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**WITH GLADNESS AND SINGLENESS OF HEART: THE RECOVERY OF
PASTORAL IDENTITY AND THE SPIRITUAL FORMATION OF THE
CONGREGATION**

**A MINISTRY FOCUS PAPER
SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY OF THE
SCHOOL OF THEOLOGY
FULLER THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY**

**IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT
OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE
DOCTOR OF MINISTRY**

BY

**ROBERT C. LORD
MAY 2002**

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Ministry Focus Paper Approval Sheet

This ministry focus paper entitled

WITH GLADNESS AND SINGLESNESS OF HEART:
THE RECOVERY OF PASTORAL IDENTITY AND
THE SPIRITUAL FORMATION OF THE CONGREGATION


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requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Ministry


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Abstract

With Gladness And Singleness Of Heart: The Recovery Of Pastoral Identity And The Spiritual Formation Of The Congregation

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2002

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The purpose of this Ministry Focus Paper is to present a theology and implementation strategy for the recovery of pastoral and priestly identity and its contribution to the spiritual formation and growth of the congregation of Saint Michael and All Angels Episcopal Church (STMAA).

STMAA, a fifty-five year-old congregation, has emerged within the past six years from a prior cycle of decline and stagnation, to a vital and active congregation experiencing significant numerical and spiritual growth. Increasing revitalization and renewal at STMAA has mandated a need to recover lost (or forgotten) traditions of spiritual and pastoral identity if the relationship of pastor and congregation is to thrive in the years ahead. It is clear that while accurate knowledge of Christianity is essential, it is not sufficient to generate a wholesome Christian life. Furthermore, while psychology is most useful, it alone will not produce personal integration centered in Christ. The Spirit produces spiritual life. There is a spiritual component to both transformation and renewal.

This paper proposes that the central image of the pastor as spiritual guide can serve as the organizing principle for pastoral identity and ministry in the 21st century. Spiritual guidance, as a metaphor for ministry, places spiritual formation and discipleship at the heart of the congregation's mission and ministry.

This Ministry Focus Paper is divided into three sections. The first section explores a biblical and theological foundation for Christian spiritual formation and the recovery of pastoral identity. Particular attention will be given to aspects which are central to the catholic and evangelical expression of the Anglican tradition. This section will also provide a theology and philosophy of spiritual guidance as an organizing principle for ministry in the 21st century.

The second section will present an in-depth analysis of STMAA and the surrounding community. We will observe how the cultural context affects the ability of the congregation to become a transforming community that engages the human longing to know God.

The third section will provide a specific strategy for the recovery of pastoral identity and ongoing spiritual formation at STMAA. This will include the goal of developing a model of parish life that is focused around the task of spiritual formation consistent with the biblical and theological principles outlined in section one.

The basic goal of this paper is to provide a theological and compelling strategy to reframe and recover ordained ministry as an expression of the life of prayer, of intimacy with God, and as a means of grace for the spiritual formation of the congregation.

Final Project Advisor: Peter Hintzoglou
Words: 491

To my wife, Nancy, and my children, Jennifer and Jonathan

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INTRODUCTION

The changes in the church and society in the 20th century to our present day have caused many clergy to lose clarity about their role and function. In this, I refer to dedicated, faithful people with considerable strength in vocation, who have become confused and uncertain about how best to be ordained persons in today's church. This confusion has led to an erosion of self-esteem or even faith. No one action seems called for, but the concern is acute.

I have been in ordained pastoral ministry for over twenty years, long enough to discover that the care and feeding of my own interior life is not auxiliary to a faithful vision of ministry; it is the foundation. Nevertheless, the question remains: Can professional ministry be an expression of the life of prayer and a path of discipleship to Jesus?

Our ordination vows mandate a vital and vibrant personal faith and life of prayer. How do I, or any minister in the midst of the varied pressures and activities of our professional lives, discern and ground our actions and being in the presence of God?

The call of God is first to be a person of prayer, and one who sets up housekeeping in the Word (Acts 6:2, 3).

What matters most in being a Christian leader is the interior life, for “the greatest and hardest preparation is within.”¹ Without this, all leadership effort is sterile, without compunction, and ultimately leads to boredom and insipidness. How we take care of ourselves ultimately relates to and greatly influences our ministry effectiveness.²

My challenge to practice ministry this way is not unlike what many of my colleagues have found. There has been a major shift in the role of pastoral ministry from the “cure of souls,” or, spiritual guide, to the model of a CEO, or, the “running of a church.” It is the high demand and expectations of others that place great pressure and temptation upon us to compromise. Eugene Peterson has prophetically spoken this to pastors as he says:

The pastors of America have metamorphosed into a company of shopkeepers and the shops they keep are churches. They are preoccupied with shopkeepers concerns: how to keep customers happy, how to lure customers away from competitors down the street, how to package the goods so that customers will lay out more money.... The pastor’s responsibility is to keep the community attentive to God. It is this responsibility that is being abandoned in spades.³

Acknowledging the generalizing in the following observations, it may be said in general that there are at least three results of this shift. First, clergy often live fragmented lives, working to fulfill competing expectations and conflicting roles. Second, they are often isolated due to ordination and appropriate professional standards that are part of their position in their parish and

¹ James M. Hoppin, *Pastoral Theology* (New York: Funk and Wagnall’s, 1985), 8

² See John 15:4

³ Eugene Peterson, *Working the Angels: The Shape of Pastoral Integrity* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1987)

community. Third, they may at times experience personal isolation and lack of accountability or resources for their spiritual, emotional, and physical lives.

Sometimes, these factors (as well as others) have the potential of wreaking devastating effects on the private and public lives of clergy and their communities with which they are associated. In most cases (and my own), the negative factors of clergy life simply impinge on the ability of clergy to do their best work and to enjoy their callings as ordained ministers, while being balanced human beings, friends, and family members. To survive in ministry unscathed seems to be the exception rather than the rule.

Nevertheless, is survival in ministry the goal? Hardly. Dr. Dallas Willard has made a compelling case for "spirituality and whole life" as the paradigm for pastoral ministry.

Your call is to *live your life* (emphasis added) in God and to his glory in contrast to simply doing your job. Ministry is a whole life function based on who you are in your relation to God and your interaction with him. Your life is not your ministry. Do not let the context take your life. Your identity before God, your place in the spiritual world, these are the things you must claim and order your life towards. When we step into a sensible use of the spiritual disciplines, the problems that keep breaking us down will disappear.⁴

To a far greater extent than most of us are willing to consider, our interior world shapes our contextual reality. The quality, character, and results of our ministry are reflections of our spirituality, projected on the screen of the organization we lead.

⁴ Dallas Willard, Lecture from "Spirituality and Ministry," Fuller Seminary, 18 July 1994

Clarity about what one is trying to do then, and about who one is, about his or her life before God, is essential to ministry. The act of pastoral spiritual formation and integration is intended to encourage spiritual formation and integration on the part of the members of the congregation. Dallas Willard offers the following definition: "Spiritual leadership is essentially a matter of being able to induct others into the spiritual life and guide their development therein. It is not merely a matter of being mighty in the spiritual oneself and having astonishing effect."⁵

In the words of Jesus, spiritual leadership is essential to the fulfillment of the Great Commission. Jesus defined making disciples through the process of "teaching them to observe (to do) all things whatsoever I have commanded you."⁵ Leading our people into spiritual disciplines, is utterly indispensable to following this command. So then, the aim of pastoral ministry is the making of spiritually astute and competent people who are actively engaging the Kingdom of God.

There is a growing sense among church leaders that we need to recover lost (or forgotten) traditions of spirituality and pastoral identity if the church is to thrive in the years ahead. It is clear that while accurate knowledge of Christianity is essential, it is not sufficient to generate a wholesome Christian life. The Spirit produces spiritual life. Furthermore, while psychology is most useful, it alone will not produce personal integration centered in Christ. Nor will a good grasp of organizational skills alone produce a renewed church. There is a spiritual component to both transformation and revival.

⁵ Ibid

There is new interest in exploring the spiritual traditions. The interest, however, is pragmatic. The goal is not simply new knowledge; the goal is to transform people in a renewed congregation led by a pastor who has experienced what he or she is preaching and teaching.

In this ministry focus paper, the topic of the recovery of pastoral identity and Christian spirituality will be investigated with the aim of bringing transformation and renewal to the congregation.

This paper proposes that the central image of the pastor as spiritual guide, defined as the ability to induct people into the spiritual life and guide their development therein, can serve as the organizing principle for pastoral identity and ministry in the 21st century. Spiritual guidance as a metaphor for ministry places spiritual formation and discipleship at the heart of the congregation's mission and ministry. We can make a movement from pastor as program director to pastor as spiritual director. The way is clearly marked as the yoke of Christ, and the following of his life in spiritual disciplines. This is a way of vocational holiness rather than a religious career. It is as the well-loved 100th Archbishop of Canterbury Michael Ramsey said, "We are called, near to Jesus and with Jesus and in Jesus, to be with God with the people on our heart."⁷

With this recovery of pastoral and priestly identity, we can enter more authentically into the vocation God has given us, and do so as the post-communion prayer of Celebration of the Holy Eucharist proclaims:

⁵ Matthew 28 19-20

⁷ Michael Ramsey, *The Christian Priest Today* (Boston MA Cowley Publications, 1985), 14

Eternal God, heavenly Father, you have graciously accepted us as living members of your Son our Savior Jesus Christ, and you have fed us with spiritual food in the Sacrament of his Body and Blood. Send us now into the world in peace, and grant us strength and courage to love and serve you *with gladness and singleness of heart*, through Christ our Lord.⁸

⁸ The Book of Common Prayer, 365

CHAPTER ONE
**A THEOLOGY OF CHRISTIAN SPIRITUAL FORMATION
AND PASTORAL IDENTITY**

It is beyond dispute that we are witnessing a tidal wave of interest in spirituality in our culture today. This spiritual sprawl is having dramatic effects on the practice of ministry and mission in the life of the church. People of all sorts, even those who are not religious in the ordinary understanding of the term, seem to be grappling with the deepest yearnings in the human heart, a desire for "more than meets the eye," and for the sacred. One way of naming this desire for the more, the greater, for things unseen, is to speak of spirit, spirituality, and the spiritual life.

We experience around us a yearning for meaning in the face of life's precariousness. The signs are everywhere. This yearning is variously addressed in ways both healthy and unhealthy, and more and less effective. Attention to the life of the spirit is among them. Unfortunately, some of this attention is in the nature of a passing fancy, unmoored from the received tradition or the wisdom of the ages.

This is precisely the challenge. In fact, the place of greatest controversy in the years ahead may well be about who or what defines the

meaning of spirituality and spiritual life. For most Americans, it can be accurately said that words like "sacred," "spirituality," and "religion," are all very fuzzy.

The question is this: Just what is spirituality and spiritual life? In coming to a clearer definition, it is helpful to note that in the various spiritual movements in our culture today, there appear to be two themes that constantly emerge. First, and most importantly, there is the awareness that there are levels of reality not immediately apparent: there is more than meets the eye. Second, there is the quest for personal integration in the face of forces of fragmentation and depersonalization. These must be recognized and addressed.

Fragmentation, alienation, and depersonalization are so all-pervasive and unsatisfying that other ways of perceiving and being in the world have become necessary for our survival. Crises abound in human life, and it may be that spiritual yearning is initiated by an individual's experience of such a crisis. The priesthood or pastoral role is not immune from this. At such times, God speaks to interpret our fragmentation and begin our transformation. Vilma Seelaus sets the stage for our understanding, saying:

Fragmentation, the crisis of identity and meaning, touches the lives of each of us. Yet the potential for growth and transformation inherent in life's struggles and breakdowns evades most of us. We fail to realize that dark times condition us for God, that they invite us into a transformed identity through a deeper faith, hope and love.¹

¹ Vilma Seelaus, "Fragmentation and Divine Transformation," *The Way* Oct 1988 301

What is Christian Spiritual Life?

The spiritual life is a dangerously ambiguous term. Many people would find it to mean "the life of my own inside." Others define the spiritual life as something very holy, difficult and peculiar, a sort of honors course in personal religion, to which they did not intend to aspire. Both of these kinds of people need a larger horizon.

What is life? What is life of any kind? What characterizes life? One formal definition that is helpful is that life is a self-initiated, self-sustained, self-directed movement or change that appropriates what lies beyond. Life is the ability to metabolize.² One example would be the difference in planting a seed and planting a pebble. Which one would demonstrate life?

Similarly, spiritual life is the ability to reach out to God, and through him, to reach others. It is a gift, through the words of the Gospel, which itself is spiritual life. Those who profess faith in Jesus Christ and follow him in discipleship, living in the presence and power of the Holy Spirit are living a Christian spirituality and spiritual life. Spirituality is not just one dimension of the Christian life. Michael Downey offers this helpful description of spiritual life: "It is the Christian life in the presence and by the power of the Holy Spirit; being conformed to the person of Christ and united in communion with God and others. Personal integration takes place in and through conformity to the person of Christ."³

The distinctiveness of Christian spirituality is precisely the formation of the inward person, one who becomes like Christ on the inside.

² Dallas Willard, Lecture from "Spirituality and Ministry", Fuller Seminary, 19 July 1994

³ Michael Downey, *Understanding Christian Spirituality* (New York: Paulist Press, 1997), 146

Spiritual life is the inner transformation of the will, mind, and emotions into the likeness of Christ. When we think like Christ, feel like Christ, and choose Christ's character; it moves into our body, our surroundings, and everything. The focus is on inward transformation into Christ-likeness. The old, much-used, but too little applied statement of the Apostle Paul is that "Christ be formed in you."⁴

It is hardly surprising that the language of spiritual life seems punctuated by words like "desire", "thirst", "hunger", "pining", "homesickness", "seeking", "restlessness", and "yearning". Desire for God is also, what Christian spirituality is.

Spiritual life begins with the fact that the human being is, by nature, a creature requiring relationship. The spiritual life is grounded in relationship. It has to do with God's way of relating to us, and our way of responding to God. Scripturally speaking, the spiritual life is simply the increasing vitality and sway of God's Spirit in us.

As those created in the image of God, we are never ceasing spiritual beings with an eternal destiny in God's great universe.⁵ As T. De. Chardin has said: "We are not human beings having a spiritual experience; we are spiritual beings having a human experience."⁶

Spirituality is the means by which we develop an awareness of the presence of the loving Lord in our lives, and the process by which we keep that awareness alive and vital to the end that we become formed in the likeness of

⁴ Gal 4 19

⁵ Dallas Willard, Lecture from "Spirituality and Ministry" Fuller Seminary, 19 July 1994

⁶ Ibid

Christ. It is paying attention to the life within. Our life as a spiritual being is completed only by living in and from the Kingdom and government of God. God's desire for us all is that we should live in him. However, that assertion immediately raises questions. Everything we do is lived under the canopy of three defining questions: Who is God? Who am I? What am I to do with my life?

Who is God?

Christian spiritual life begins with the outpoured love of God. God is creating within us the capacity to receive his life and love. Such, is God's longing that we should be filled and nourished and satisfied with him. He yearns to flood the life of everyone with his own holy life and love. The way he does this is through the in-breathing of his own life and breath, his Spirit. The Spirit's ministry includes creating within us what theologians have called the *capax dei*, which is the capacity for God without which we cannot be filled with the divine life and love because we are so full of self.

Central to any spirituality is its conception of what is ultimately real. This is the great question that stands at the limit of the world. That is where we must begin. The answer to that question from the Judeo-Christian tradition brings the resources of scripture, tradition, philosophy, and reason to bear upon the basic question about the nature of God and how that relates to spirituality and spiritual life. Do we have a conception of God that is adequate to the faith which Jesus himself had? It is one thing to have faith in Jesus and it is quite another to have the faith of Jesus. We live at the mercy of our ideas, and especially our ideas

about God. Several years ago, J. B. Phillips wrote a little book entitled, *Your God Is Too Small*, in which he shows how our concepts of God related directly to the way the spiritual life is perceived and lived.

What did Jesus know about God? To Jesus' eyes, this is a God-bathed and God-permeated world. It is a world that is inconceivably good because of God and because God is always in it. We stand in a world completely penetrated by the living God, the abiding source and sum of all reality. We are citizens of that world now, and our whole life, is or should be, an acknowledgement of this fact. The Psalms often teach us of the nature of true reality:

Where can I go from your Spirit? Where can I flee from your presence? If I go up to the heavens, you are there; if I make my bed in the depths you are there. If I rise on the wings of the dawn, if I settle in the far side of the sea, even there your hand will guide me; your right hand will hold me fast.⁷

Consider this carefully phrased reflection on the nature of God from a different century by Adam Clarke:

God is the eternal, independent, and self-existent Being; the Being whose purposes and actions spring from himself, without foreign motive or influence; who is absolute in dominion; the most pure, the most simple, the most spiritual of all essences; infinitely perfect; and eternally self-sufficient, needing nothing that he has made; illimitable in his immensity, inconceivable in his mode of existence, and indescribable in his essence; known fully only by himself, because an infinite mind can only be comprehended by itself. In a word, a Being who, from his infinite wisdom, cannot err or be derived, and from his infinite goodness, can do nothing but what is eternally just, and right, and kind.⁸

⁷ Psalm 139 7-10

⁸ John M Clintok and James Strong, eds., *Cyclopedia of Biblical, Theological, and Ecclesiastical Literature* vol 3 (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1984), 903-904

The revelation of God in the Scriptures, upon careful and prayerful reflection, has been described by Dr. Dallas Willard under the following traits: God is self-subsistent, spiritual substance, and of limitless power.⁹

God Is Self-subsistent

What ultimately characterizes God is the fact that he exists without dependence on anything else. There is nothing that God needs to exist. Out of the richness of his own being, God sustains himself in existence. That is unlike anything else in all of reality. There is nothing like that. I'm not like that. You are not like that. Nothing in all of creation exists in its own right. Everything that exists other than God is dependent upon God. God is dependent upon nothing. We need to remember that! The most fundamental distinction between God and all else is God's self-subsistent being.

In Exodus, chapter three, God comes to speak with Moses and Moses essentially asks this question: Who are you? The response to that in Exodus 3:14, is "I AM THAT I AM." In this disclosure of the Divine name, God is announcing his self-subsistence: "I am from myself. My being gives me being." God is the only being who has Self-existence – Self-subsistence. As Jesus put it: "The Father has life in himself."¹⁰

⁹ Dallas Willard, Lecture from "Spirituality and Ministry", Fuller Seminary, 19 July 1994

¹⁰ John 5:26

God is Spiritual Substance

The second element of the nature of God is Spirit. Dallas Willard argues that the biblical revelation teaches that God is "Spirit" in substance. God is enduring having powers and qualities that belong to God alone. Spirit is unbodily personal power made up of thoughts, desires, feelings, evaluations and character. God is Spirit, says Jesus in John 4:24.

God does not have physical properties such as size, shape, weight, texture, or color. Dallas Willard makes the following assertion:

Therefore when in 2 Cor. 4:18 Paul speaks of drawing life from the nonvisible by focusing our minds and expectations on it, as opposed to the visible-"we are looking not at things which are seen, but at those which are not seen"- he is, of course referring to the realm of persons, and to God above all.¹¹

This is the Hebrew tradition. Verdic or Eastern religions teach that God is non-person. Judeo-Christian tradition teaches that God is personal, Trinity, and being in communion. The Trinity is not a force. It is a power because it is personal. Being personal, it has demands to make of its own. The biblical concept of the spirit and the spiritual are illustrated in John 4:25. God is spirit.

Spirit is creative, self-sustaining will. Spirit is unbodily, personal power. It is not a mere "force" or "energy," not even one that lies outside the framework of the physical, as it is generally understood. It is a power that functions independently of bodily and natural forces, though it can be intimately involved with them. It takes form and substance in ideas, attitudes, emotions, judgments, decisions, and actions.

