was viewed historically or across different faith traditions. The area which lacks any richness is the area of the spiritual formation of those in leadership.

How do we as leaders manage the expectations of others and ourselves? How are we to walk through times of stress, grief, pain and opposition as we lead? How do we provide for those who follow us “the least anxious presence” or the peace of the God we are meant to represent (Friedman 2017, 38). Indeed, how

do we continue to be formed by and into Christ while helping others to be formed without trying to meet the expectations of the culture both inside and outside the church. This is not a question that is being directly answered in much of the literature I found.

The experience of the professional presentation was a helpful reminder for me that keeping in touch with other people who experience leadership in different ways is important to whatever way I engage the learning I've experienced here. Being in regular communication with lay and clergy leaders and listening to needs and concerns will help me to understand how to help support spiritual formation. There are no easy answers but there is a beauty in the discussion when we are sharing with one another the possible answers to our questions.

Our search process puts me in contact with applying clergy as well as leaders in parishes looking for a new clergy person. The discernment process puts me in direct contact with those who are prayerfully considering ordained ministry leadership. I have been looking for opportunities both within the diocese and also with local theological schools where I might introduce spiritual formation to those discerning leadership.

A new project I am embarking on is teaching at the university level. Ambrose University, which is a Christian university in Calgary, has asked me to create a syllabus and course outline for a course on spiritual formation which is required for all those in the seminary track. I've also been asked to create and teach a shorter course about spiritual autobiography. I look forward to reentering

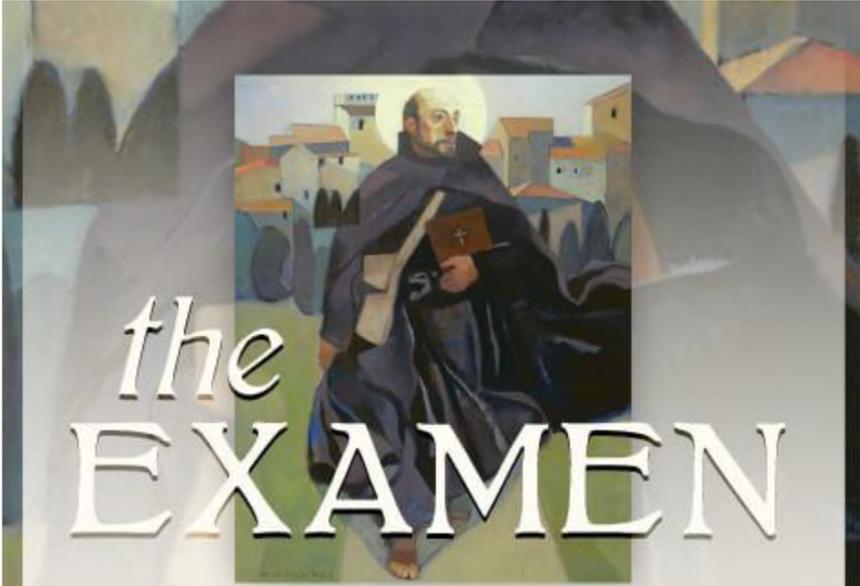
the teaching arena again with the experience and learning from these past few years.

The snapshot of what I have been able to discover during this program has opened up a number of possibilities all of which I am grateful for and which I look forward to pursuing.

Appendices

Appendix 1

Examen card given to participants



the
EXAMEN

The *Examen* is a method of reviewing your day in the presence of God. It's actually an attitude more than a method, a time set aside for thankful reflection on where God is in your everyday life. It has five steps, which most people take more or less in order, and it usually takes 15 to 20 minutes per day. Here it is in a nutshell:

- 1** Ask God for light.
I want to look at my day with God's eyes, not merely my own.
- 2** Give thanks.
The day I have just lived is a gift from God. Be grateful for it.
- 3** Review the day.
I carefully look back on the day just completed, being guided by the Holy Spirit.
- 4** Face your shortcomings.
I face up to what is wrong—in my life and in me.
- 5** Look toward the day to come.
I ask where I need God in the day to come.

Version of the Examen from *A Simple Life-Changing Prayer* by Jim Mamey © Loyola Press

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Appendix 2

Informed Consent Letter

Program: Doctor of Ministry

Title: Fostering Spiritual Health of Church Leadership.

Researcher: Ven. Pilar Gateman ;

Faculty Advisor: Mark Chapman mchapman@tyndale.ca Ph. 416-226-6620 Ext.2208

Informed Consent Form

Thank you for agreeing to participate in this study, which will take place from October to November of 2019. This form details the purpose of this study, a description of the involvement required and your rights as a participant.

Purpose: The purpose of this research is based on the quest for emotionally healthy spirituality among the clergy. To consider practices, which might help in that goal.

Benefits: The benefits for you include:

- Taking a small amount of time therefore not adding too much to your schedule.
- Learning a new Spiritual Practice
- Allowing you time each day to reflect and quietly contemplate your day.
- Allowing time to reflect on your relationship with God

Risk: There is a risk for you that this practice may bring to light something uncomfortable. It may make you feel embarrassed or exposed. You are encouraged not to respond in any way which creates discomfort and share only what you are comfortable sharing. You are encouraged to notify the third-party data collector if you are feeling anxious or stressed in any way.