¹¹ Dallas Willard, *The Divine Conspiracy*, (HarperSanfransico, 1998), 79

We conclude, then, that spirit is unbodily personal power. It is primarily a substance, and above all, it is God who is both spirit and substance. To understand spirit as "substance" is of the utmost importance in our present world, which is so devoted to the material as being that which is ultimately real. It means that spirit is something that exists in its own right, to some degree in the human case, and absolutely with God.

If you do not start at the right place about whom you are encountering, your very faith cannot rise to the level of execution that is expressed in all of the Scriptures. The growth of our faith depends on our understanding the greatness of God. That greatness, above all, expresses itself in God's self-subsistent spiritual reality and substance of limitless power.

Who Am I?

In Greek, the words "spirit" and "spiritual" are translated *pneuma* and *pneumatikos* respectively. There is a *pneuma* in God (the Holy Spirit), but there is also a *pneuma* in each human person (Pauline anthropology sees the person as made up of *soma* (body), *psyche* (soul), and *pneuma* (spirit)). The human being has a spirit, and is basically a spiritual being, though one that is eternally individual by its bodily history. To the extent that the actual life of a human being is dependent upon his or her interactions with God he or she is a spiritual person.

Dallas Willard states that we are unceasing spiritual beings who currently have physical bodies. We occupy our bodies by our consciousness of them and by our capacity to will and to act with and through them. I occupy my body and its proximate space, but I am not localized in it or around it. I am not simply my

brain. I am an unceasing spiritual being with an eternal destiny. I am an embodied spirit in my basic nature. God is the Father of my spirit. Spiritual life is the capacity to reach out to God and appropriate eternal life, an unending kind of life. Anglican spiritual writer and guide Evelyn Underhill expresses it in this way:

We are essentially spiritual as well as natural creatures; and therefore life in its fullness, the life that develops and uses all our capacities and fulfills all our possibilities, must involve correspondence not only with our visible and ever changing environment, but also with our invisible and unchanging environment: the Spirit of all spirits, God in whom we live and move and have our being. The significance, the greatness of our humanity, consists in our ability to do this.¹²

A spiritual life is simply life in which all we do comes from the center, where we are anchored in God. It is a life soaked through and through by a sense of his reality and claim, and self-given to the movement of his will. Our lives as spiritual beings are completed only by living in and from the Kingdom of God. We live in and from the Kingdom by trusting Jesus Christ who brings us into the rule of God, and through our discipleship to him enables us to fulfill our invitation to share in the reign and rule of God's full world.

Whatever our small practice, belief, or experience may be, nothing can alter the plain fact that God, the Spirit of spirits, the life-giving Life, has made, or rather, is making each person for Himself. Our lives will not achieve stability until they are ruled by that truth. This is summarized with compelling clarity by Evelyn Underhill:

There we have the formula of the spiritual life: a confident reliance on the immense fact of his presence, everywhere at all times, pressing on the soul and the world by all sorts of paths and in all sorts of ways, pouring out on it His undivided love, and demanding an undivided loyalty. The discovery that this is happening all the time, to the just and to the unjust,

¹² Evelyn Underhill, *The Spiritual Life* (Boston Mass: Oneworld Publications, 2000)

and that we are simply invited to adore and to serve that which is already there, once it has become a living conviction for us, will inevitably give to our spiritual life a special quality of gratitude, realism and trust. *We stand in a world completely penetrated by the living God, the abiding Source and Sum of all reality. We are citizens of that world now; and our whole life is or should be an acknowledgement of this fact.*¹³

A full-bodied Christian spirituality, then, will lead us at every moment to invite God's Spirit to make a personal dwelling in our lives, knowing that we do this together, as the faithful in Christ. Inner and constant receptivity becomes an extension of our baptism, and an ongoing fulfillment of that unity that we experience and express around the Lord's table.

As we enter into this adventure of communion with the One, to whom we owe our very breath, meditation upon the Scriptures (i.e. the reading, marking, and inward digestion of them) is essential. Spirituality is not a private thing apart from what we have learned in Scripture, but intimately connected with that story, those words, and those pictures of the One we love. Spirituality begins with learning from him, not with human resolve for the esoteric, nor with a search for personal empowerment, nor with confidence in human solidarity.

It is in times of watching and in quietness, in our sober recognition that God is the Word and that our role is to attend, that our Lord comes to us. The human spirit hears the divine Spirit lovingly, but powerfully encouraging us to live with him in the present, despite nostalgia for our past and fears or hopes for our future.

¹³ Ibid 47

The Process of Christ

Anglican spirituality is a fruit of our profoundly incarnational theology, and has to do with what the 18th century priest-mystic, William Law, calls "the process of Christ." Law describes the process of Christ as the daily encounters with the risen One in word and sacrament, and the events and circumstances that challenge and mold us, through which we are transformed and conformed to the pattern of Christ.

When we have the mind of Christ, the world itself, and especially every human person in it, becomes a window to us of his presence, his love, his peace, his power. When you look at Jesus and see what he did and how he believed, you are looking at a man who trusted this God and found him present in everything that he did; a God such as the scriptures present.

Christian spirituality, therefore, is always rooted in the experience of Jesus. Richard Peace describes this dynamic in the following way:

To be a disciple of Jesus is to take on his way of life. And this Way is not always an easy way. We are invited to change our behavior so that we focus in love of God and others. We are invited to develop a healthy self-love that lapses into neither hedonism nor despair. We are invited to tell the truth (with love), not to steal, not to let our anger go unprocessed, etc. Christian spirituality is a lifestyle and not just an experience.¹⁴

There are three primary themes in the life of Jesus that we encounter as we follow him: His experience of growing into intimacy with God (Who is God?), accepting our identity as a beloved child of God (Who am I?), and discovering our unique voice in kingdom responsibility (What am I to do with my life?).

¹⁴ Richard V. Peace *Theology News and Notes* March 1999, Fuller Seminary

These are the broad streams of the spiritual life and of the process of spiritual formation. The following becomes the primary task of the pastor as a spiritual guide: to awaken the people in the congregation to their uniqueness as a loved child of God, created in the image of God for intimacy of relationship that empowers them for individual acts of ministry. All of this is dependant upon announcing the Gospel that Jesus announced. It was a Gospel for the reformation of the heart.

What is the Gospel Jesus Proclaimed?

"I have come that they might have life, and have it to the full" (John 10:10b). Taking these words of John to heart, cherishing them, and yearning for them to be true, is at the core of Christian life. This text summarizes so much of what Jesus has done for us and what is being offered to us in his announcement of the Gospel of the availability of the Kingdom of God. The Gospel of Jesus was a whole life Gospel. Every bit of life was brought into the Kingdom of God. The Gospel we preach must be directed at the transformation of human character and life. Jesus preached a Gospel that did that:

God's desire for us is that we should live in him. He sends among us the Way to himself. That shows what, in his heart of hearts, God is really like, indeed, what *reality* is like. In its deepest nature and meaning, our universe is a community of boundless and totally competent love.¹⁵

The Invitation of the Gospel.

Mark's Gospel reports that Jesus then came into Galilee announcing the good news from God 'All the preliminaries are taken care of,' he said, 'and the

¹⁵ Dallas Willard, *The Divine Conspiracy* (New York: HarperCollins, 1998), 11

rule of God is now accessible to everyone. Review your plans for living and base your life on this remarkable new opportunity."¹⁶ The Kingdom of heaven is immediately present to us because of the nature of God, and because God is immediately present to us wherever we are. God is sufficient to the soul, always, everywhere, and for everything. This is the central message of Biblical revelation. God is of such abundance in his being that out of God proceeds everything that exists around us and it is totally inexhaustible. "The Lord is my shepherd and I shall not want" (Psalm 23:1). I can trust it.

This is the content of the Jewish experience of God: that God is to be experienced right here, and right now. His presence and power is always available, and directly present to the person that lives in a covenant relationship with Him. It is the effective range of God's will in our lives and in our world.

The kingdom of the heavens is now accessible to humanity in a new way. The old way was the law and the prophets, through the people of Israel. The new way is through confidence in Jesus Christ. It is in this confidence that we are brought into the kingdom of the heavens.

This is the reality of the new birth, or, regeneration. "Unless you are born of water and of the Spirit you cannot see or enter the kingdom of God."¹⁷

Jesus brought the kingdom to human beings in a way it had never been before. Moreover, the primary difference was simply through loving and trusting in Jesus, and placing our confidence in Him.

¹⁶ Mark 1:15

¹⁷ John 3:5

This is what Jesus meant by repentance: "Considering this fact, that the kingdom of God is available in the person of Jesus Christ, think through the way you are living your life. You can now live in the kingdom of the heavens. What are you relying on, counting on? Reconsider it now in the light of the availability of the Kingdom of the heavens." ¹⁸

The Gospel of Christ is the availability of the reign of the Kingdom of God, and the availability of God to meet present human need through the actions of Jesus. He is the good news about the Kingdom. Jesus proclaimed the Gospel of the availability of the rule of the heavens. The Gospel offers the promise of entering into an unending kind of life. The Gospel Jesus proclaimed is about life. All that is required to rise up and enter the unending kind of life of the Kingdom is faith in and reliance upon Jesus.

When Jesus announced that the rule of God had become available to human beings, he was referring to what *he* could do for people God acting with him. As Jesus said: "I must preach the kingdom of God to other cities also for I was sent for this purpose." ¹⁹

What purpose was he sent for? To preach the Kingdom of God. That was Jesus' Gospel. In addition, if we want Jesus' results we need to preach Jesus' Gospel. If you preach something else, you get a different result.

We see this Gospel proclaimed by the great Apostle Paul. "For two whole years Paul stayed there in his own rented house and welcomed all who came to see him. Boldly and without hindrance he preached the kingdom of God and

¹⁸ Paraphrase by Dallas Willard

¹⁹ Luke 4 42ff

taught about the Lord Jesus Christ.”²⁰ Those two go together. To preach Jesus adequately is to preach the Kingdom of God. Moreover, to preach the Kingdom of God adequately is to preach Jesus. They go together, you cannot separate them. Any other Gospel will be quite inadequate to transform the real life of human beings.

Gospels of Sin Management

We have two Gospels that are often substituted for the message of the Kingdom. Dallas Willard has called them the “Gospels of sin management.” First is the liberal version, the Gospel of liberation coming against structural evils. It is rooted in the prophetic strain of both Old Testament and New Testament teaching. Unfortunately, it is focused only on the correction of structural evils. Social reform is essential. You cannot leave these things out. So things like racism, poverty and other social issues are very important but they have degenerated into the idea of the liberation of desire. People should have what they want and should not be denied.

The liberal version is a Gospel of sin management; it is a way of managing sin, of getting rid of these social evils. Jesus is taken out of the picture as a person, but His vision of justice is used as a motivation. Issues of personal morality are no longer relevant or a serious issue. The feature of Gospels of sin management are that they always omit the person of Christ as teacher and ruler in the heart. They put him somewhere else.

²⁰ Acts 28 30-31

The other substitute is the conservative version of a sin management Gospel. Believing the right things about Jesus secures heaven after death. This is presented as the Gospel. The Gospel becomes a theory of the atonement. Everything is absorbed into the doctrine of justification and totally obscures and shrinks the reality of a new order and species of life, and of regeneration. The Gospel Jesus preached was about a new heart and a new spirit, but now the whole issue becomes obtaining the forgiveness of sins.

This is not to say forgiveness of sins is unimportant or unessential. It is. However, the forgiveness of sins is not the Gospel that Jesus preached and it is not the Gospel that brought the church into existence. There is no way to teach people how to grow in Christ-likeness if the whole message is how to have your sins forgiven. This turns the Gospel not as confidence in Jesus but confidence in an arrangement that God made through the death of Jesus. This essentially leaves Him out. All that is necessary is that He dies, and if you believe he died to pay for your sins, you will make the cut. It is all paid for.

Much of evangelism today is rooted in a misunderstanding of salvation. People have been told they are Christians because they have confessed they believe that Jesus died for their sins, but the total package is presented in such a way that it leaves the general life untouched.

Biblically, salvation means deliverance. The question is: Deliverance from what? The common message is that people have deliverance from guilt. Yet the full concept of salvation in the New Testament is deliverance from our present sins. Deliverance from sins comes from the new life of God's Kingdom when we

place our confidence in Jesus the person. The problem is that we have been obsessed with this idea that the real issue is "making the cut" to get to heaven or justice and social reform. We have taken discipleship out of conversion.

Dallas Willard makes this following claim:

In today's presentation of the gospel, Jesus' death is primarily presented as a ransom that deals with guilt and the effects of guilt regarding our standing before God. But there is more to life than guilt. Once you have been forgiven, you still have to live. Jesus is about the redemption of actual life from actual sin. It is by entering into his life, which is still ongoing on earth that we are delivered from actual sin. The New Testament is absolutely clear on this. You just take Colossians 3, Philippians 3, 1 John, and Titus 3. All make it clear that the righteousness that is by faith is a matter of being delivered from the evil that is around us in action and that we are in danger of falling into ourselves.²¹

Faith in the living Christ raises us above merely being delivered from the consequences of sin. We need a doctrine not only of justification, but of regeneration. We need a picture of our life in God that does not leave most of our life untouched. What has happened today is that we have reduced salvation to justification. We have reduced the saving work of Christ to his death on the cross. So what relevance does the resurrected Christ have?

While we are familiar with the cross and resurrection, the intimate connection between the two sometimes escapes us and produces a skewed understanding of what it means to live the Christian life. There are those who focus on the cross as the sign of human sin, but never go through the cross into the new and abundant life of resurrection. In addition, there are those who see

²¹ Dallas Willard, Lecture from "Spirituality and Ministry" Fuller Seminary, 20 July 1994

everything from the perspective of the resurrection without being mindful that the new life it imparts can be mistakenly treated as a possession rather than a gift.

The paschal mystery embraces both the cross and the resurrection in a double dynamic set forth in the Gospels and the apostolic letters, particularly those of Paul. These writings testify to the paradox of authentic discipleship: we enter into life by dying; we find by losing; and it is as we face our essential poverty before God that the way is opened for us to experience the riches of Christ's grace – a lifegivingness which, as Paul knew well, comes to full term, and is made perfect, in weakness.

This weakness, this poverty, is not, however, an invitation to some sort of passive resignation, but rather it is revealed to us in the midst of active engagement, in the midst of "insults, hardships, persecutions and calamities for the sake of Christ," as Paul tells us.²² "For whenever I am weak then I am strong;"²³ not with the strength of my own psychological, intellectual or physical effort, though they may certainly be called into play, but with the strength of the risen Christ. "I can do all things through him who strengthens me."²⁴

This kind of deep and costly availability to God's desire (listening to what the Spirit is saying) invites suffering. Obeying God can bring the crucifixion of attitudes and opinions, the unacknowledged biases, prejudices and fears that keep us from entering into that open space spoken of in the Book of Psalms where all is reconciled according to God's own truth and justness. "In Christ, God

²² 2 Cor 12 10

²³ Ibid

²⁴ Phil 4 13

was reconciling the world to himself”²⁵ and to us, through baptism, has been given “the ministry of reconciliation.”²⁶

The Gospel of Life and Transformation

I believe there are only two things that all Christians share in common. First, is the realization that we are all sinners and that all humanity stands level at the foot of the cross. The death on the cross of the savior is the great conviction of humanity of our true nature.

Second, all Christians also share new life in Christ. In baptism and conversion, we are joined to His life that now lives in us by the transforming power of his Spirit. We have in common this new life. When Christians forget either of these truths, or emphasize one at the expense of the other, our witness to the world is compromised.

The real issue for me, as a pastor, is what Gospel is it that I am preaching? What is my orientation? Is it the gospel of “sin management,” that the center of the Gospel is about sin and how I can be forgiven? Or is it about the “liberation of desire,” that Christ came to liberate our desire? Or is it what Jesus announced; the Gospel of the availability of new life in the Kingdom?

We have Gospels on the right and on the left that do not lead to transformation, or to the reformation of the heart. Where is the message of personal transformation? There is such a swelling hunger for this, for something

²⁵ 2 Cor 5:19

²⁶ Ibid

that can move us beyond failure and defeat and the epidemic of anger and contempt we see in our culture today.

Where is the Gospel that changes the heart, which changes the life of the individual? Where is the Gospel that naturally leads to discipleship and connection to ordinary life? Jesus' driving vision was this: The Kingdom of God is at hand. All He said and did supported this. The Gospel Jesus proclaimed naturally leads to the transformation of the human person. It was his Gospel, and it transforms lives today. We now turn to see how this Gospel of the Kingdom naturally leads to spiritual formation.

Spiritual Formation, Discipleship, and the Great Commission

One of the clearest statements about the nature of the human being is from the Book of Proverbs: "Watch over your heart with all diligence, for from it flow the springs of life."²⁷ We live from the heart:

The part of us that drives and organizes our life is not the physical. This remains true even if we deny it. You have a spirit within you and it has been formed. It has taken on a specific character. I have a spirit and it has been formed. This is true of everyone. The human spirit is an inescapable, fundamental aspect of every human being; and it takes on whichever character it has from the experiences and the choices that we have lived through or made in our past. That is what it means for it to be "formed."²⁸

Christian spiritual formation is the process of being conformed to the image of Christ for the sake of others.²⁹ Spiritual formation is not an option. It is

²⁷ Proverbs 4:23

²⁸ Dallas Willard, *The Renovation of the Heart: Putting on the Character of Christ* (Colorado Springs: Navpress, 2001), 13.

²⁹ M. Robert Mulholland Jr., *Invitation to the Journey: A Roadmap for Spiritual Formation* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1993), 12.

not a discipline just for "dedicated disciples." Spiritual formation is a primal reality of human existence. Every event of life is an experience of spiritual formation.

We need to recognize this first in general human terms. Within the invisible dimension of the person, and right at its conscious center, lies the human spirit. "God is Spirit," the creative will that creates and governs the universe, and "spirit" is the creative element in human nature, the image of God in humanity. The human spirit is primarily what we today call "will," the capacity of choice and resolution, and what biblically and traditionally is called "heart." The human spirit is the source of our life, and the stream of the actions, influences, and contributions we make to our shared, visible world and its history.

Spiritual formation, without regard to any specifically religious context or tradition, is the process by which the human spirit or will is given a definite "form" or character. It is a process that happens to everyone. The most despicable as well as the most admirable of people have had a spiritual formation. Their spirits or hearts have been formed. We all become a certain kind of person, gain a specific character, and that is the outcome of a process of "spiritual formation" understood in general human terms. Fortunate or blessed are those who are able to find or are given a path of life that will form their spirit and inner world in a way that is truly strong and good.

Spiritual formation, in the tradition of Jesus Christ, is the process of transformation of the inmost dimension of the human being, the heart, which is the same as the spirit or will. It is being formed (really, transformed) in such a way that its natural expression comes to be the deeds of Christ done in the

power of Christ. It is a matter of shaping the inner character of the individual, and of "Christ being formed in you."³⁰ Spirituality is living intentionally in the gracious presence of God and allowing that presence to shape our lives; living God-conscious lives. As Dallas Willard writes:

"Spiritual formation" is the process through which those who love and trust Jesus Christ effectively take on His character. When this process is what it should be, they increasingly live their lives as He would if He were in their place. Their outward conformity to His example and His instructions rises toward fullness as their inward sources of action take on the same character as His. They come more and more to share His vision, love, hope, feelings and habits. In the language of His "Great Commission" to His disciples, they are "taught to obey everything I have commanded you."³¹

We are being shaped either toward the wholeness of the image of Christ or toward a horribly destructive caricature of that image. That is why Paul urges Christians, "*Whatever* you do, in word or deed, do *everything* (emphasis added) in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him."³² Human life is, by its very nature, spiritual formation. The question is not whether to undertake spiritual formation. The question is what kind of spiritual formation are we already engaged in? Are we being increasingly conformed to the brokenness and disintegration of the world, or are we being increasingly conformed to the wholeness and integration of the image of Christ?

In Christian experience, the work of the Holy Spirit is to conform us to the image of Christ: the Bible tells us that, "Now the Lord is the Spirit, and where the

³⁰ Gal 4 19

³¹ Matt 28 20

³² Col 3 17, italics added

Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom. And all of us, with unveiled faces, seeing the glory of the Lord as though reflected in a mirror, are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another, for this comes from the Lord, the Spirit.”³³

Our contribution to our being conformed to Christ for the sake of others goes through these steps: 1) Want it. Either we want this or we do not. We have to begin with ruthless honesty. 2) Intend it. Here we move from saying that it would be nice, or desire it to some degree, to deciding to do this and making appropriate provisions to do so. 3) Become an apprentice and a student of Jesus Christ. This alone is what it means to trust him.

Spirituality for pastoral identity is found in Jesus' invitation to his disciples: "Come to me all you that are weary and carrying heavy burdens 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."³⁴

Once you have made the choice to say, "Yes, I want to follow Jesus," the question is, "What disciplines will help me remain faithful to that choice?" Discipline means to prevent everything in your life from being filled up, or the effort to create some space in which God can act. In order to follow Jesus effectively in ministry, we must also follow Jesus into the lonely desert and the mountains to be alone with God, and to practice the way of life he practiced.

³³ 2 Cor 3 17-18

³⁴ Matt 11 28-30

Dallas Willard states it compellingly:

We do not just hear what Jesus *said* to do and try to do that. Rather we also notice what he *did*, and try to do that too. We notice, for example, that he spent extended times in solitude and silence with him. We note what a thorough student of the scriptures he was, and we follow him, the Living Word into the depths of the written word. We notice how he used worship and prayer, how he served those around him, and so forth.³⁵

The quality, character, and results of our ministry are a reflection of our spirituality, projected on to the screen of the communities we lead. If the congregation is to journey toward a deeper and more intimate relationship with the Lord, the pastoral leader must set the tone. As Paul said, "Follow me as I follow Christ."³⁶

The greatest resource is the transparent example of the pastor. Out of his or her own spiritual journey, the pastor is able to offer spiritual companionship to others in the congregation whom the Spirit calls to the spiritual pilgrimage.

Discipleship and the Great Commission

"Follow Me" may be the simplest description of Christian spirituality that exists anywhere, but the simplicity is deceptive. The simple command assumes a complex relationship through which one becomes educated and trained for the reign of God. To be a Christian is to make a decision to devote oneself to becoming like Jesus Christ, nothing more, and nothing less.

In the New Testament, the word "disciple" (which means a student or pupil or follower, in this case, of Christ) occurs 269 times.

³⁵ Dallas Willard, *The Divine Conspiracy*, 352

³⁶ 1 Cor. 11:1

"Christian," on the other hand, is found only three times and was first introduced as the only way to distinguish the original disciples from the sect of the Jews.³⁷ The point is clear: there was no such thing as a Christian who was not also a disciple. The goal of evangelism is not the development of nominal Christians, but of devoted Christians who become disciples who make other disciples and whose lives are enriched by their relationship with God. Dallas Willard points out that this is where we find a major challenge to our pastoral identity:

One of the leading assumptions in the American church is that you can be a Christian but not a disciple. For at least several decades the churches of the Western world have not made discipleship a condition of being a Christian. One is not required to be, or to intend to be, a disciple in order to become a Christian, and one many remain a Christian without any signs of progress toward or in discipleship... Churches are filled with 'undisciplined disciples'³⁸

Spiritual formation, renovation of the heart, requires something more than traditional Western forms of instruction. It requires a mentorship of the heart, a relationship with the teacher of life, a way of life that is formed, and not merely instructions that are given. Discipleship can begin only in a personal relationship with the Lord and with a desire to be formed as one of "His People." A person learns to live life to the fullest by becoming a follower, or disciple, of Jesus. In fact, that is a good definition of a disciple: a person who is learning from Jesus Christ how to live life to the fullest.

³⁷ Acts 11:26, 26:28, 1 Peter 4:16

³⁸ Dallas Willard, Christianity Today, October 10, 1980

What is being a disciple all about? What does being a disciple (also called "discipleship") involve? How does a person begin to learn from Jesus Christ how to live life to the full? We need to be clear in our heads about what discipleship is.

Dr. Dallas Willard gives this definition:

A disciple is a person who has decided that the most important thing in their life is to learn how to do what Jesus said to do. A disciple is not a person who has things under control, or knows a lot of things. Disciples simply are people who are constantly revising their affairs to carry through on their decision to follow Jesus.³⁹

In the New Testament, discipleship means being an apprentice of Jesus in our daily existence. A disciple is simply someone who has decided to be with another person, under appropriate conditions, in order to learn to do what that person does, or to become what that person is. It is an active following of Jesus, and patterning our life after His.

What does Jesus do that I can be disciplined to do? The answer is found in the gospels: He lives in the kingdom of God, and He applies that kingdom for the good of others and even makes it possible for them to enter it.

As a pastor, I am called to help people place their full confidence in the authority of Jesus, as the great commission declares. People need to learn this. Disciples by definition are learners, not know-it-alls. To be a disciple, then, means to have so much confidence in Jesus that you become His lifelong student, and a learner for life. In light of this, we need to do a little self-assessment and response. Do you have confidence in the full authority of Jesus?

³⁹ Dallas Willard Lecture from "Spirituality and Ministry", Fuller Seminary, 19 July 1994

Do you believe He is alive? Do you believe that He is right in everything He taught? Do you believe He is who he claimed to be?

There is a cost to being involved in Christian formation. It will take an investment of your time, your energy, maybe even a rearrangement of your priorities. That is what it might take to put yourself in a position where God can transform you.

There is a cost of being a non-disciple, too. It costs a life permeated throughout with love, peace that surpasses all understanding, hope in the midst of insurmountable odds, and faith that sees everything in light of God's goodness. Being a non-disciple costs us the joy that comes from being on an adventure with Jesus.

As members of the church, we belong to a missionary body. The great commission is not optional is it? If there is anything that you can read in the New Testament, it is that this early apostolic band of people knew themselves to be apostolic. That is, they knew themselves to be sent on a mission. Matthew tells it one way, Luke tells it another way, and John tells it another way. Nevertheless, there is no doubt they knew that what they had, what they had been given in Jesus, was not for them alone, but for the whole world.

The Ministry of the Church as a Transformed And Transforming Community

Everything Jesus said or did during his early ministry was aimed at the glorious transformation of lives, and those transformed lives worked to change the culture and the world in which they lived. Transformation under girds the

Prayer Book definition of mission found in the catechism: "The mission of the church is to restore all people to unity with God and each other in Christ."⁴⁰

Biblical examples of transformation include Peter, the fisherman, whose life was transformed when he started following Jesus. Zacchaeus, the hated and feared tax collector, was transformed into a compassionate, generously restorative person after his encounter with Jesus. Mary Magdalene was a prostitute whose life was transformed by Jesus. The woman at the well, because of transformation through contact with Jesus, became an evangelist, bringing people in her Samaritan village to "the living water." Barnabas sold his land and gave the proceeds to the church because of his transformation.

For whom are we here? Our own members certainly, but the vitality of our life comes from maintaining an outward focus rather than inward focus. The great Archbishop of Canterbury, William Temple, often reminded the clergy that the church is the only institution on earth that exists primarily for the benefit of those who are not its members.

Biblically, these are the lost. Today, these are those outside the church, often referenced as the unchurched or nonchurched, or those with no faith involvement.

This does not mean as disciples we have no concern for our own needs, but the nurture of our own members is most beautifully fulfilled when they are engaged in reaching out with inspired expectation to those beyond the community. Motivated by the great commandment to love and being equipped with spiritual treasure that has brought about our own experiences of

⁴⁰ Book of Common Prayer, 855

transformation, Jesus gives us the great commission to go and make disciples. We are commanded to seek the lost, or what we now call the unchurched. Furthermore, the commandment is to make disciples of all nations, making it imperative to reach out to all sorts and conditions of people.

The result of spiritual transformation is joy that enhances personal wellness and self-esteem. Those engaged in this beautiful and holy endeavor gain a great sense of significance as they participate in furthering the wellness of others. They gain fresh and practical insight into a greater, wider, fuller reality, which encompasses the divine power available for daily life. Finally, enormous courage to do greater things is generated as an aftermath of divine transformation.

Joy, wellness, significance, insight and courage are the Biblical result of what Jesus taught as well as what He did. In the parable of the talents, those who stepped out in faith to invest, doubled what they had been given. Their reward is described in these words: "Well done, good and faithful servant. Enter into the joy of your master."⁴¹ The same rewards were experienced by the father and son in the parable of the prodigal. Both stepped out in faith and received their rewards after having experienced a form of death.

The lost sheep parable is also a story of death and resurrection. The hopeful expectation, when finally realized, affects every dimension of the life of the seeker and the sought. The source of our common mission is none other than Jesus' vision.

⁴¹ Matthew 25:23

At the beginning of his earthly ministry, He announced the vision: "The kingdom of God is at hand." He codified it in the Lord's Prayer in the words, "Thy kingdom come, thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven."⁴² Everything He said and did while on earth reinforced this vision. Jesus' announcement of the Gospel is simply the declaration of the reality and availability of another dimension of existence, in this world now. The loving rule of God, which includes God's transforming presence, God's wisdom, and God's unconditional forgiveness, is available to everyone. In light of this, Jesus called his hearers to review their plans for daily living and to base their lives on this remarkable new opportunity.

Today the Holy Spirit is available as the power source for the glorious transformation of lives. Jesus' vision of the Kingdom of God at hand is the foundation of the vision of the Church and the beginning point for its mission. Transformation is the goal and the process, which never ends.

As ordained leaders in God's church, we need to be reminded of our definitive, Godly, and ever-present calling. We are commissioned by our Lord Jesus Christ and through the power of the Holy Spirit to be a community of transformation, living in miraculous expectation. This was and is Jesus' vision. He proclaimed that the Kingdom of God is at hand. In His earthly ministry, Jesus set about, through all that He did and all that He said, transforming lives. The church is called to be a community of miraculous expectations that is commanded to share and continue the vision of Jesus in this life and beyond. The intended result of evangelism is disciples, not membership. It is also

⁴² Matt 6 10

disciples making disciples, under girded by transformation to change individuals and society.

Conclusion

It is the thesis of this paper that in order for this kind of transformation to take place and in order for congregations to fulfill the great commission, there must be a radical recovery of pastoral identity as the practice of spiritual guidance and direction. The crisis of the church is first a crisis of identity, specifically pastoral identity. I write this as an Episcopal priest in a denomination that is, at this time, plagued with conflict and confusion. The priest is, before all things, a Christian soul, given to prayer, and the disciplined practice of the presence of God, centered in the Eucharist. A priest's life is grounded in a daily rule of office and silence. To pray and teach souls to pray, is at the heart of our vocation, for given this, everything else will follow.

Out of this interior castle come the fruits, or works of priesthood. The priest reveals only what he or she offers, and so the call to holiness sums up this vision of priesthood, and of pastoral identity. This is a priesthood of presence. The priest seeks to become what he or she offers, a walking sacrament, by which God touches, heals, feeds, reconciles, and challenges.

We turn now to consider what the recovery of this kind of pastoral identity looks like. While there are many practical problems in the parish ministry, which must be addressed, it is my conviction that the fundamental stress, is a crisis of meaning. There is a genuine confusion about the meaning of priesthood in the minds of the priests, bishops, deacons, and laity. What does it mean to be a

priest? What is the work of a priest? This question trails us to such a degree that the question, "Do we really need priests?" is a question seriously asked today.

CHAPTER 2

A THEOLOGY AND PHILOSOPHY OF PASTORAL IDENTITY

Pastoral Identity as Spiritual Guidance

Because of its nature, pastoral identity is never secure. In every age the church must ask: What are pastors and priests for? This paper's argument is that the problems clergy face reveal the church's struggle with its own self-understanding. The church's lack of clarity about its mission results in lack of clarity related to the role of its clergy. The lack of clarity about expectations means that no matter what pastors do, pastors come under attack for not doing something quite different. The work to which they feel most called is often the activity least valued by parishioners. Yet, much observation (both historically and contemporary) suggests that an awakened congregation requires vital, dynamic, and spiritually sensitive leaders. Personal spiritual formation of the pastor directly impacts the corporate spirituality of the congregation.

While there are many practical problems in the parish ministry, which must be addressed, it is my conviction that the fundamental stress is a crisis of the meaning of pastoral vocation. Part of that stress lies in the disconnection between the way we understand who we are as ordained people and what it is we actually do. Clarity about what one is trying to do, and about whom one is,

about their life before God, is essential to ministry. The act of pastoral spiritual formation and integration is intended to encourage spiritual formation and integration on the part of the members of the congregation.

The remedy to this identity crisis does not only lie with changes made by individual pastors, although this certainly is needed and will help. The problem is more systemic. It involves the very nature of ordained ministry as practiced today. To reach a genuine resolution, we need to come to a recovery of pastoral ministry as spiritual direction. The central image of the pastor as a spiritual guide and director can serve as *the* central organizing principle for ministry in its various functions of worship and liturgical leadership, preaching and teaching, social justice, and administration. Spiritual guidance as the heart of ministry provides a clear and valuable pastoral focus. No one has written more penetratingly about the integrity of ministry than Eugene Peterson:

But no excuses: being a spiritual director is far more essential and important than being messianic and managerial, even though we cannot function outside those contexts. Spiritual direction is the act of paying attention to God in a person or circumstances or situation.... It seems to me that a stance of spiritual direction is the center out of which pastors need to move in order to be in appropriate gospel response to the people we are serving in Jesus' name.¹

When people turn to a pastor, what are they seeking? Whatever their response, they are looking for a source of validity for their lives. They are looking for a model of being in the world that is anchored in God. Henri J. M. Nouwen wrote: "If it is possible for a doctor to cure a patient even where the doctor hardly

¹ Eugene H. Peterson, *Under the Unpredictable Plant: An Exploration in Vocational Holiness* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1992), 181, 189.

believes in the value of life, a minister will never be able to be a minister if it is not his or her own most personal faith and insight into life that forms the core for pastoral work.”²

Persons in other professions can depend upon particular tools of the trade, or upon skills learned in professional school to get them by, even when they have ceased to believe very much, in what they are doing. The principal tool for the work of pastoral ministry is ones own heart, ones own faith, and ones own journey of spiritual formation. One would be suspicious of a doctor who has read no medical book for twenty years and knows nothing of current medical practice. Intelligent Christians might also be suspicious of clergy who are forever engaged in something other than prayer, learning, and spiritual formation. It is *because* a priest or pastor has time for prayer, study, and reflection that his or her guidance of those in this complicated world's stress and strain, is likely to be worth having.

As an antidote to the maladies described above, Peterson suggests that pastors need to learn to work the “angles of ministry.” He describes what he means in this metaphor drawn from trigonometry: saying,

Most of what we see in a triangle is lines. The lines come in various proportions to each other but what determines the proportions and shape of the whole are the angles. The visible lines of pastoral work are preaching, teaching, and administration. The small angles of this ministry are prayer, Scripture, and spiritual direction.³

Experience has demonstrated that spiritual guidance and direction requires greater intensity and resolution than any other dimension of pastoral

² Henri J. M. Nouwen, *Creative Ministry* (New York: Doubleday & Doubleday, 1971), xx

³ Eugene H. Peterson, *Working the Angles: The Shape of Pastoral Integrity* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 1987), 4-5

identity, and for no small reason: first, because spiritual direction, in one shape or another, has always formed a central component of Christian living; second, because it has, for too long, been either secularized or simply neglected among people of all Christian traditions; and third, because it can and should be a crucial model for doing ministry in today's world.

Biblical and Theological Foundations for Pastoral Identity as Spiritual Guidance and Direction

The goal of spiritual direction has always been the same as that of the Gospel itself: reconciliation with God, to lead people deeper and deeper into the struggle for the Christian life, which is toward wholeness and healing. The distinctly Christian approach to spiritual direction will be to influence deeper communion and reconciliation with God. This is the chief hallmark of any Christian pastoral ministry.

Biblically, this is focused on in the New Testament passage from the Apostle Paul's second letter to the Corinthians:

Now all these things are from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ, and gave us the ministry of reconciliation, namely that God was in Christ, reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and entrusting to us the message of reconciliation. So we are ambassadors for Christ, God making his appeal through us. We beseech you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God.⁴

Spiritual direction, as a particular form of ministry, must concentrate on this primary task given to us by God. Following this line of thought, the task of pastoral ministry in general, and spiritual direction in particular, becomes seeking

⁴ 2 Cor 5 18-20

reconciliation. By removing the various obstacles which have led us astray into alien life paths, we open up to the inner way which leads to God and the fullness of life. What we need, what has always been needed, in the pastoral vocation is a process capable of leading people through the impediments of sin toward that wholeness which is ours in Christ. Spiritual direction, as a focus for pastoral identity, cannot be understood outside the global task of the church's ministry of reconciliation.

Christian faith is an imitative faith. The life of Jesus Christ must be seen and held as the unique model worthy of imitation for Christians. "Follow me" may be the simplest description of Christian spirituality that exists anywhere, but the simplicity is deceptive. That Jesus was a teacher, mentor, and discipler of others is well documented in the Gospels. This strategy of spiritual mentoring for the church is further articulated by Jesus in the Great Commission: "Go therefore and make disciples of all nations... teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you."⁵

The kind of teaching and mentoring Jesus provided his students and apprentices with assumed a relationship that invested life in the learner. The teaching was not just conceptual, but more so it was lived, experienced, tasted, and touched by the ones being guided and directed into life in the Kingdom of God.

Consider an example of spiritual guidance from the story of Jesus and the Samaritan woman at the well. Jesus violates social and cultural rules by

⁵ Matt 28 19-20

speaking to her; a proper Jew would have avoided a Samaritan and a proper rabbi would have avoided all contact with women. Yet Jesus responds to the woman's needs.

Jesus encounters her directly by asking for a drink of water. He continues to pay attention to what she says and does, and He tells her the hard truth about herself. He challenges her despite her efforts to turn the conversation in a less personal direction. When Jesus says, "You have five husbands, and the one you are now living with is not your husband,"⁶ she tries to turn the conversation to institutional practices. Ultimately, Jesus turns her life around with His persistent, yet loving interaction with her. She goes joyfully into the city proclaiming, "Come and see a man who told me everything I have ever done."⁷

Jesus was a masterful spiritual guide. He paid attention to the disciples, held them in prayer, and spoke the truth that enabled their understanding of the real meaning of their lives. His followers learned well.

The Apostle Paul was a strong teacher and spiritual director to the fledging churches he established. He called himself a "father through the Gospel" to his Corinthian congregation.⁸

In the book of Acts, a man named Phillip exemplified the role of spiritual director as he came along side a public official, a man who was bewildered reading the scriptures: "Do you understand what you are reading? How can I, unless someone guides me?"⁹

⁶ John 4 18

⁷ John 4 29

⁸ 1 Corinthians 4 15

⁹ Acts 8 30-31

Spiritual formation (education of the heart) requires more than instruction. It requires a mentorship of the heart, that is, a relationship with a teacher of life who can convey a way of life that is formed in Jesus Christ. As Thomas Merton wrote:

The whole purpose of spiritual direction is to penetrate beneath the surface of a man's life, to get behind the face of conventional gestures and attitudes which he presents to the world, and to bring out his inner spiritual freedom, his inmost truth, which is what we call the likeness of Christ in his soul.¹⁰

The modern dichotomies, which permit the question of "ministry and spirituality," lie at the root of our problem. There needs to be a reconstruction of pastoral and priestly spirituality. We turn now to some of the elements of this reconstruction that will be essential.