If you are left feeling anxious after the journaling process, you are encouraged to follow up with your Spiritual Director. You may also engage a Spiritual Director if you do not have one. A Spiritual Director can be found at the FCJ centre in person at 219 – 19 Ave. SW Calgary or by phoning 403-228-4215.

There is also a risk that you may feel your work relationship with me will be negatively affected if you choose to step away from the study or if any

response you give makes you feel concern. Firstly, the responses you give will be coded with an alphanumeric code prior to me reading them, so I will not know who sends in which response. You are free to leave the study at any time with no repercussions to our relationship.

Whether you agree or decline to participate, it will in no way negatively influence our working relationship. Firstly, because there will be no identifying markers on your replies. Secondly because no matter what is written in the responses, it will inform the practice and your relationship with the practice, not our relationship. Thirdly, it is important that all participants are taking part willingly, so if it becomes difficult to continue, it is best for the study that you do what is best for you.

Participation: Your participation in this study will consist of:

1. A short explanation of the Ignatian Examen. During this you will be invited to ask any questions for clarification that you need.
2. You will then be invited to practice the Examen each day for six weeks. At the end of each week, you will be invited to reflect very briefly in writing on you experienced the practice. (there will be guiding questions included)
3. During the final week of the study, you will be invited to reflect on what negative, neutral or positive effects this daily practice had in your life.

You have the right to abstain from answering any questions that makes you feel uncomfortable. At any time, you may notify the researcher that you would like to stop and your participation in the study. There is no penalty for discontinuing participation.

You are encouraged to ask questions or raise concerns at any time about the nature of the study or the methods I am using. Please email me anytime at

Your participation is completely voluntary; however, we ask that if you commit to this study you agree to remain until the completion date.

Feedback Opportunity: At the end of the study, there will be an opportunity for you to comment on how you experienced the entire study. You will be invited to attend a casual get together where you and your fellow participants will be invited to share any thoughts about the study and your experience.

You will be given the opportunity to see the results of the research should you wish to see them. They will be provided upon request.

Data Usage: Data collected from you will be analysed and used in the creation of a final report stating the researcher results and conclusions. You are encouraged to indicate (by writing your email address below) whether you would like to receive a summary of the findings of the research once it is completed.

Yes, I would like to receive a final summary of research results. Please send results to my email: _____

Confidentiality:

Your written reflections will be coded (A21, A22, ...). The code associated with your name and contact information will be kept in a separate and locked location. No one outside of the study will see that connection. I will not share individual responses with anyone other than the research supervisor.

All possible measures will be taken to ensure your confidentiality. If this becomes a concern for you during the information collecting process of the research, you may discuss which elements of the information you would like to preclude from the study or withdraw from the study altogether.

Security of the data: I will keep the print copy and any paper records of the study in a lockable drawer when not in use. The electronic records of the study will be saved as documents in my personal computer that requires a password known to me only to log in. I will ensure that my computer is virus free. I will only use emails when I need to send the study to the director of Doctor of Ministry, the third-party data collector and/or the advisor.

Withdrawal: You also have the right to withdraw from the study at any time. In the event you choose to withdraw from the study, all information you provide (including recordings) will be omitted from the data and final paper. If you do wish to withdraw, please email me and state that you would like to withdrawal. You do not have to provide a reason and there are no consequences for withdrawing.

Supervision: All research being completed is under the supervision of Dr. Mark Chapman with Tyndale University. Dr. Chapman's email address is mchapman@tyndale.ca If there are any questions or complaints about

the researcher, you are encouraged to contact Dr. Chapman. You may also contact the Archbishop of Calgary The Most Rev. Gregory Kerr-Wilson bishop@calgary.anglican.ca .

This study has been reviewed and received ethics approval through the REB of Tyndale University. If you wish to ask any questions about your rights as a participant, you may contact the Research Ethics Board at the following email: reb@tyndale.ca

By consenting to participate in this research, you have **not** waived any right to legal recourse in the event of research related harm.

By signing this form, I, _____ certify that I have read and

(Participant Full Name)

understood the information given here; that I may ask questions at any time throughout the process and I agree to the terms of this agreement.

I Consent/Agree

Participant Signature: _____

Date: _____

Appendix 3

WEEK ONE

Journal Reflection Guiding Questions

Participant Code: _____

At the end of each week, you are kindly asked to reflect on having used the practice of the Ignatian Examen each day. The following are some guiding questions for you in that effort.

How many times this week did I complete the Examen? (please circle one)

1 2 3 4 5 6

How have I experienced using the Examen this week? What thoughts, feelings, prayers have arisen for you in using the Examen?

Is there anything you have learned about yourself this past week? If yes, please indicate.

Appendix 4

Questions for Final Gathering (used as guide not prescriptively)

1. How was your experience of using the Examen overall?
(time it took, ease of practice...)
2. What effects did the using the Examen have on you personally?
3. Do you see any benefits in continuing to use the Examen as a regular practice?
4. Have you noticed any effects on your work during or after the practice of using the Examen regularly?
5. Did you notice any effects on others after using the Examen?
6. How would you describe your relationship with God at the beginning of the Examen and now?

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