Concerning the Inner Life: Pastoral Identity in the Anglican Tradition

The most representative example of classical pastoral identity in the Anglican tradition is expressed by the 100th Archbishop of Canterbury, Michael Ramsey's book, *The Christian Priest Today*. Ramsey weaves together the scriptural exhortations to mission, witness, and reconciliation together with the contemplative and sacrificial elements of the tradition to forge a vision of the priest for the modern and post-modern world as he says: "We are called, near to Jesus and with Jesus and in Jesus, *to be with God with the people on your heart.*"¹¹

¹⁰ Thomas Merton, *Spiritual Direction and Meditation* (Collegeville, Minn: Order of St. Benedict Press, 1960), 16.

¹¹ Michael Ramsey, *The Christian Priest Today* (Boston, Massachusetts: Cowley Publications, 1987), 14.

In other words, pastoral identity means, above all, to be a person of honest prayer. Being with God with the people on your heart is the call, and the ground from which it is done is identification with Jesus in the Kingdom of God. Jesus died, rose again, and ascended into heaven. The disciples now believed that He, exalted as He was in the Father's glory, was still near to them, sharing, and bearing their lives, as in the former days. This conviction underlies the imagery in the letter to the Hebrews, of Jesus, the great high priest whose intercession continues: "*He always lives to make intercession for them.*"¹²

Jesus is with the Father. He is with him in the intimate response of his obedient humanity, and He is with him as one who bears us all upon his heart. He is our friend, our companion, our Savior, our priest.

Amid the contemporary tensions between traditional and newer forms of secular spirituality, it is enormously helpful to recapture the simplest meaning of Christ's high priestly intercession. This is to be with God for others. It is the "being with" in synergy with the Lord from which the power of our pastoral identity is found. The priest is called, before all things, to be a Christian soul given to prayer. This means a priest cultivates the disciplined practice of the presence of God, which in the Anglican rule of life is to be centered in the Eucharist and grounded in the praying of daily office and silence. Out of this continued development of the inward spiritual life come the fruits and works of priesthood and ministry.

¹² Hebrews 7:25

This union with God in the sacraments, in personal prayer, and in self-giving among people is inevitably bound to the pursuit of holiness.

We share by our one baptism, a single spirituality, laity and ordained alike.

As Dietrich Bonhoeffer maintained:

The ordained ministry comes neither before nor after, neither above nor beneath the congregation, but within and together with it. One is not the subject of the other—the subject of both is the Holy Spirit—nor is one the object of the other, for that would mean that the office of ministry was at the mercy of the communal spirit or, alternatively, that the congregation was deprived of its right to judge doctrine.¹³

In this relationship, imbued by the Spirit, any seeming contradiction between the ministry of the laity and that of ordained persons dissolves.

Those called out to be pastors have a special responsibility to be, and reflect what common spirituality demands within this vocation. Spirituality for ministry of the ordained is distinct, though not disconnected, from the whole spirituality of the people of God. It is so because it is public, because it is nurtured in the awesome privilege and responsibility of presiding in the Eucharistic community through both the proclamation of the word and the celebration of the sacraments.

Anglican spirituality is formed, in both pastor and people, by worship with the one *Book of Common Prayer*. The prayer book includes in varying amounts, Holy Scripture, the liturgical traditions of the Catholic centuries, reformed over the last four hundred years, personal devotions set firmly within a public liturgical context.

¹³ From Bonhoeffer's lectures while he was dean of the Finkwalde seminary in Eberhard Bethge, *Dietrich Bonhoeffer: A Biography* (revised ed., Minneapolis: Fortress, 2000), 446

Anglican Spiritual Direction

No tradition of spiritual direction stands alone. The Episcopal Church and the Anglican Communion's inheritance in this area, as in so many others, draws on a number of sources beyond its own limits. There are deep currents of influence from Eastern and Western Christianity both before and after the Reformation. Clearly, any tradition in the realm of spirituality and of spiritual direction draws on a wide range of insights and sources. There is, however, a benefit in trying to outline what has distinguished the Anglican way, and marks it out as something that is wise and helpful and something to give thanks to God for. This is not a claim to exclusivity for the Anglican way, or to say it is better than any other. It is simply to try to present it as one branch in the tree whose roots reach to the one great river of the Holy Spirit.

To begin, it is necessary to understand the English pastoral tradition. The way to discover what the distinctive model of pastoral ministry is in the Anglican tradition, is to study the *Book of Common Prayer*. Phrases from the bishop's exhortation in the Ordering of Priests from the first and the current *Book of Common Prayer* of the Episcopal Church echo the primary importance of spiritual guidance and direction:

Have in remembrance into how high a Dignity, and to how weighty an Office and Charge ye are called: that is to say, to be Messengers, the Watchmen, the Pastors, and the Stewards of the Lord; to teach, and to premonish, to feed and provide for the Lord's family; to seek for Christ's sheep, that are dispersed abroad and for his children in the midst of this naughty world, that they may be saved through Christ forever.

See that you never cease your labor, your care and diligence, until you have done all that lieth in you, according to your bounden duty, to bring all such as are or shall be committed to your charge, unto that agreement in

the faith and knowledge of God, and to that ripeness and perfectness of age in Christ, that there be no place left among you, either for error in religion, or for viciousness in life.¹⁴

As a priest, it will be your task to proclaim by word and deed the Gospel of Jesus Christ, and to fashion your life in accordance with its precepts. You are to love and serve the people among whom you work, caring alike for young and old, strong and weak, rich and poor. You are to preach, to declare God's forgiveness to penitent sinners, to pronounce God's blessing, to share in the administration of Holy Baptism and in the celebration of the mysteries of Christ's Body and Blood.

In all that you do, you are to nourish Christ's people from the riches of his grace, and strengthen them to glorify God in this life and in the life to come.¹⁵

All that is contained in these statements is clearly the work of spiritual direction. That is to say, the object of Anglican pastoral ministry is the sanctification of the people of God. The image that recurs through the centuries is that of priest as shepherd, as spiritual guide, enabling growth, development, transformation, and maturity in Christ. To accompany people on their journey of faith, and to help them grow into the fullness of what God wants for them to become, is to be concerned with their openness to God and their response to God's invitation.

A Constant Danger to Pastoral Identity

The constant danger for those of us who enter the ranks of the ordained is that we take on a role, a professional religious role, which gradually obliterates the life of the soul. A pastor can become so diligent in being a pastor, in working for Jesus, that it crowds out the personal life of *living* for Jesus.

¹⁴ *The Book of Common Prayer 1928* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1952), 539

¹⁵ *The Book of Common Prayer* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990), 531

For those in sacramental traditions, the pastoral role is not simply a job, but an identity, a condition, and a sacramental state. One cannot shed it or be rid of it. Martin Thornton in the 1950s and 1960s spoke of "multitudinism,"¹⁶ the pastoral disease by which clergy rush about doing more and more, while the spiritual quality and intensity of the Christian community suffers neglect and ossifies. There is no way out of this syndrome except through the recovery of the symbolic and sacramental character of priesthood and the pastoral vocation. The stress therefore, needs to shift from skill and function to that of character formation, symbolic identity, and to the inwardness and spiritual substance of priesthood and the pastoral vocation. As the great Archbishop of Canterbury, Michael Ramsey wrote:

Amid the spiritual hunger of our times, when many whose souls are starved by activism and seeking guidance in the contemplation of God, a terrible judgment rests upon the priest who is unable to give help or guidance because he has ceased to be a man of prayer himself.¹⁷

This view reflects the pastor primarily as a practitioner rather than a functionary. As practitioner, the pastor is centrally involved with caring for souls -- for their being and becoming in God, individually and corporately. This care grows out of the pastor's own desire for the fulfillment of St. Paul's prayer: "May he give you the power through his Spirit for your hidden self to grow strong."¹⁸

An enormous weight of functionary expectations focused on tasks of institutional and social maintenance is placed on pastors. These tasks can

¹⁶ Martin Thornton, *Essays in Pastoral Reconstruction* (SPCK, 1956), 14.

¹⁷ Michael Ramsey, *The Charismatic Christ* (SPCK, 1974), 46.

¹⁸ Eph 3:16-19.

eclipse the heart of the pastor's calling to be a practitioner who models the values of the formation of the soul into Christlikeness. Often this sad situation is reinforced by the dominant values of the congregation. A mutual, unconscious complicity arises between pastor and people to avoid the truth of God, in the name of God. The people are not willing or yet graced to face the price of the gospel. That price involves relinquishing one's ego attempt to over-control, possess, and secure life. Only then can we live truly open to the liberating abundance and shared life promised us in Christ.

The pastor as a practitioner of spiritual guidance needs to approach ministry as a calling to attend to both this context of resistance and the liberating reverberations of God's Spirit among us. Such personal sensitivity will help the pastor tune in to what is most significant in the church's life and the pastor's own ministry: preaching, teaching, spiritual direction, counseling, meetings, prayer and faith sharing groups, sacramental rites, programs, and community outreach. Indeed, the pastor is at least an indirect spiritual guide through everything he or she does and is.

The process of deepening the church's life in Christ today requires that spiritual guidance be taken with great seriousness. Both clergy and laity are forever in danger of sinking too deeply into functional modes that cheat the pastor and the community of authentic spiritual practice. The best place for pastors to begin in this struggle is with themselves. Guidance for parish practice will emerge organically out of the pastor's deepening sensitivity to the Spirit's caring life moving in and through himself or herself and the faith community. The

forms of pastoral guidance will be manifold, but all authentic forms will be united by a single-hearted desire for fullness of life in the risen Christ. We turn now to the way of Ignatius of Loyola as one of the greatest models and exemplars of pastoral identity.

The Way of Ignatius of Loyola

There is great value for us in exploring and appraising the life of one of the greatest exemplars of pastoral ministry and spiritual discipline: Ignatius of Loyola. What is there in Ignatius of Loyola's life and his book *Spiritual Exercises*, which make them just as spiritually effective a medicine and an example for us as they were 450 years ago? What actually happens when we follow his way? What are the dynamics of spiritual exercise? These are the lines of inquiry we want to follow.

The burden of the succeeding parts of this chapter will be to distill the wisdom of Ignatius' vision and implementation of a dynamic spirituality that was ordered toward both personal spiritual growth and energetic apostolic endeavor. The book *Spiritual Exercises*, developed out of his personal conversion to Christ within the church and out of his work over two decades to evangelize others and reform their lives. The fruits of this examination of Loyola can add to the recovery of a pastoral identity that fulfills the Great Commission's emphasis upon making disciples, students of Jesus who are progressing in His life and likeness. For that recovery to happen, we must see that spiritual disciplines are a constituent of the Gospel. They are not optional. They are a means to acts of holiness and

righteousness. Dr. Willard makes the following confident assertion that rings with reality and truth:

My central claim is that we can become like Christ by doing one thing-by following him in the overall style of life he chose for himself. If we have faith in Christ, we must believe that he knew how to live. We can, through faith and grace, become like Christ by practicing the types of activities he engaged in, by arranging our whole lives around activities he himself practiced in order to remain constantly at home in the fellowship of His Father.¹⁹

The way of Ignatius is none other than a grace filled exposition and experience of this reality in the Kingdom of God.

Ignatius And Ministry: The Demands Of God's Life Within Us

There is a fundamental contribution which spiritual disciplines and exercises make to the tasks of leading others into the spiritual life. Externally, the motivation for pastoral ministry comes from our Lord's mandate in the Great Commission, and fidelity to the task of making disciples. *There is more.* The inner basis and energy for pastoral ministry are found in our experience of God's life and the dynamics that experience uncovers in our lives. As Dallas Willard says: "Ministry is not coping or grinding it out. We minister from the life we have in the Kingdom. How to enrich this life to the full means discipleship, apprenticeship. Do I see myself in this way? Then follow Him in his practices."²⁰

This means that the primary work we face, if we want to be pastors who induct others into the spiritual life, is not how much energy we give to reaching

¹⁹ Dallas Willard *The Spirit of the Disciplines* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1988), 9

²⁰ From a lecture by Dallas Willard, *Spirituality and Ministry*, Colorado Springs, July 1994

out to other people to tell them about the Gospel, *but first to learn to attend more fully to the demands of God's unending kind of life within us*. We need to pay attention to how God's grace transforms us and opens the whole of the field of our lives, to the divine life. Our "whole self, whole life"²¹ is the primary way of making Christ known.

The fullness of His life in people is a primary instrument of evangelization. By the way we live our lives, by our actions, motivations, and values, we should stir up irresistible questions in the hearts of those who see how we live. These questions might be: Why are they like this? Why do they live this way? What or who is it that inspires them?

The way of Ignatius, with his companions and friends in the Lord, reflected and enabled this dynamic of liberating attraction very powerfully. Because they were centered upon the fascination with Jesus and the invitation to apprentice themselves to his ways of dealing with people and responding to life, they evoked desires and questions in others. The fresh and zealous spirit of Ignatius and his companions and the tenor of thought in the book *Spiritual Exercises*, flowed into their conversations, preaching, and everything they did. Their enthusiasm resulted in a quickly expanding ministry and an extraordinary growth in number of recruits. By the time Ignatius died in 1556, his Society of Jesus numbered approximately one thousand members.

While he was at Manresa, Ignatius came under the influence of a centuries old way of living an interior life aided by what were explicitly called "spiritual exercises." By Ignatius's time, exercises (which involved the use of

²¹ Ibid

disciplines), had come to apply to an organized scheme of growth in the interior life.

The first mark on the copy of the book *Spiritual Exercises*, is this symbol: IHS. The letters, used as the monogram of the Company of Jesus, abbreviates the Greek form of Jesus' name, IESOUS. It is at the top of the page to affirm the setting in which the exercises proceed. They do not begin in theology, or begin in stoicism and end in mysticism. The *Spiritual Exercises* begin and end in life in Christ. They are a structured religious experience. People are searching in our contemporary culture for freedom and for meaning, and much non-Christian spirituality is in vogue. Dallas Willard makes this clarification:

Much modern thinking views spirituality as simply a kind of "interiority," the idea that there is an inside to the human being, and that this is the place where contact is made with the transcendental. In this view, spirituality is essentially a human dimension. Christian spirituality is centered in the idea of a transcendent life, "being born from above," as the New Testament puts it. This idea of spiritual life carries with it notions like accountability, judgment, the need for justice and so on. These concepts are less popular, and they certainly are more difficult, than a conception of spirituality that simply focuses on one's inner life.²²

As an example, I find that many people in my congregation have no hesitancy to look for freedom through structured experiences of psychiatric counsel, of twelve-step programs, and of human empowerment workshops. Yet, when the liturgical season of Lent arrives, with its call to structured use of spiritual disciplines for forty days, they tend to fear this time as repressive and constricting. Yet as you pray through the exercises, or as you observe a Holy

²² Dallas Willard. "Conversations with Philosopher Dallas Willard." interview by John Ortberg. *Christianity Today*, March 1995

Lent, you find that they can elicit a profound human freedom and a penetrating experience of God.

This is what Ignatius hoped to help people to do. Consider *the first explanation* in the introductory notes:

By the term Spiritual Exercises we mean every method of examination of conscience, meditation, contemplation, vocal or mental prayer, and other spiritual activities, such as will be mentioned later. For, just as taking a walk, traveling on foot, and running are physical exercises, so is the name of spiritual exercises given to any means of preparing and disposing our soul to rid itself of all its disordered affections and then, after their removal, of seeking and finding God's will in *the ordering of our life for the salvation of our soul*.²³

What then are the dynamics inherent in the process and experience of Ignatius' approach to spiritual disciplines?

The Condition and Source of Desire: Longing For God

The Exercises are a way to find God, and in finding God to find his will. Ignatius states from the outset that to find God's will one must be free from all disordered attachments. Spiritual exercises of whatever kind presuppose the presence of desire.

This *condition of desire* can exist at many levels. For some it may be deep and explicit: "I want God, but I do not know how to find Him." It is not our desire that makes this happen, but His. He longs *through* our hearts. Our insufficiency and our forgetting to long for him are the fruits of disordered desire and attachments. Often, when people tell me that they long for God, I know that it is

²³ See 1 Timothy 4 7-8

God who is seeking them himself, creating the desire; he is on the inside of the longing.

This desire can be present in a thousand appearances in a congregation, all the way to an implicit longing that is expressed in words like, "I am uneasy, restless, and unfulfilled." It may simply be a barely expressed hope to find some peace. It all may simply be a masking of a real desire for God.

Jesus apparently recognized the *condition of desire* in the response to the message of the Kingdom in the lives of his hearers. The *Parable of the Sower*,²⁴ with its various conditions of soils (interior life), demonstrates this insight that Ignatius continually addresses in his meditations.

What Ignatius does in his exercises is take people where they are, patiently staying with them, and slowly uncovering the layers of debris that cover the fragile grace of desire. This process enables each person to disclose the underlying desire that is given by grace. When the person is ready, they are invited to "make some exercises in accordance with the progress made and adapted to the needs of the soul so moved."²⁵

The wisdom of this approach for pastoral ministry as spiritual guidance and the cure of souls seems evident enough. One wonders how we, in our age of hurry and haste, are quick to lead a person through the "four spiritual laws" (or some other quick fix) without any concern to the condition of desire in the person's heart. Superficiality is the curse of our age.

²⁴ Matthew 13 1ff

²⁵ The seventeenth introductory explanation at the beginning of the *Spiritual Exercises*

The way of Ignatius is to first begin to free the desire and longing for God, and as this desire begins to grow, harnessing it to further growth, always with a view to the end of a life in union with the Lord: "The greater the love the greater the desire. And desire in some sort prepares and opens the one who desires to receive the one who is desired."²⁶

Again, as Dr. Willard suggests, "we must ravish them with the blessings of the Kingdom,"²⁷ i.e. reveal their true desire.

It is good to remind ourselves in pastoral ministry that the desire for God is somehow and somewhere, present in those we are called to minister to, however disfigured. In our own settings, this conceivably might move us more to compassion than to anger and frustration at the lack of commitment. Jesus loved the rich young ruler who nevertheless walked away from discipleship because of his disordered attachments. Desire was there, but it was disordered and confused. There are many like this, yet Ignatius helps us to see a pastoral strategy to reach them, *by helping them disclose their true desires*. He touches a principle of growth that is not simply in his texts, but in the reality that the text expresses.

For example, the *Principle and Foundation*, which is given to the exercitant to meditate on for the first few days of the thirty-day retreat, plants a seed of opening. It begins to disclose the ambiguity of our desires, the darkness in our hearts, our moral impotence, and the feelings that can lead us to revolt or

²⁶ St. Thomas Aquinas, exact source unknown

²⁷ Dallas Willard, "Rethinking Evangelism," *Cutting Edge* (Winter 2001)

revulsion. We are not free. We can begin to desire to be, for God wants us to be. However, it is necessary to see where we truly are.

When Ignatius first began helping someone, he would urge the use of the "Examen of Conscience." He brought out this method to help as many people as possible, people whom he could not or would not invite through the rest of the Exercises. In the *First Week*, meditations and exercises are a contemplation upon our sins and the use of the Examination of Conscience. It is the same dynamic as that of the Gospel, of those who encounter Christ: "Repent and believe the Good News."²⁸

Integral to a spirituality of pastoral ministry is the daily exercise of discernment in a person's life. John Wesley advised the morning and evening hours for such a review:

Be serious and frequent in the examination of your heart and life.....Every evening review your carriage through the day; what you have done or thought that was unbecoming to your character; whether your heart has been instant upon religion and indifferent to the world.....exercise yourself unto godliness.²⁹

The discovery and naming of obstacles to the Spirit is perhaps the hardest step in the process of self-knowledge and often long in coming. Examination of conscience enables us to become aware of our habitual motivation; it can be at the heart of improving our responsiveness to the Spirit in daily life. It is an intrinsic requirement of love as a *precondition of growth in desire*.

Ignatius knew that the more we know about human nature and about

²⁸ David Lonsdale *Eyes to See Ears to Hear* (New York: Orbis Books, 2000), 124

²⁹ Frederick C. Gill, *Through The Year with Wesley* (Nashville: The Upper Room, 1983)

ourselves, the more we will be made aware that there are undiagnosed imprisonments, or bondage's we do not know. We will have to learn to wait in freedom for the time when God sees that we are able to face them. There will never be a time when we will not need to surrender our weakness to the power of Christ by whose stripes we are healed.

All of this takes place in the context of the disciplines of abstinence that are designed to free us from spiritually hurtful entanglements and wrong engagement of our lives. The disciplines of solitude and silence are foundational to intensive spiritual life, and the purifying of our core desire. Dr. Willard defined solitude as electing to step free from human relationships for a lengthy period of time, in isolation or anonymity, to make room for occupation of our lives by God.³⁰ The benefits of solitude are many. We find that the world does not rest on our shoulders. We have time to clear the storms of life and mind for decision and "election." We rediscover what it is God is calling us to do.

The following part of a meditation on "The Standard of Christ" speaks to a profound healing of spiritual desire:

Consider the address which Christ our Lord makes to all his servants and friends whom he is sending on expedition. He recommends that they endeavor to aid all persons, by attracting them, first, to the most perfect spiritual poverty and also, if the Divine Majesty should be served and should wish to choose them for it, even to no less a degree of actual poverty; and second, by attracting them to a *desire of reproaches and contempt, since from these result humility*.³¹

³⁰ Dallas Willard, Lecture from "Spirituality and Ministry" Fuller Seminary, 21 July 1994

³¹ Poverty, in its profound sense for Ignatius, is our total emptiness before God and our dependence upon him for any and all spiritual progress. It would be wrong to imply only material poverty, although for Ignatius, this was a discipline he observed in the traditional vows of monastic life.

It is hard to desire humility and poverty of spirit, obscurity and benign respect, in a world obsessed with possessions and positions. It is hard to choose a pauper's station in life, when everyone around us is scrambling for upward mobility. Indeed the temptations amongst clergy are not for money, but for admiration, respect, adulation, prestige, and power. These are riches that must be guarded against, if we are to experience freedom for the glory of God. The desire for true humility in spirit is planted in the deep soil of our inner being, but so is the desire to be popular or magnificent. These conflicting desires and motives reside side by side in our deepest interiority, and they do battle with each other seeking each to gain ascendancy over the other. No wonder we feel distracted and torn.

The meditations of Ignatius in this regard can be heavy to bear. Again, what is our orientation? What motivates our ministry: "If you are uncertain of which two paths to take, choose the one on which the shadow of the Cross falls."³²

A deepened appreciation for the role of desire in the formation of spiritual life is at the heart of why the *Spiritual Exercises* have been so sound a tool for inducting people into life with Christ. Their overall dynamic involves a retreat in a journey of transformation that begins in the foundational experience of being loved unconditionally by God and recognizing one's true desire. The various meditations and contemplations aim at helping the retreatant grow both in self-identity and in the experience of God through a gradual ordering and

³² Rupert Hart-Davis, *Hugh Walpole A Biography* (New York: Harper & Row, 1981), 81

transforming of the energies, affections, and desires of one's life. Touched by God's love, the retreatant enters into the mystery of grace and sin, having tasted the freedom of forgiveness, contemplatively accompanies Christ in his ministry in order to learn to choose as Christ chooses. The concrete election or vocation that emerges as fruit of the spiritual exercises can then enable one to become a co-laborer with God for the salvation of God's world. Eliciting great desires is at the heart of the experience of the *Spiritual Exercises*.

Applications of the Way of Ignatius to Pastoral Ministry

Recovering pastoral identity, in light of the example of Ignatius of Loyola, requires that the goal of our use of spiritual disciplines is a crucial and necessary means toward Christian maturity and holiness of life. This is not the same as psychological maturity, although that certainly is involved. The claim here is that this theological goal of pastoral ministry, so effectively demonstrated in the ministry of Ignatius of Loyola, will bring us into collision with prevailing values of "professional ministry" and church life today. It will also bring us into collision with much that passes for Christianity and for spirituality in our society. To be spiritual at all is to share in Christ's risen life, and to be formed in him anew. Spirituality is inseparable from this solidarity in Christ. The sad fact is that a church may grow numerically and decline spiritually if there is no increase in spiritual maturity.

While the vision of pastoral ministry given by Ignatius is one that thrills our hearts, at the same time we know from experience that there are some very

major obstacles in the way of locating spiritual disciplines at the center of our ministry.

In the first place, to do so runs counter to the prevailing models and emphases in ministry and pastoral theology, and it can be expected to meet with some resistance by those at the receiving end of pastoral practice, the religious consumers. Old traditions die hard. There is a strong tendency in most churches to see the ministry only in professional terms. The care of souls is one thing. *Making a parish a howling success is another!* Pastors quickly discover that prayer, study, and offering spiritual direction are hardly noticed or rewarded by those responsible for clergy placement.

Secondly, to place training and spiritual disciplines at the center of ministry is to acknowledge that attention to the formation and the building up of the Body of Christ demands faithfulness and not necessarily success. Are we willing to pay that price? Many church leaders do not place a priority on spirituality and spiritual formation because the denominational agencies responsible for the oversight of clergy are largely disinterested in the topic.

The passion for success constantly becomes a spiritual problem in the lives of God's servants today. To want to succeed is natural and not wrong in and of itself, but the problem is that our ideas of success are usually much more self-serving and prideful than Ignatius' dictum of "all things to the greater glory and praise of God." The way of health and humility is for us to admit to ourselves that in the final analysis we do not and cannot know the measure of our success as God sees it. The religion of faithfulness rather than the idolatry of achievement is

the way of God's servant. Whether we have been appointed to succeed we do not know, but we do know that we are called to be faithful to the word of our God in all things. As Dallas Willard says:

An awakened pastor is humble and ready to attempt God's work with an utter dependence upon God. Awakened pastors realize the work is not theirs.... Wherever we are--in our family, in our community, in our education, even in our culture, no matter how small or despised that place may be, that is where God can use us and bless us. We may not achieve the dreams of our youth, but we can be sure God will bring us to the dreams he has for us.³³

Though it may lead to poverty or lack of recognition in the eyes of other leaders, pastors must take seriously the challenge of forming congregations in an authentic Christian spirituality.

What, then, might be some practical requirements of the kind of reversal of priorities Ignatius of Loyola's example reveals? I will suggest at least the following two prerogatives.

First, we need to recover a view of ministry that *stresses reliance upon the presence of Jesus and his Kingdom with us*, out of our experience of God and His word, more than professional, managerial and organizational skills. These latter skills are useful and needed, but their tendency is to exclude transcendence. Ignatius' ministry was one of a director of souls, a ministry of illumination, pointing beyond the self to the glory of God. His was truly a ministry of injecting, both by word and by deed, the reality, substance and life of the Kingdom into human life and relationships.

³³ Dallas Willard, *Wide Awake: Rousing Drowsy Christians from Spiritual Slumber* in an interview in Leadership Journal Fall, 1994

Secondly, this reliance upon the Lord who is always with us and always near us, is not always easy. It requires discipline. The practice of the constant presence of Christ is defined by St. Paul in this way: "We fix our eyes not on what is seen, but on what is unseen. For what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is eternal."³⁴

The practice of His presence is the discipline of calling to mind the truth that God is with us. As C.S. Lewis writes, "What is concrete but immaterial can be kept in view only by painful effort."³⁵ This is very true and can have incredible impetus for ministry.

The founding and development of the Society of Jesus between 1540 and 1556 was accompanied by an extraordinary outburst of energy and enthusiasm among its members, which led them into a wide range of mission and ministry. We cannot simply argue that because Ignatius did X, Y and Z, being faithful to Ignatius today simply means imitating those actions as closely as possible. That's not the point. What we are saying is that pastoral ministry, and ministry for the Christian has an inner, spiritual dimension. It is something that engages us at all levels; it is incarnation as we become temples of the Holy Spirit.³⁶ It was this dynamic which Ignatius so romantically (not excessively) modeled.

In the model which Ignatius gives us, ministry and mission may usefully be seen as a continuing interaction between several different but interrelated factors: 1) the experience of making the *Spiritual Exercises* or a planned use of

³⁴ 2 Corinthians 4:18

³⁵ C. S. Lewis *Letters to Malcolm: Chiefly on Prayer* (New York: Harcourt, Brace and World, 1963), 114

³⁶ 1 Corinthians 6:12-20

the spiritual disciplines; 2) the commitment and momentum that flow from this experience; 3) a realistic appraisal of our gifts and resources; 4) an awareness of the needs in the field of life in which we find ourselves; 5) and a capacity to make discerning choices in the path of the Gospel, which is also fostered by Ignatius's rules for discernment.

Again, consider the initial stages of the book *Spiritual Exercises* in offering several gifts of grace that prepare for the recognition and acceptance of mission and ministry. They include a more complete appreciation of God's love, a deepening understanding, with gratitude, of oneself and one's gifts as a child of God, an awareness of the abuses of love which constitute sin in our lives and in the world, and a profoundly joyful recognition of the forgiveness and reconciliation offered in Jesus.

In the unfolding *Weeks* (the time periods in the process of the *Spiritual Exercises*), one is encouraged to determine, as far as can be done, what Jesus is inviting us to do. What does it mean for me at this present time to follow Jesus? How am I in reality to play my part in establishing and sustaining the reign of God? What is the "call of the King?"

As a pastor, it is this vision of Christ and his Kingdom that I must make vivid to the people I serve, rather than successfully running a church. Through proclamation and teaching, we as pastors, help our congregations to recognize and contemplate God's gifts to us. Then, moved by gratitude and love, we in our turn can make an offering to God of what we have received from God. In matters of the Spirit, it does the congregation little good if the pastor attempts to

represent something he or she has not accepted as normative for his or her own life. Mother Teresa of Calcutta offers this wise advice:

Just allow people to see Jesus in you; to see how you pray, to see how you lead a pure life, to see how you deal with your family, to see how much peace there is in your family. Then you can look them straight in their eyes and say, "This is the way." You speak from life, you speak by experience.³⁷

Secondly, we need to concentrate on building and nourishing a remnant, and to reject statistical notions of church growth. Growth in and of itself is not a value. In our concern with growth, we need to seek inner qualitative growth, the growth of the committed minority who can be salt to the world. If the salt loses its savor, how can its saltiness be restored?

An uncritical activism is not the answer. *The effects of trying to be omniscient in ministry are disastrous.* The incidences of clergy breakdowns, of stress diseases and exhaustion, and of compulsive work leading to substance abuse or sexual misconduct present a growing problem. Dallas Willard observes, "Burnout occurs when the body is stretched beyond its capacities and is not supernaturally sustained. A true spirituality is honest about human limitations and about God not intervening in the given case."³⁸

The spiritual direction of a "remnant," that is, the people that are ready and who have heard the voice of the Good Shepherd, must be our primary concern. Why should the most anxious and dependent people call all the shots? Pathology arises in relation to what others permit! Our clarity as pastoral leaders is more

³⁷ Mother Teresa *Words to Love By* (Notre Dame: Ave Maria Press, 1983), 15

³⁸ Dallas Willard *from* lecture in Colorado Springs, July 1994

important than a gushy empathy. Why should there be adaptation toward the immature and recalcitrant in every system? It is a failure of nerve. To bring this change in our ministry we need to know where we are going and have a clear vision for our own lives. Here is a test of success in ministry: Do you wake up in the morning, loving your work? Where is the joy of the Lord?

Pastoral guidance and direction of the remnant will require leading them into ascetical disciplines that should characterize a disciple of Jesus. A vast gulf sometimes exists between the spirituality espoused by a congregation and the spirituality lived out by the members. The total sum of the church's activities does not necessarily correlate to a vigorous spirituality in the scriptural tradition. If the congregation is to journey toward a deeper and more intimate relationship with the loving Lord, the pastor and the remnant must set the tone. The greatest resource for this is the example and transparent experience of the pastor. Out of his or her own spiritual journey, the pastor is able to offer spiritual direction to others whom the Spirit calls to the spiritual pilgrimage.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I have labored to demonstrate the guiding wisdom of St. Ignatius of Loyola for a recovery of pastoral identity today. At the center of pastoral ministry is the person and reality of Jesus and his invitation to take upon us the "easy yoke," the way of practicing spiritual disciplines and exercises, to the end that we may enlarge our experience of and our capacity to engage the Kingdom of God.

To be the spiritual companion and guide for a congregation is perhaps a pastor's highest calling and privilege. Out of our own encounter with spiritual disciplines, we will see ourselves in a new light and the service and imperatives to which God is calling us. I close with one of the most famous prayers of Ignatius, the "Take and Receive" prayer (*Suscipe*). It comes at the end of the Exercises and expresses the fruits of uncovering pure spiritual desire for the Lord and for His Kingdom.

Take, Lord, and receive all my liberty, my memory, my understanding, and all my will, all that I have and possess. You, Lord, have given all that to me. I now give it back to you, O Lord. All of it is yours. Dispose of it according to your will. Give me love of yourself along with your grace, *for that is enough for me*. - Ignatius of Loyola⁴⁰

⁴⁰ Lonsdale. *Eyes to see Ears to Hear*. 134

CHAPTER THREE
THE COMMUNITY: MISSION AND JOHNSON COUNTY, KANSAS

Introduction

The recovery of pastoral identity and the spiritual formation of a congregation require sustained and critical thinking about the changing culture of our country and the changing context of ministry. The primary task for church leaders is to understand what it takes to be effective in engaging the world around us with the claims of Christ.

We need to come to grips with the epochal change as our culture transitions from a modern world to a postmodern world. Secondly, we have to come to terms with the fact that we live in a post-Christian culture. This means we have to approach our culture with a missionary strategy as though we were presenting the gospel for the first time.

The changes in the church's context have been dramatic and the Episcopal Church, in turn, must navigate this considerably if it is to grow (or even to survive, some would say).

Social context and wider organizational forces have a potent bearing on the local congregation's life. For example, it is more and more acknowledged that the under-fifty population carefully chooses membership, loyalty, and

commitment. It is pointed out that the majority of baby boomers that dropped out of church have stayed out. They did not expose their children to church, and now their children are having children. We must challenge the "they will come back" thinking of the church. Most haven't come back. In addition, their children cannot come back, because they have never been there before. If they do come they will need infinitely more help and explanation than a polite usher handing them a service bulletin. Some may or may not know about Jesus. Some may or may not be aware of their own spirituality. Some may or may not know what drew them to the church for the first time or why we are inviting them.

Over the past fifty years, the Episcopal Church has changed in many ways. Its place in society and its identity as a mainline denomination are uncertain because of the extent to which they are being redefined. Congregations confront a rapidly changing social environment. These cultural trends greatly impact all ministries as they strive to maintain some balance between the need to adapt and the need to retain the essence of our professed traditions and faith. Church leaders must assess these realities in order to prepare effectively for the future.

Episcopal congregations are religious organizations that were founded at a specific place and time. They exist as unique incarnations of the church and minister to people in their surrounding communities. Understanding our context makes us more willing to make the transitional changes necessary to meet the community in the future.

Where We Are: Community and Socio-Economic Factors

St. Michael's parish is located in the city of Mission, in Johnson County, Kansas, one of America's most rapidly growing and dynamic communities. It lies at the heart of the nation in the Greater Kansas City metropolitan area and encompasses twenty-one cities. The largest of these communities is Overland Park, which borders Mission.

A good summary of demographic information has been obtained through Johnson County Community College.¹ Some of the more important factors that will impact Saint Michael and All Angels in the immediate future are identified in this profile.

Johnson County lies at the heart of the nation and possesses all the ingredients necessary to economic growth and success. The County boasts nationally ranked schools, a low crime rate, high quality neighborhoods, a low cost of living, and a variety of cultural and entertainment amenities. This high quality of life and unsurpassed business environment attracts an average of 10,000 new residents and 15,000 new jobs each year. Half of the Fortune 100 and over one-third of the Fortune 500 firms have operations in Johnson County. When completed, Sprint Corporation's World Headquarters Campus currently under construction in Johnson County will house 14,500 employees and,

¹ The data for the analysis in this section of the paper is from Johnson County Community College Office of Institutional Research. *Profile of Johnson County, Kansas*. May 2000

according to Sprint Chairman Bill Esrey, will be the largest center of operations for WorldCom when the Sprint/WorldCom merger is completed. Johnson County is a diverse community with a strong Midwest work ethic. The county's population growth has gone hand-in-hand with its rapid economic growth. This growth is further evidence that leads to the conclusion, which is shared by national leaders and economists as well as local leaders, that Johnson County is a prime choice for both individuals and business.

The county and its twenty-one incorporated cities and nine townships continue to work together to ensure that the necessary infrastructure improvements are in place to accommodate further growth. Currently slightly over half of the 477 square miles of land in the County remains in farmland, only a third is urbanized, and the remainder is predominantly natural woodland. Johnson County is comprised of gently undulating terrain ranging in elevation from 742 feet above sea level near its northern border along the Kansas River to 1,130 feet in the south central part of the county. Kansas City is the nation's largest metropolitan area to meet all Environmental Protection Agency ambient air quality standards.

Johnson County residents tend to be rather conservative and regularly send Republican representatives to Congress. Of the 258,000 registered voters in the County in 1997, 48% were registered as Republicans, 21% as Democrats, and 31% as Independents.

Population

Johnson County's current population is estimated to be approximately 450,000 and is projected to reach well over half a million by 2005. The county's population growth accounted for 53% of the total increase in the eleven county Kansas City Metropolitan Statistical Area (MSA) and 55% of the increase in the entire State of Kansas last year.

In 1997, it was estimated that over 95% of Johnson County residents were white (including 3% Hispanics), compared to 85% white for the Greater Kansas City area as a whole. Johnson County's population is comprised of slightly more females than males (51% vs. 49%), and only 9% of County residents were estimated to be over the age of 65 at that time, compared to 11% of residents in the Greater Kansas City area as a whole. The median age has been increasing for Johnson County residents, however, going from 32.8 years in 1990 to an estimated 35.3 years in 1998. The greatest concentration of elderly in Johnson County can be found in the northeast quadrant, while younger residents are located in the southern part of the County.

Percentage of Current Year Population by Birth Years in Johnson County

The population trends of Johnson County by generations fall into these following categories:

Table 1. Percentage of current population by birth years in Johnson County

Millenials (1982 to 2001)	33%	29.6%
Survivors (1961 to 1981)	21%	26.3%
Boomers (1943 to 1960)	32%	27.0%
Silents (1925 to 1942)	11%	11.1%
Builders (before 1925)	4%	6.1%
The percentage of Projected 5-Year Population trends are:		
Gen Z (born after 2001)	7%	6.7%
Millenials	29%	27.6%
Survivors	23%	26.8%
Boomers	29%	25.7%
Silents *	11%	11.5%

This indicates that potentials for church membership are highest for continued growth and outreach to Baby Boomers and their Millennial children.²

Housing

According to the National Association of Home Builders, the Kansas City metropolitan area ranks fifteenth in affordability among the nation's 186 metropolitan regions, and first among those with a population in excess of one million. The median housing price in Johnson County was \$91,500 in 1999, and Coldwell Banker's most recent Home Price Comparison Index listed the average cost of a 2,200 square foot, four bedroom home in Johnson County at \$158,800, substantially less than the U.S. average for a comparable home. Johnson County

² Ibid

is also a very safe place to live and conduct business, with a violent crime rate well below the national average.

Income

Earnings of those working in Johnson County grew 126% between 1986 and 1996 and accounted for 22% of the total earnings of Kansas workers and 28% of earnings in the Kansas City MSA. Johnson County's per capita personal income of \$36,845 in 1997 ranked above 99% of the nation's counties.

Recreation

Johnson County residents are afforded a wide variety of recreational opportunities. Within the Kansas City Metropolitan Area there are over 50 museums and historic sites, 50,000 acres of park land, and sixty-two golf courses, twenty-two of which are in Johnson County. There are also fourteen Corps of Engineers regional lakes within a three-hour drive that provide abundant opportunities for boating, water skiing, fishing, and camping. Johnson County's library system is rated second best in the nation among libraries serving populations over 100,000 according to the Hennen's American Public Library Rating Index.³

³ "Johnson County." Internet on-line. Available from Hennen's American Public Library Rating Index, 2000. <<http://www.haplr-index.com>>. [May 2000].

Education

In its annual "Education Quotient," ranking of nearly 1,000 public school districts, *Expansion Management* magazine ranked Johnson County's public school districts among the best.⁴ The educational attainment of Johnson County residents is virtually unequalled anywhere, making the local labor pool one of the best in the United States. Of counties in the United States with populations above 250,000, Johnson County ranks first in percent age of adults with at least a high school education, fourth in percent age with at least a bachelor's degree, and 19th in percent age with a graduate or professional degree. Fully 93% of Johnson County residents twenty-five years or older have earned at least a high school diploma, 41% have earned at least a bachelor's degree, and 12% have earned a graduate or professional degree. There are currently thirty-five four-year colleges and universities and eleven two-year colleges offering classes in the region, ensuring many opportunities for those wishing to continue their education.

Employment

Employment opportunities are unusually good in Johnson County. The County added 16,873 jobs during 1998, and ranked 28th among all 3,140 counties nationally in job creation. The average unemployment rate in the County is approximately 2% and remains one of the lowest in the state.

⁴ Johnson County Community College Office of Institutional Research *Profile of Johnson County Kansas* May 2000

Johnson County's unsurpassed business environment and quality of life are the fuels that power one of the Midwest's principal economic engines.

Johnson County's sustained population and economic growth are testament to the fundamentally superior characteristics that make up the "Johnson County Advantage," and help explain why Johnson County's population and economic growth rank the County in the top third of *Fortune's* list of rapidly growing premier counties and in the top 2 percent of all counties nationally.

Some of the characteristics that attract and retain residents are, nationally ranked school districts (Shawnee Mission and Blue Valley), low crime rate, high quality neighborhoods, low cost of living, and cultural and entertainment amenities.

The area's system of roads and highways plays a prominent role in the success of businesses, as well as providing residents easy accessibility to some of the best colleges and universities in the nation, including Johnson County Community College and the University of Missouri, Kansas City. The University of Kansas in Lawrence, Kansas State University in Manhattan, and the University of Missouri at Columbia are short drives. Several major businesses have their headquarters in Johnson County, including Sprint, Lee Apparel, Yellow Freight, Applebee's, and Sealright.

Cultural highlights in the Kansas City area include the Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art, Kansas City Symphony, Lyric Opera, and a number of local theatres. Other entertainment highlights include the world renowned County Club Plaza area, and the newly expanded Kansas City Zoo.

The City of Mission

The city of Mission is located in northeastern Johnson County, Kansas, a suburban area of the Kansas City metropolitan area. This area of eastern Kansas ranks as one of the top growth areas in the State, and the country. The city lies adjacent to a major transportation corridor, Interstate 35, and is quite accessible to the entire metropolitan area. Mission boasts a population of slightly under 10,000, and covers an area of 2.75 miles, about 95 percent of which is developed.

Mission has traditionally been viewed as a bedroom community, offering convenient services, a small town atmosphere, comfortable living conditions, a family environment, and a variety of outstanding residential neighborhoods. An excellent standard of living exists in the city as a result of the active community spirit, an excellent school system, and a low crime rate.

The daytime population of the city is approximately 50,000. The population increases as a result of the large number of people who come into the city to work, conduct business, and to shop. These individuals work in a variety of businesses, most of which is retail. The Mission Center Mall is the hub of a great deal of retail activity, but the Johnson Drive corridor is the cornerstone of the city's retail activity. Other employers include car dealerships, health care facilities, laboratories, Shawnee Mission Main Post Office, Johnson County Offices, Water District No. 1 of Johnson County, State of Kansas Drivers License

Bureau, a number of very good restaurants and fast food establishments, grocery chains, and a host of other employers.

The city is land-locked into its present boundaries and very little land exists for development purposes. Therefore, the governing body has a strong focus on ensuring that our economic environment remains healthy and that existing businesses remain in the city. We, as a city, work closely with the Mission Area Chamber of Commerce and the Northeast Johnson County Development and Retention Council to attract new businesses which mesh well with and enhance our community. Financially, the city is very stable and the future outlook appears favorable.

Percept Study Profile of Ministry Area

A "First View 2002" report prepared by Percept Demographics lists four major areas of analysis of the Johnson County population: People and Place, Faces of Diversity, Community Issues, and Faith Interests. They have helped us see expected trends and perceived needs of the community. I have shared them with our leaders as a crash-course in understanding the setting and needs to which we are called to minister.

One continued trend is the increasing growth boom in Southern Johnson County, eight miles from the church. It is representative of much of the area, and we draw membership from the entire region. One community where the pastor lives is Leawood, Kansas.

Under "People and Place" details, currently, there are 19,323 people residing in this area. This represents an increase of 16,504 or 585.5 percent since 1980. During the same period of time, the United States as a whole grew by 25.4 percent. Between 2002 and 2007, the population is projected to increase by 13.2 percent or 2,552 additional people. During the same period, the United States population is projected to grow by 4.3 percent.

Under "Faces of Diversity" the lifestyle diversity in the area is *extremely low* with just seven of the fifty United States lifestyle segments represented. Of the six major segment groupings, the largest is referred to as "Affluent Families," which accounts for 92.0 percent of the households in the area. The top individual segment is "Traditional Affluent Families," representing 87.9 percent of all households.

Of the generational patterns, the most significant group in terms of numbers and comparison to national averages is Boomers (age forty to fifty-nine) who make up 31.7 percent of the total population in the area compared to 27.0 percent of the U.S. population as a whole. The area can be described as *extremely traditional* due to the above average presence of married people and two-parent families.

Under "Community Issues," concerns which are likely to exceed the national average include: Social Injustice, Time for Recreation/Leisure, Aging Parent Care, Satisfying Job/Career, Retirement Opportunities and Racial/Ethnic Prejudice. As an overall category, concerns related to "Hopes & Dreams" are the

most significant based upon the total number of households and comparison to national averages.

Finally, under "Faith Preferences," overall, the likely faith involvement level and preference for historic Christian religious affiliations is somewhat high when compared to national averages. Based upon likely worship, music and architectural style preferences in the area, the overall church style preference can be described as somewhat traditional. In the study area, 88.0 percent of the households are likely to express a preference for some particular religious tradition or affiliation, which is somewhat above the national average of 85.0 percent.

It is significant to note that the fastest growing and largest United Methodist Congregation in the country, Church of the Resurrection, is located in Leawood. This church grew from zero to 8,000-plus in its first twelve years (1990-2002).

Implications for the Church and its Ministry: The Transition from Modernity to Postmodernity

Since the 1960s, the West has gone through a tremendous cultural shift. For the most part, however, leaders of liturgical and mainline Christian churches haven't paid much attention. The urgent question for Christian mission in North America today has to do with churches and congregations, and the crisis of their identity in the culture of modernity. According to Alan J. Roxburgh, the church

has shifted from the center of culture to the margins.⁵

The shift has been called many different things, depending on who you ask, but whatever you call it, it has landed institutional Christians in a very different context than the one for which our institutions were originally designed.

We live in a post-Christian era. Increased pluralism and social transformations are creating a radical challenge to the church. There continues to be a shift from the Christendom paradigm to a Post-Christendom paradigm.⁶ In the Christendom paradigm, the institution of the church was central. Questions were discouraged, and the doctrine and dogma of the church was rigidly protected. Pastors and priests were afforded great respect and authority, and the inerrancy of the holy writ was never in question. God ruled in the heavens, and all was right with the world.

Post-Christendom ushered in a different view of the church. Suddenly, everything was called into question. Post-Christendom deconstructed the Christian church.

Author, Douglas Hall speaks of this shift in terms of the "effective disestablishment of the Christian religion in the Western world by secular, political and alternative religious forces."⁷ Responsible Christians should not despair by the humiliation of Christendom, but ought rather to attempt to discern

⁵ Alan J Roxburgh *The Missionary Congregation. Leadership and Liminality Christian Mission and Modern Culture* (Harrisburg, Pennsylvania: Trinity Press International, 1997)

⁶ For a more detailed description of what many refer to as the Christendom and post-Christendom paradigms see Loren Mead's *The Once and Future Church*. Alban Institute, 1991

⁷ Douglas John Hall, *An Awkward Church*, "Theology and Worship Occasional Papers," published by the Presbyterian Church, U S A

in this process new occasions for authenticity and, accordingly, ought to give positive direction to the process instead of allowing it simply to happen to them.

Douglas Hall writes:

Our effective distancing from the dominant culture is happening quite apart from our willing it. We are no longer 'mainline churches' or 'major denominations' in anything but the historical sense of having grown out of older families of Christendom. We are not 'mainstream churches' if that term implies (as it does for most people) a certain social status: the status of unquestionable social respectability; the status of right-thinking American Christianity; the status of the unofficially official churches of our society. We may be allowed to play that role here and there, but I think we are deluded if we imagine that it is a role our society reserves for us alone, or that it will simply be held open for us, world without end!⁸

In short, we are discovering that we are no longer privileged in the culture or identified with it; the Spirit is revealing to us that we are "resident aliens," to use the Willimon and Hauerwas phrase.

In light of this "cultural disestablishment" of the church, what faithful action is required of us in this kind of world? My view is that the number one question we have to answer as Christians in North America in the years to come is: How do we become communities of the Kingdom? The question compels three kinds of activity which give shape to the missionary way the church is called to live.

First as spiritual guide of the congregation, together with the leadership, we must continue ongoing social and cultural analysis. What kind of setting are we in and how do we understand its importance in light of God's mission in the world?

Secondly, we must commit ourselves to biblical and theological reflection.

⁸ Ibid

As we take this setting seriously, how are we ourselves faced with the meaning of the gospel in new ways?

Thirdly, we need to continue to seek and align ourselves with a vision for the church and its mission. What kind of church do we need to be to show what it means to believe the gospel, and to live and speak as though it is true? In order to respond biblically, theologically, and practically to such a changed status in American life, it is necessary to revisit the nature and mission of the Church through the lens of Scripture and against the backdrop of the cultural landscape in which the Church finds itself. We live in a time where the church has a great opportunity to be the answer to the postmodern question. To be this answer, we must understand how the postmodern culture thinks, what it values, and how God will be received

Four Worldly Quests--And Christian Witness

Douglas Hall identifies four human quests that are strongly present in the post-modern dominant culture of America today, which are also clearly emerging in our ministry context. The four quests to which we must devote attention are: the quest for moral authenticity, the quest for meaningful community, the quest for transcendence and mystery, and the quest for meaning.

There is a quest for *authentic* morality strongly present in our society today. People know now, better than they did in the 1960s and 1970s that the permissiveness of the new morality leads to moral chaos, indeed to life-threatening danger. AIDS and other sexually transmitted diseases have

dramatized this, but it is visible everywhere--to those who have reason to care.

Christopher Lash considers the world from the perspective of a caring parent:

This perspective unmistakably reveals the unwholesomeness, not to put it more strongly, of our way of life: our obsession with sex, violence, and the pornography of 'making it,' our addictive dependence on drugs, entertainment,' and the evening news; our impatience with anything that limits our sovereign freedom of choice, especially with the constraints of marital and familial ties; our preference for 'nonbinding commitments,' our third-rate educational system; our third-rate morality; our refusal to draw a distinction between right and wrong, lest we 'impose' their morality on us; our reluctance to judge or be judged; our indifference to the needs of future generations, as evidence by our willingness to saddle them with a huge national debt, an overgrown arsenal of destruction, and a deteriorating environment; our unstated assumption, which underlies so much of the propaganda for unlimited abortion, that only those children born for success ought to be allowed to be born at all.⁹

How does the Gospel address those who, in our time and place, "hunger and thirst for righteousness," and for moral integrity? How would Jesus speak to affluent young parents, caught between consumerism and genuine concern for their children's future, and asking how to be "good"? This is a cutting edge concern of the unchurched, which we as the people of God will need to engage.

The quest for meaningful community, like the quest for authentic morality with which it is closely related, is also conspicuous today because of a double failure: the failure of individualism, and the failure of most forms of community. The development of meaningful relationships, where people carry a sense of belonging, is central to what it means to be the church. Yet, despite our efforts, church too often is a place of loneliness rather than connection.

⁹ Christopher Lash, *The True and Only Heaven: Progress and Its Critics* (N Y and London: W W Norton & Co., 1991), 33-34.

Community matters. The ability of Saint Michael's to engage our ministry context will depend on whether it develops true community. There is a profound loneliness and isolation that characterizes much of contemporary American life at its best, and that is true here in Johnson County. Phillip Langdon, senior editor at *Progressive Architecture* magazine, observes the following:

The United States has become predominantly a suburban nation, but not a very happy one.... It is no coincidence that at the moment when the United States has become a predominantly suburban nation, the country has suffered a bitter harvest of individualized trauma, family distress, and civic decay.¹⁰

Then there is the quest for transcendence and mystery. There is a hunger in our culture that is haunting lives and hearts. Both within and beyond traditional faith communities, a hunger for spiritual depth and integrity is gaining momentum. Behind the specific cultural and personal factors of this quest lies a deeper reason for the spiritual hunger of our day: we were made for relationship with God. Insofar as we allow ourselves as Christians to know, in all honesty, the longing and the dissatisfactions of this contemporary quest for transcendence and mystery, we are also in a position to respond to it out of the riches of the Judeo-Christian tradition, newly revisited. Perhaps if we were to rethink our own Anglican tradition, we would more consistently discover the means for engaging it from the side of the Gospel.

Finally, there is the quest for meaning. Paul Tillich insisted that the basic anxiety by which modern Western humanity is afflicted is the anxiety of

¹⁰ Phillip Langdon, *A Better Place to Live: Reshaping the American Suburb* (New York: HarperPerennial, 1994), 1.

meaninglessness and despair.¹¹ We have lost our “story.” We are an amnesiac culture without a “metanarrative” that gives meaning to our place in the universe, an overarching story that purports to account for all of reality.

Therefore, postmodernism is highly skeptical of exclusive truth claims. Postmodern people are less impressed with our claims to being right; they want to know if we're good. Good deeds and good relationships are more important to postmodern people than good arguments. Truth is relational for many of them. It isn't just an abstract proposition floating in a rational vacuum. Truth is incarnated in people, relationships, and lives. The pastor as spiritual guide leads people, not into the possibility of finding themselves through some inner-directed reflection, but through a reengagement with the true story, a story that is bigger than them and radically different from the needs-centered, personal success story that has come to inhabit the church in North America.

Conclusion

The context in which we are the church has made an important transition. Postmodernism is increasingly the cultural context in which we in the West all live. Mission happens in that world; or mission fails to happen in that world, if we do not notice how people and communities are changing.

In the face of substantive technological and cultural changes, God is clearly reaching out to us as always. Unfortunately, most parishes are failing to

¹¹ Paul Tillich, *The Courage To Be* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1952)

respond to the shifting cultural forces surrounding us, and as a result many are struggling with their mission. If, however, we seek to understand the values of postmodernism and the kinds of behaviors and lifestyles it tends to engender, we can find remarkable new resources for our mission in our parishes. If we do this, we are simply seeking to understand the people we have been called and sent to serve.

The four human quests we described earlier are at the heart of post-modern spiritual concern. To fulfill the Great Commission at Saint Michael and All Angels, the church needs to be creative in its calling to re-present a classical Christianity and find points of contact with a postmodern world. As Robert Webber says, "The road to the future runs through the past."¹²

In the next chapter, we will see how this applies to the ministry and mission of St. Michael and All Angels Episcopal Church.

¹² Robert E. Webber, *Ancient-Future Faith: Rethinking Evangelicalism for a Postmodern World* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Books, 1999), 7.

CHAPTER FOUR

UNDERSTANDING ST. MICHAEL AND ALL ANGELS EPISCOPAL CHURCH

As we begin this section of this ministry focus paper, it is important to restate the central claim being made: There is a synergistic relationship between the recovery of pastoral identity and the spiritual formation of a congregation. The pastor as a spiritual guide, and as a spiritual companion is a central integrating role which must be placed at the heart of ministry. The literature of spiritual direction is just beginning to be applied to the corporate context and the questions of congregational spirituality. This reunion of the spiritual life and the life of the local church is what this focus paper seeks to explore and apply.

Most seminaries have taught little or nothing about guiding people spiritually. Loren Mead, founding president of the Alban Institute, and others emphasize, unless churches can replace business and survival anxiety with a rediscovery of their spiritual center and a willingness to listen for God's call, they will continue losing energy and relevance.¹ Too often mainline churches, like the Episcopal Church, often continue to speak to those who value activist and issue-centered approaches, and many are losing numbers.

¹ Loren B. Mead, *Transforming Congregations for the Future* (An Alban Institute Publication, 1995), 118

Churches, on the other hand, that stay clear about their God-given purpose, and stay close to the center of Christ, find themselves growing. That is, they are becoming entirely devoted to the spiritual formation of those in attendance.

When this sense of pastoral identity and purpose is strong and intentional, the people of God flourish. When it is forfeited or abandoned by neglect or substitution of some other model, the congregation begins to decline and enter into difficulty. That is a pattern which will emerge in this reflection about Saint Michael's.

When we become active in a congregation as pastors, we sense something of its distinction. Things like its unique history, joys, sorrows, responses to and failure to callings, and varieties of old and new people with their evolving experiences of God, all of which help to shape its ever changing corporate life.

Within this dynamic reality of the church, certain patterns of the Spirit can reveal themselves, patterns that show what God seems to be doing with the church as a whole. This awareness can awaken a shared sense of identity and mission in the congregation.

Parish History: Rooted in Mission

In 1946, Bishop Fenner, of Kansas, sent the Reverend Laurence Spencer into the rapidly growing Johnson County area to establish an Episcopal Mission. St. Michael and All Angels Episcopal Church was born on a blistery winter evening, when a group of twenty-seven residents of Johnson County met at the

Fine Arts School of Dance in Mission. The date was December 18, 1946. Their common goal and vision was to start the first Episcopal congregation in Northeast Johnson County, which was a rapidly growing suburban community.

The group then met on the fourth Sunday in Advent, December 22, with forty people in attendance. It was their first Eucharist. A quarter century later it would be the largest Episcopal congregation in the diocese and one of the fifty largest in the nation.

It was the post-war world, and people were moving to new homes in the suburbs of Kansas City. By February of 1947, a church school was organized. Later that year parish meetings were moved to the old gymnasium of Hickory Grove School at Johnson Drive and Lamar

Moving quickly, the newly formed vestry agreed to buy a four acre plot of land at 67th Street and Nall Avenue in the city of Mission, Kansas for \$10,000 (the money to be loaned by the Diocese at 3 percent interest). Also at that time, post-war clearance sales were being held by the United States Army, and a chapel from Camp Crowder, Missouri, was bought and moved to Mission. The chapel was reassembled and erected in 1948 on the new land. Ground was broken on Epiphany 1948. A copper-clad bell, resurrected from a junkyard and donated by several members of Grace and Holy Trinity Cathedral in Kansas City, Mo., soon graced the steeple of "the little white church." The bell remained throughout those early years.

The congregation began to acquire the symbols of worship that are still well-regarded, especially those that represent our ties to the Church of England.

Altar appointments arrived from England, and inside the Altar Cross was a stone from the oldest English church bearing the name of Saint Michael's Turpenhow, England, built in 1120 A.D. The silver statue of St. Michael in our processional cross stands on another stone of history, one taken from Canterbury Cathedral. This was an indication of the strong sense of Anglican identity that was to become a core value of the parish.

In December of 1949, the parish was three years old. From twenty-seven members it had grown to 370. The church school had grown from thirty-five to 135. Out of sixty parishes and missions in the Diocese of Kansas, St. Michael's was the seventh largest parish. Building fund drives soon began, and members of their rapidly growing church were generously enthusiastic and responsive. In 1957, the existing Parish Hall was completed and functioned as a worship space for the next four years.

Major building culminated in the dedication of the completed English Gothic church (Nave, Narthex, Bell Tower, and Sunday school rooms) on Sunday October 8, 1961. A brick from the Old North Church in Boston was placed on the west wall of the bell tower as another link with the past and history of the Episcopal Church in the United States.

Saint Michael's missionary zeal was reflected not only in its growth of membership and buildings, but also in its outreach. In the 1950s, Father Spencer sparked a program that licensed 15 lay readers (lay pastors), who began or revived five mission churches.

Larry Spencer, the founding rector, moved on after fourteen years. In October of 1960, The Reverend Donald Rhaesa became the second rector of Saint Michael's. The parish continued to flourish under his leadership and continued to reach out to others. The parish gave birth to a mission church, Saint Thomas of Overland Park, Kansas, that today continues as a growing Episcopal parish in Johnson County.

On July 8, 1965, Donald Rhaesa was killed in an auto accident, and the parish suffered a deep wound. Grieved by the loss, they pressed on, and in the fall of that year, welcomed the Reverend Robert Clarkson Swift as its third rector. He led the parish in a discovery of change. The physical facilities grew, and together they pioneered changes in the liturgy with the revision of the *Book of Common Prayer*.

His ministry was completed after fourteen years, and in 1974, the parish greeted the Reverend Richard Frank Grein, as the fourth rector. He arrived to find a congregation ready for real spiritual growth, and helped the parish attain a stronger understanding of scripture, tradition, liturgy, and theology. His was a ministry of excellent teaching and formation, and parish renewal. In 1981, St. Michael's rejoiced in bittersweet celebration on May 22, when he was consecrated as the seventh Bishop of Kansas.

During this time, the parish decided to choose leadership from within. The Reverend David F. With, an associate rector at St. Michael's for six years, became the fifth rector on November 1, 1981. Under his leadership, the parish

moved forward in its ministry of outreach and pastoral care. He resigned in 1995 after twenty years of ministry at St. Michael's.

1996 and Beyond: Spiritual Formation Becomes the Vision

The parish did a self-study as part of its preparation for calling the sixth rector of St. Michael's. Time was taken to honestly examine the parish's needs, and to listen carefully in a discernment process to discover what God has in mind for Saint Michael's. This was an important imperative: to listen and seek the will of God for Saint Michael's, and the calling of a new rector.

In the parish profile document, the intention was stated this way: "We have faithfully proceeded to do so (discern Gods will) and present this profile to celebrate our parishes Christian heritage, our life in Christ together and our journey together to a renewed presence as a part of Christ's community."² They stated that one of their primary goals for the new rector was renewed spiritual development and formation, and the number one pastoral skill they were looking for was excellence in preaching.

The stated vision of the parish that came out of their discernment process is the following statement: "To be a place where we fuel the fire of the Holy Spirit in each of us and radiate the love of Christ into the world."³ It was this vision statement, focused as it is on spiritual formation, being the kind of person who has a radiant life, which spoke deeply to the parish and guided the calling

² St. Michael and All Angels Episcopal Church, Mission, *Kansas Parish Profile*, 1996

³ Ibid

process for the new rector. On October 15, 1996, shortly after the fiftieth anniversary of the parish, the Reverend Robert C. Lord became the sixth rector of the parish.

Who We Are Today: Sociological Structure and Generational Characteristics

Today, in 2002, Saint Michael and All Angels is a strong healthy parish of about 750 families and 1800 members. More than half the members are regular contributors, and 91 percent of the membership considers themselves what an external consultant termed the "fellowship circle" of active parishioners. More than 30 percent live more than five miles from the church, passing some eight other Episcopal Churches on their way to worship and other activities.

The parish has strong leadership, particularly in the age range from thirty-five to sixty. There has been an increase in growth among young families in the thirty to forty year old segment that has excellent growth potential. One factor that supports this, is that thirty-five percent of the general population in a five mile radius is between the ages of fifteen and thirty-four.

There has been a resurgence of membership and attendance in the past five and a half years from an average weekend attendance of 450 to 800. Church school attendance has doubled in the same time. A newly constructed and expanded nursery facility was added to accommodate the growth of families with young children.

Most Episcopal congregations (78 percent) have 200 or fewer active adults, and slightly over half (53 percent) have 100 or fewer active adults. Worship attendance data from parochial reports shows that 84 percent of Episcopal congregations average 200 or fewer in their worship services (1-50, 27 percent; 51-100, 30 percent; 101- 200, 27 percent). Only 1.3 percent of Episcopal congregations reported average weekly worship attendance of more than 500 people in their 1999 parochial report. That places St. Michael's in the top 1.3 percent in terms of largest worship attendance in Episcopal Parishes nationally. Our neighboring parish located on the same street just three miles to our south is Christ Episcopal Church. It is the largest Episcopal parish in the Diocese of Kansas of which we are a close second. These two parishes are both vital, large congregations with their own particular theological expressions. The fact that they could be large and growing virtually side by side is a commentary on the dynamic socioeconomic factors of Johnson County

Episcopal congregations diverge more strongly from other mainline churches in terms of education and income. The image of Episcopalians as more highly educated and affluent than the general population is real. Over 40 percent of Episcopal congregations report that most, if not all, of their regular adult participants are college graduates. Among other mainline bodies, the percentage is only 11.9 percent, and among conservatives, it drops to 7.9 percent. Income repeats the pattern of education. Most churches in mainline and conservative denominations report that few of their households earned over \$75,000 in 2000, but that was not the case in the Episcopal Church. Slightly over 30 percent of

Episcopal congregations report many or most of their households earn over \$75,000 as compared to 19 percent of mainline, and 6 percent of conservative congregations.⁴

The stewardship and giving level of the parish has grown from pledged income of \$457,000 in 1996, to pledged income of \$810,000 in 2002. This is almost a 75 percent increase in six years. This is one indicator of the revitalization of the congregation, as it has focused on its vision of spiritual formation.

Facilities

Saint Michael and All Angels is blessed with an exceptionally beautiful English country Gothic structure that sits on four acres of land. It shapes our sense of place and identity. The current structure was built in segments beginning with the parish hall in 1957, and the nave in 1961. As the church grew, a two-story wing was added in 1979 for office space and classrooms. The Cloud Chapel was built in 1986, and a courtyard garden, including a large columbarium area, was completed in 1987. A new 1.8 million dollar expansion and renovation of the parish hall, including a new kitchen and dining room, south tower entrance, and a new state of the art nursery facility, was completed in January of 2002.

The church is a well-designed and much-used facility. The north end of the upper level contains the narthex, nave, sacristy, and chapel. The south hall

⁴ A Report on Episcopal Churches in the United States Prepared by C. Kirk Hadaway For The Office of Congregational Development Domestic and Foreign Missionary Society The Episcopal Church. April 2002

leads to the administrative offices, library, parish hall, and large commercial kitchen. The lower level of the building houses the St. Michael's Day School, a large number of Church School classrooms, along with a children's chapel, acolyte room, choir room, youth room, columbarium and a large nursery addition.

Theological Perspective: The Church as Sacramental Presence

Several decades ago, Archbishop William Temple was asked what the task of the church was. He was well known for his commitment to social justice and had involved himself in movements working to effect social change. His answer was not entirely expected:

What is the task of the Church? To be itself and not do anything at all. All that it does is secondary and expressive of what it is. And, first of all, it's duty is to be in living actuality . . . the fellowship of those who have received the power of the Holy Spirit through the revelation of the love of God in Christ. It exists to be the redeemed community which worships as redeemed.⁵

The thought of Archbishop Temple was inspiring then and now. At the heart of Saint Michael's theological vision has been the conviction that God is already at work with this parish. It is a vision of transformation. Because that is true, the rector's role as spiritual guide is imperative, especially in helping the congregation in discerning the real presence of Christ.

Congregations are spaces in which people grow in their ability to see and enact signs of God's reign in the world. Worship, in a particular space, prepares

⁵ As quoted in a letter from The Rev. Paul Brown dated June 2001. The Temple quote is from William Temple, *The Church and Its Teachings for Today* (New York: Macmillan Co., 1936), 13.

us for God's presence in one another. Not that we are trying to create holy buildings that in themselves provide some guarantee of God's availability, but in the beauty of holiness, we worship in order to join the movement of life with God, such that every time and every place is touched with the reality of holy love and mercy. As we pray in the preface to the Sanctus in every celebration of the Eucharist:

Therefore, we praise you, joining our voices with angels and archangels and with all the company of heaven, who forever sing this hymn to proclaim the glory of your Name.⁶

One of the former rectors of Saint Michael's, Richard Grein, who went on to be the Bishop of the Diocese of Kansas, and then the Bishop of the Diocese of New York, in his own way set a theological direction that reflects the importance of spiritual formation. Bishop Grein wrote these words to the congregation in 1976

Divine grace is understood as God's personal presence. I think that we could even say that it is a primary attribute of God to be faithfully and lovingly present to his creation. God's continuous message to his people, to the world, through out Scripture is, 'I am with you'. This is the message to Moses and Israel. Most certainly it is the meaning of the Incarnation, Emmanuel, God with us. It is precisely what Jesus says at the Resurrection and the Ascension.

Sometimes the Church is so bound by institutional structures, so conscious of its institutional traditions, that it loses sight of the fact that it is a mystery and sacrament of the divine presence in the midst of a forgetful world. It is true that the Church is an institution among institutions, but it is also more than this; it is primarily a center of grace and presence of the divine.

What we would like the parish of Saint Michael and All Angles to be in your life is not just another institution, but a sustainable presence. We

⁶ The Book of Common Prayer, 362

would like you to think of it as St. Paul thought of the whole Church, the Body of Christ, the presence of God. We would like you to know and remember that whether or not the parish is visibly and immediately present to you, it is still a personal presence for you. To its parishioners and to the community which surrounds it, St. Michael's is a source of grace that sustains; it is a resource that supports. The parish, that personal community of faith, is there receiving and giving the gifts of its members, receiving and giving the gifts of God. Saint Michael's: A Sustaining Presence.⁷

In other words, the most radical thing the church can do is to be the church. When congregations devote themselves to the apostolic teaching, breaking the bread and the prayers, God will, as in Acts, "day by day add to [our] number those who [are] being saved."⁸ This has been our experience in recent years.

Congregational Spirituality at Saint Michael's

What are the factors helping the process of spiritual formation at Saint Michael's? We believe that our core strength and charism has always been the quality and excellence of our liturgy and worship life, as well as the teaching, discipleship, and the fellowship activities that focus on the spiritual formation and growth of our members. We have a heritage of, and are respected for, a traditional liturgical style and a focus on excellence in preaching and teaching, not only on Sunday but also through the week. We have found that when we do those things well, people are attracted to our community. The strength of the

⁷ Richard Grein *The Parish as Presence* (Article in the St. Michael and All Angels Parish Newsletter 15 September 1996). 1

⁸ Acts 2:47

activities of our congregation has resulted in the formation of Christian leaders in the community, and in the greater life of the Episcopal Church.

What are we here for? To build an enduring church into the 21st century, the only reliable resource for stability is a strong inner core of vision and values, and the willingness to adapt and change everything but that core. We need to know what we stand for and why we exist.

One way to analyze our vision is to look at its core attributes:

- 1) Our core objective is to rekindle the fire of the Holy Spirit in each of us. This means the glorious transformation of lives, which was the result of Jesus teaching, preaching, and healing.
- 2) Our core value is love. Fulfilling the Great Commandment.
- 3) Our core focus is to radiate the love of Christ into the world. The lost, the needy, the suffering, and the unchurched.
- 4) Our core means is making disciples who make disciples. That is to become students of Jesus, apprentices of Christ as defined by the Baptismal Covenant in the Book of Common Prayer.
- 5) Our core result is joy and the fruit of the Spirit

The emphasis is on being a certain kind of place and people that empower spiritual formation and mission. As Robert Weber says:

In the postmodern world, the most effective churches will be led by those who turn their backs on the corporate market driven view of the church and return to the theological understanding and practice of the church as the community of God's presence in the world. It is this kind of church that will grow, not only in numbers, but also in depth and openness to others.

The most significant witness in the world will emanate from the church as the embodied presence of God on earth.⁹

This is a vision of living in the expectation of the miraculous and of personal transformation through the power and presence of the Holy Spirit. The early church was filled with stories of God's transforming power. It is the experience of the Holy Spirit that changes people and it is the experience that the unchurched seek.

The primary focus of the early church was the glorious transformation of lives. It was a community where miracles of human transformation were courted and expected as a natural aspect of Christian life. This is our opportunity in the third millennium, to once again proclaim the Good News in such a way that we become God's agents of transformation. The great opportunity is for the Church to recapture the transformation power of the first century church through becoming a missionary organization. If we do not, Saint Michael's is headed for extinction.

A Strong Commitment to Worship and Tradition

Worship in the third millennium needs to be positioned to reach people with a postmodern worldview. This will call for an emphasis in the worship patterns on recognizing elements of mystery, community, and symbol. This is a core value at Saint Michael's.

⁹ Robert Webber, *Ancient-Future Faith: Rethinking Evangelicalism for a Postmodern World* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Books, 1999) 81

The Prayer Book and liturgy emphasizing the Eucharist have become core dimensions of Episcopal identity, and are viewed as central to people's lives and the life of congregations. Worship itself is energizing and renewing for us. One reason is that praising God, listening to God's word, and sharing in God's table never goes out of season, and when we know that and show that, others are sure to join us. We have seen a jump in numbers, numbers that are increasing steadily. Average weekend attendance in 1996 was 450. An average weekend around here is approaching 800 people. We have witnessed close to a 75 percent increase. That is the work of God!

When done well, worship through the liturgical traditions throbs with life and shines with glory. When done with passion, the liturgy loses its stale stereotypes and is transformed into a surprising spiritual connection to postmodern generations as well as to earlier ones.

Our present worship schedule includes a Saturday evening celebration of the Holy Eucharist at five p.m., and an early morning Celebration at 7:30 a.m. Both of these services are simple, with some music. Our major community celebrations on Sunday begin first with a "blended," or "convergence" model of traditional and contemporary elements, truly an ancient-future experience of the Holy Eucharist. This service has grown from 150 to 400 in typical attendance and has particular appeal for younger families. Elements include the use of icons, incense, chant, songs of praise, keyboard, guitars, flute, many candles, and a commitment to transformational preaching that is Biblical, relevant, and faithful.

The four fold pattern of ancient worship: Gathering, Word, Meal, and Sending, is used with enriching art and music and symbol.

At the time before my call to be the rector, a major consultation by The Alban Institute was held at Saint Michael's to profile its strengths and its challenges. One of the strongest areas of tension and concern was between what was characterized as "Traditional Episcopal styles of worship," over against what many people called, "Modern or Contemporary worship." Some spoke of being "Anglo-Catholic" in their preferences, and others spoke of being more exciting, evangelical, and charismatic in their preferences.

In my role as spiritual guide, I intentionally moved away from framing this as an either/or issue. I saw it as a both/and paradigm of our identity as God's people. I began slowly to introduce the concept of convergence of traditions and blended worship at the 8:45 a.m. service. I did a weekly teaching series on the six great spiritual traditions of Christian faith so well articulated in Richard Foster's book, *Streams of Living Water*.¹⁰ (An outline can be found in Appendix A). It became my pastoral approach to the congregation. I deliberately worked to bring a comprehensive system to the renewal and revitalization of the parish. Rather than focus on one stream or model of Christian discipleship as other parishes and churches in the area do, our discernment of the vision and of discipleship was rooted in the fullness of Christian history. We discerned that the deeper issue was a need to focus on the spiritual formation of the congregation.

¹⁰ Richard Foster. *Streams of Living Water Celebrating the Great Traditions of Christian Faith* (Harper San Francisco, 1998)

not simply its worship style. Moreover, in doing so, our worship would become an authentic expression of who we are becoming in Christ. There has been little or no tension over worship or music in the past six years.

Our 10:45 a.m. service and celebration of the Eucharist is one which utilizes a fresh retrieval of traditional Anglican worship and Choral style. It is characterized by richness in ritual and ceremony, and by pursuing excellence in organ and choir leadership. It is more formal in setting, but alive in the Spirit. It attracts both young and old, and I have characterized it as "a Cathedral Liturgy in a parish church."

God is calling us to explore the possibility of adding an additional service somewhere during the weekend. If we did, it might be a new opportunity to expand our community. It might mean additional staffing, but it is time for discernment.

The objective consultant stated in his report, that the key issue from his perspective was this: What will you be as a parish? 62 percent of the membership did not grow up as Episcopalians. There existed many varied understandings of what the parish should be and do. Nine out of ten did not grow up in the parish. A wide set of assumptions on "what we should offer" or be as a church indicated a lack of vision and leadership vacuum. Clearly a new vision and sense of mission was needed.

A Strong Commitment to Discipleship and Spiritual Formation

The growth in the Alpha course in the last five years has been truly astounding. It is being used at Saint Michael's for purpose of parish renewal and to support the original Alpha concept of bringing unchurched adults to the knowledge of Christ. Alpha is overtly and unashamedly about bringing the "Good News" to those who have not heard it.

The Christian initiation of adults is nothing new. The Catechumenate, a method of initiation of the early Church, has been practiced in different forms at Saint Michael's. We are now preparing for a new adaptation of this process called *Journey to Jesus*. Alpha and the Catechumenate address the same task in broadly the same way, and we have found them to be complementary. Catechumenate groups also become occasions through which people experience Christian love, reinforced with strong simple liturgical rites in which the whole congregation participates. The parish will continue to use Alpha to sow the seeds and the Catechumenate to give them deeper roots. In so doing we will indeed see an unparalleled movement of the Spirit.

While the primary goal of evangelism at St. Michael's is conversion to Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior, there is a related conversion to the Church, and to life with the Church. In fact, conversion to Jesus Christ remains incomplete and partial until there is a conversion to the Church. For the Episcopalian, three aspects of conversion to the Church are: conversion to the Body, conversion to the Christian life, and to the Anglican tradition.

Conversion to the body

Conversion to the body of Christ is the corporate dimension of the faith and the fact that we are bound up with each other in Christ. This membership in the Church goes beyond institutional membership. It is membership in the Body of Christ. It is organic, as the arm is a member of the body. It is quite different from being a member of a club.

Conversion to the Christian life

Conversion to the Christian life is, in one sense, an unfolding into depth, height and breadth. People may initially relate themselves to the Church because of a lovely building, a sentimental feeling, a parish program of music or outreach, or the warmth and friendliness of the priest and congregation. God will use any such starting point for the journey, but it is just a starting point. The end is maturity and holiness. The Christian life is a life of transformation. Human lives are being recreated in the divine image and to fullness of life known in Jesus Christ.

Conversion to the Episcopal Church and the Anglican tradition

Conversion to the Episcopal Church and the Anglican tradition is lived within a particular context. It is always lived as part of a particular tradition. We are not inviting people into an abstraction, but into a real, historically shaped expression of faith. We need to present this tradition's experience of the Christian

life clearly, directly, and compellingly. We do not need to make excuses for being Episcopalian; we need to fan the flame into fire.

We are fanning the flame. More people are participating in groups and learning, and that is inspiring. There are ten home study gatherings during the week. Other offerings for spiritual formation such Alpha, the Journey in Faith class, The Benedictine classes, Bible studies, and others are attracting a growing number of people who bring questions, learn questions, and think deeply.

Factors Hindering Spiritual Formation

While we have been blessed with a strong season of revitalization, we still have our challenges and weaknesses. Alan Roxburg writes of the enormous and tumultuous changes that Western culture has undergone in the past fifty years, and the resulting displacement of the Church. He uses the metaphor of a tapestry that has come unraveled. From its once steady and secure place at the center of civilization, a place it has held for the past 400 years, the Church finds itself today on the margins of society. We are in a place of "liminality," a place where the landscape has changed, and the old rules and roles no longer work.

It is crucial that church leadership shift its style from an emphasis on management and care-giving, to learning the skills needed to guide congregations through this transition phase in which we now find ourselves. Facing the unknown involves risk, but the alternative, choosing to draw a line in the sand to avoid change, will lead to a Church that has no relevancy to the

culture in which it exists. This is the precarious position in which many mainline denominations find themselves as they contemplate plummeting membership.

This does not mean denying our tradition at Saint Michael's, but recovering traditions we have lost as we have become subsumed by the culture in which we live. We must recover the Biblical story and recreate our missional identity out of that story. We must come to a deeper understanding of the new cultural context and find ways to translate that core story, so that those outside of the Church can understand it and come to relate to it.

The opportunity before us is to recover and sustain our identity as God's transforming community. The pastoral and priestly role in this context is one of helping people understand themselves as missionaries to North American culture, structurally forming congregations into "mission outposts," whose vision is shaped by their encounters with the Gospel in the culture.

Bryan Stone lists four marks of our culture that deeply influence the Church's identity and practice: 1) a pervasive individualism and drive for self fulfillment; 2) a push for cultural conformity (witness how many SUVs are in the parking lot at the mall or your church!); 3) a distinct preference for the quick and painless with rejection of discipline and the cultivation of character and life habits with the long, broad view in mind and; 4) a general pessimism about the possibility of human transformation.¹¹

¹¹ Bryan Stone. "The Spirit and the Holy Life." *Quarterly Review*. Vol. 21, No. 2, Summer 2001 159

These are clearly hindrances to the depth of spiritual formation at Saint Michael's. These factors press upon our members and will challenge us in the future. As we increasingly live and invite others to conform to a gospel that is not conformed to the shape and values of the cultures around us, hard decisions will need to be made.

Conclusion

The pastoral role of spiritual direction embraces both a concern for the parish as a whole, and for the individual members. This is the task of enabling people to trust God, to be dependant upon Him, and to rest in Him. The Holy Spirit is *the* spiritual director of the parish. As the Rector, I cannot control the spiritual life and depth of the parish. I cannot "make it happen." I can establish structures and encourage disciplines that church and my experience tell me provide the necessary context. I can give my attention to my own spiritual life as a priest and person. The call is to be the priest for the parish so that they might be priests for the world. At times this means providing structure, laying the claim on others, presenting the church's discipline, challenging illusions, and proclaiming reality. Sometimes it is just listening and sharing the struggle.

The parish community needs to know what it *is* if it is to know what to expect of itself in life and ministry. It *is* the Body of Christ. It is not a club, a corporation, or a social reform movement. Its life does not depend on success, society's approval, being clear about its goals, or reforming its structures. The parish is held together by and in Jesus Christ.

The church's nature and mission are not things we create by our will and activity, but are given by the grace of God. Many of the conflicts that go on in parishes are related to the models people have of the Church. How we understand what the Church is, will shape what we think the Church is to do and how it is to live. Our hope is to so root the parish in the life of Christ, that the result is a spiritually healthy community filled with God's transforming power. The overall concern is to enable an environment in which men and women know, love, and serve Jesus Christ in worship, discipleship, and mission. The parish's climate will encourage either maturity, or immaturity in the Christian life. We now turn to the third section of this paper, which offers a strategy to deepen the life and maturity of the people of God in this place.

CHAPTER 5

DEVELOPING A DIAGNOSTIC PARISH MODEL FOR SPIRITUAL FORMATION AND PASTOR AS SPIRITUAL GUIDE

Congregational and parish transformation is essential to the fulfilling of the Great Commission, to make disciples of Jesus Christ who are taking their place in the Kingdom of God. It will not occur, however, without a recovery of pastoral identity where leaders commit to their own personal life-giving transformation. Personal transformation has a very real cost, but so does failure to change.

The driving force in the spiritual formation of a priest/pastor and parish is spiritual and relational vitality. As Jim Herington says:

Spiritual and relational vitality is the life giving power that faithful people experience together as they passionately pursue God's vision for their lives. All of the law and the prophets are summarized by a commandment to love God (spiritual vitality), and to love our neighbor (relational vitality).¹

Spiritual and relational vitality follows the movement from an individuals encounter with God and their experience of grace. Leadership has to flow out of our being, out of the renovation of the heart. That is why it must begin with the pursuit and practice of pastoral identity, with an emphasis on the primordial role of spiritual formation as a task of ministry.

¹ Jim Herington, Mike Bonem, James H. Furr, *Leading Congregational Change: A Practical Guide for The Transformational Journey* (San Francisco: Jossey-Boss Publishers, 2000), 16

Fulfilling the Ordination Vows in the World We Live in Today

Models for ministry seem to rise and fall with some regularity. There was the pastor as evangelist, the pastor as preacher, the pastor as resident theologian and, more recently, the pastor as manager, and the pastor as servant leader. Each of these models captures some essential element of church leadership, but all are missing something, perhaps what Howard Rice is referring to when he writes:

The ability to assist people toward development of a faith that can celebrate and connect with the mystery at the center of all creation and name that mystery as the God of love is the central service that pastors offer to persons. In this paradigm, pastoral ministry depends less upon "abilities" than upon the authenticity of the pastor's own faith and faithfulness and the value of returning to a perspective that is more anchored in the fine art of attending to God.²

It is clear that there is an explicit connection between the spiritual condition and the types of crisis and emotional unhealthiness among clergy today. This neglect of our own personal spirituality is closely related to the dangers that threaten almost all clergy: insulation and evasion, depletion of energy, addiction and compulsive behavior, and loss of faith.

The sin that leads to pastoral burnout is like a two-edged sword that cuts two ways. What gets the pastor into the problem is the temptation to evade his or her own spiritual emptiness by becoming as busy as possible. Evasion is fear of meeting people in any way in which the priest or pastor is not in control, and in which he or she maybe required to give of oneself in anything but a routine

² Howard Rice, *The Pastor as Spiritual Guide* (Nashville: Upper Room Books, 1998), 75

manner. The early church fathers spoke of the sin of *accidie*, which is spiritual boredom, an indifference to matters of religion, and a lack of care. It is this ancient sin of *accidie*, which lies at the root of the pastor or priest's refusal to heed the calling to be the instrument of spiritual direction and growth of the congregation. The weaker one's foundation, the greater the danger.

Donald Hands and Wayne Fehr claim that the type of spiritual life that clergy need to help them avoid disaster is clear, simple and far reaching:

To develop and maintain a healthy personal spirituality, the clergy person needs a situation where he or she can regularly be an equal among equals, rather than the spiritual leader of others.

The ordained minister who wishes to live a spiritual life must have a personal spiritual discipline of some kind, a rule of life, to follow. This must include a period of quiet time each day for being present to God in silent openness.

The clergy person seeking to grow spiritually will ordinarily need also to work with a spiritual director.³

These are some ways in which we can counter the sin of *accidie*, the lack of care. These activities of spiritual practice are needed for the healthy functioning of ordained people, and should begin to be established well before ordination. Yet so little regarding spiritual practice seems to be required or taught in our seminaries today. There are very few training programs in the spiritual life.

The Episcopal Church is in a situation where its clergy need more inner spiritual resources than in the past, in order to withstand the pressures of modern parish ministry and the demands of parishioners. We begin our seminary

³ Donald R. Hands and Wayne L. Fehr, *Spiritual Wholeness for Clergy: A New Psychology of Intimacy with God, Self, and Others* (Washington, D.C.: Alban Institute, 1993), 64

education, however, with less prior experience of spiritual formation than those who have gone before us.

It is also clear that we cannot expect the general circumstances of our times, or even the church itself as an institution, to remedy the problems that we face as clergy, that to some extent we cause. Recovery of pastoral identity lies in a new understanding and appreciation of who we are, and the nature of the gift we have been given, and the responsibilities of the life of ordination. It moves from there to the spiritual formation and transformation of parish life.

The ordained person must reclaim the primary vocation they have received: to be a human being. Theologically, this may be linked to the mystery of baptism and of being claimed for Christ. Ordination may then be seen as secondary, as a particular way of living the foundational mystery of ones vocation to be a child of God.

Dallas Willard speaks of this as "spirituality and whole life."⁴ By this term he means that our fundamental call is not doing our job, but to live our whole life in God and to God's glory. What we get out of this life is the person we become. In other words, we must have an identity beyond ministry. Ministry is a whole life function based on who we are in relation to God and our interaction with him. The context of ministry is not our life. Our life is hidden with Christ in God.

The claim of this chapter is that the first step of recovery of pastoral identity is the acceptance, reaffirmation, and living out of our ordination vows. We

⁴ Dallas Willard, Seminar on Spirituality and Ministry, Fuller Seminary, July 1994

will look at the vows as a template for patterning our identity and work, and to be the basis of our thinking about who clergy are and what they are to do.

The word "vows" may sound obsolete here at the beginning of the 21st century, but vows are a model and framework, a rule of life which define and measure the fulfillment of our call. Vows are the foundation for facing and overcoming repeated vocational crises. Vows are a recognition and public affirmation of one's self-understanding of whom one is as a pastor and as a priest. Marriage vows were never intended to stint love, but to give it its own space to develop and mature. Ordination vows were never intended to become intrusive, divisive, or restrictive, but to give scope and room for a life of ministry that is true to the mind of Christ.

We need a theology and practice of ministry rooted in a living tradition that gives us the ascetical framework which will sustain, nourish, and advance the work of ministry. The framework used here is a pastoral spirituality that is rooted in the *Book of Common Prayer*. For Anglicans and Episcopalians, the Prayer Book shapes every aspect of our life as a Christian community. The situation was caught very well by C. S. Lewis: "About my own beliefs, as I said before, there is no secret. To quote Uncle Toby: 'They are written in the Book of Common Prayer.'" ⁵

⁵ C S Lewis *Mere Christianity* (Macmillan, 1960), 8

The Ordination Vows as a Diagnostic Model for Christlikeness

If we are to move from the current reality that ministry has been reduced to the therapeutic and the meritorious, we must admit and recognize that pastoral identity has left behind the great spiritual Christian traditions of the past. They have been replaced in favor of methods and management procedures which do not of themselves bring people to conversion and commitment to living the gospel in their daily lives.

To be constant in a recovered pastoral identity, and disciplined into Christlikeness, what do we need to do? Can we view the ordination vows as an indicative process for sanctification, or the process of becoming like Jesus for those who serve as ordained people in the life of the church today? By seeing the vows as a schema of what we need to do to become accomplished spiritual leaders, we can be trained and shaped into a greater confidence in Jesus and the Kingdom of God.

First, we of necessity need to see that a vowed life is a life of obedience. The truth about obedience in the Kingdom of God is that it is really abundance. The Reverend Guy Fitch Lytle III, Dean of the School of Theology at the University of the South states this compellingly:

We need, I truly believe, to submit to Holy Orders, to obedience, to authority. We must understand what obedience is. People in Holy Orders are not free agents. We have been called to live under orders, that is, lives of obedience. We have been called to live lives of obedience to ecclesial authority: Episcopal, canonical, and otherwise. We have certainly been called to live lives of obedience to Holy Scripture and to the great tradition of the church. We are called, finally, to live in obedience to our

consciences-our consciences which are, we believe, informed by right reason and the Holy Spirit.⁶

And so we come to the vows as a curriculum for Christlikeness. Or as Dallas Willard describes it: A course of study and practice for apprentices to Jesus in the Kingdom among us.⁷

Making Pastoral Identity Possible: The Vow of Personal Transformation

Eugene Peterson, on the fortieth anniversary of his ordination, revisited his ordination vows. One of them (the sixth vow) struck him as being generic to all ordained people. It focused him on the formative power of the vows for pastoral identity, saying: "Will you in your own life, seek to follow the Lord Jesus Christ, love your neighbors, and work for the reconciliation of the world?"⁸

In the ordination vows for a priest in the Episcopal Book of Common Prayer, the sixth vow is expressed this way: "Will you do your best to pattern your life [and that of your family, or household, or community] in accordance with the teachings of Christ so that you may be a wholesome example to your people?"⁹

It is from actual obedience to this vow that all the fulfilling of all the other vows flow. At its root, this is a vow that requires the reformation of the heart, and

⁶ Guy F. Lytle III, *The Recovery of Priestly Identity and the Revival of the Church*, *Sewanee Theological Review* 38:3 (1995).

⁷ Dallas Willard, *The Divine Conspiracy: Rediscovering our Hidden Life in God* (New York: Harper-San Francisco, 1998), 316.

⁸ Marva Dawn and Eugene Peterson, *The Unnecessary Pastor* (Grand Rapids: Wm B. Eerdmans, 2000), 13.

⁹ *The Book of Common Prayer*, 532.

a personal transformation. To become a “wholesome example to your people” is also the call and exhortation of the Apostle Peter to the elders in the church:

Be shepherds of God’s flock, that is under your care, serving as overseers—not because you must, but because you be willing, as God wants you to be; not greedy for money, but eager to serve; not lording it over those entrusted to you, but being *examples* to the flock.¹⁰

By example, surely we mean that first of all, we must be people in whom those committed to our pastoral care see and feel supernatural truth: the joy, the transfiguration of hard, dull work and suffering, which irradiate the real Christian life. We cannot do more for anyone than to give them that. As Evelyn Underhill, in her retreat addresses to clergy said so well:

Unless the whole of your priestly life is a movement of praise and adoration, unless it is instinct with awe, the work which that life produces won’t be much good. And if that is true, it follows the Christian revelation, the work done by Christ in men’s souls, has also as its main object the promotion of Gods glory, the shining out of His Reality more and more fully though our acts: the increase of our wide open, loving, selfless adoration, the deepening of our creaturely awe, the expanding of our consecration in service. And all of this must happen in you before you can give it to your people, must it not?¹¹

Drawing from the sufficiency of God, cultivating our spiritual life must be the supreme obedience we give in our ministry. For it is only out of *that* life that we can truly give to others. We must do this; God will not do it for us. Our own example is clearly what matters in ministry as well as our teaching. The Apostle Paul gives this direction to Timothy: “Watch you life and doctrine closely.

¹⁰ 1 Peter 5 2-3

¹¹ Evelyn Underhill, *Concerning the Inner Life* (Oxford: Oneworld, 1999), 23

Persevere in them, because if you do, you will save both yourself and your hearers.”¹²

Paying attention to our lives and our teaching is another way of patterning our life on Jesus and his teaching. We should understand that what Jesus does, we should also do. His example and his teaching hold incredible promise for us. This is how “we feed the flock that is among us,”¹³ by following the Lord in the things he said and did, and helping others to do the same. The sixth vow calls us to obedience, to the imitation of Christ, and to “pattern our lives on the teachings of Christ.” Our only hope is to let Jesus lead us into his life. As Dallas Willard says:

As a disciple of Jesus I am with him, by choice and by grace, learning from him how to live in the Kingdom of God. This is the crucial idea. That means, we recall, how to live within the range of God’s effective will, his life flowing through mine. Another important way of putting this is to say that I am learning from Jesus to live *my* life as he would live my life if he were me. I am not necessarily learning to do everything he did, but I am learning how to do everything I do in the manner that he did all he did.¹⁴

A Vow of Diagnosis and Protection

Might we not observe this vow functioning as a protection against considering ordination as simply taking on a role? Various churches and denominations have different ways of wording them, but this sixth vow amounts to the same thing for all: protection of our true pastoral identity and vocation. The operative phrase in the sixth vow is “your own life.” It is a vow which diligently

¹² 1 Timothy 4:16

¹³ 1 Peter 5:2

¹⁴ Dallas Willard, *The Divine Conspiracy*, 283

guards and nurtures our own basic commitment as a Christian and the integrity of our own spiritual life, and that this life is to be a "wholesome example to your people." The first *Book of Common Prayer* expressed it as "doctrine and exhortation taken out of the Holy Scriptures and a life agreeable to the same."

We live in a difficult age and, like all difficult ages, our ordination vows will sometimes put us at cross-purposes with one another. Our vows go against our nature. Our vows create an inner-battle for us. Our vows also create outer-battles. The desire of our sinful nature is freedom from being anybody's servant. To be Jesus' servant is also to be at war with the world. He has said so. That is why we need the vows and why we must renew them continually. The vows commit us to being who God intends rather than who we are by nature.

The Vows and Intimacy with God

One of the challenges that we face as clergy is to honor the tension between an inner-life (love of self and intimacy with God), and highly extroverted demands (love of neighbor writ large). Donald Hands and Wayne Fehr, both Episcopal priests, point out the spiritual danger for clergy who lack intimacy with God. They write:

Ordained ministers can live for years on the level of the 'objective,' church-mediated faith (what 'we' believe), without reflecting much on their personal history with God, without any heartfelt personal love-involvement with God. . . . Also typical for this pattern of life and ministry is a notable split between head and heart. A person in this condition may be well educated in theology and quite eloquent in teaching correct doctrine. His or her preaching and counseling, however, is likely to be without much power to touch the hearts of others. What is missing in such a life is a

deeply lived love relationship to the One about whom this person speaks.¹⁵

As clergy, we get many strokes for being public pray-ers. We do not get the same level of external reward for nurturing the private dimension of our spiritual life. Managing our time in a way that assures regular personal nurture of our relationship with the Holy One, the very source of our life and ministry, often means taking ongoing initiatives in negotiating agreements with the community of faith that we work for. It also requires negotiation with our intimate circle of relationships. We do so to acquire the practices and resources that we need, such as regular daily time for private prayer and meditation, monthly meetings with a spiritual companion or group, and periodic personal retreats and Sabbath days. Having a spiritual companion relationship that focuses on valuing the quality of your personal spiritual life will obviously give you more support as you negotiate time off from others in support of your intimacy with God.

A Model for Fulfilling the Ordination Vows

One can approach the ordination vows as encompassing at least two distinguishable dimensions of Christian leadership. They are the functional dimension and the ontological dimension. Many models of pastoral identity seem to elevate the functional dimension of leadership, with a concern for talent, skills,

¹⁵ Donald R. Hands and Wayne L. Fehr, *Spiritual Wholeness for Clergy: A New Psychology of Intimacy with God, Self, and Others*, 54-55

professional development, and perhaps a predisposition toward leadership.

The ontological dimension pertains to the shaping of one's spiritual life or heart.

Since the functional dimension relates to the "doing" side of the equation, the ontological dimension relates to the "being" side. I believe that the ordination vows in the Anglican tradition are clearly focused on the ontological (being) dimension of leadership. A priest is one who leads out of the shaping contents (ontological) of the heart, out of the person we are becoming in Christ.

How then do we order our life to this end of claiming our spiritual place in this world, and living our whole life before God? We need structure and support. There is a name in Christian tradition for the kind of structure that supports our spiritual growth. It is called a "rule of life." A rule of life is a pattern of spiritual disciplines that provides structure and direction for growth in holiness.

The Good News for those of us in the Anglican Communion is that we have a model, developed some fifteen-hundred years ago by a simple monk named Benedict of Nursia. We wonder, can something developed in the sixth century speak to humanity today? Surprisingly yes, because Benedict's model of the Christian life is based soundly on Holy Scripture, and yet takes seriously the frailty of our own human nature. Benedict captures the essentials (or core) experiences of the Christian life and devises a rule for living them. Following a rule of life does not call for heroics or spectacular feats of spiritual accomplishment, just a steady and committed focus on God, through the vehicles of prayer, study, and work involving the spirit, mind, and body. Following such a rule can bring a needed balance to our lives. What follows is a simple diagram of

the "Benedictine," or "Anglican" Triangle, a way of seeing the Christian life in balance. It is essentially the model of the canonical hours of prayer adapted to our individual case.

Protected by the Vows

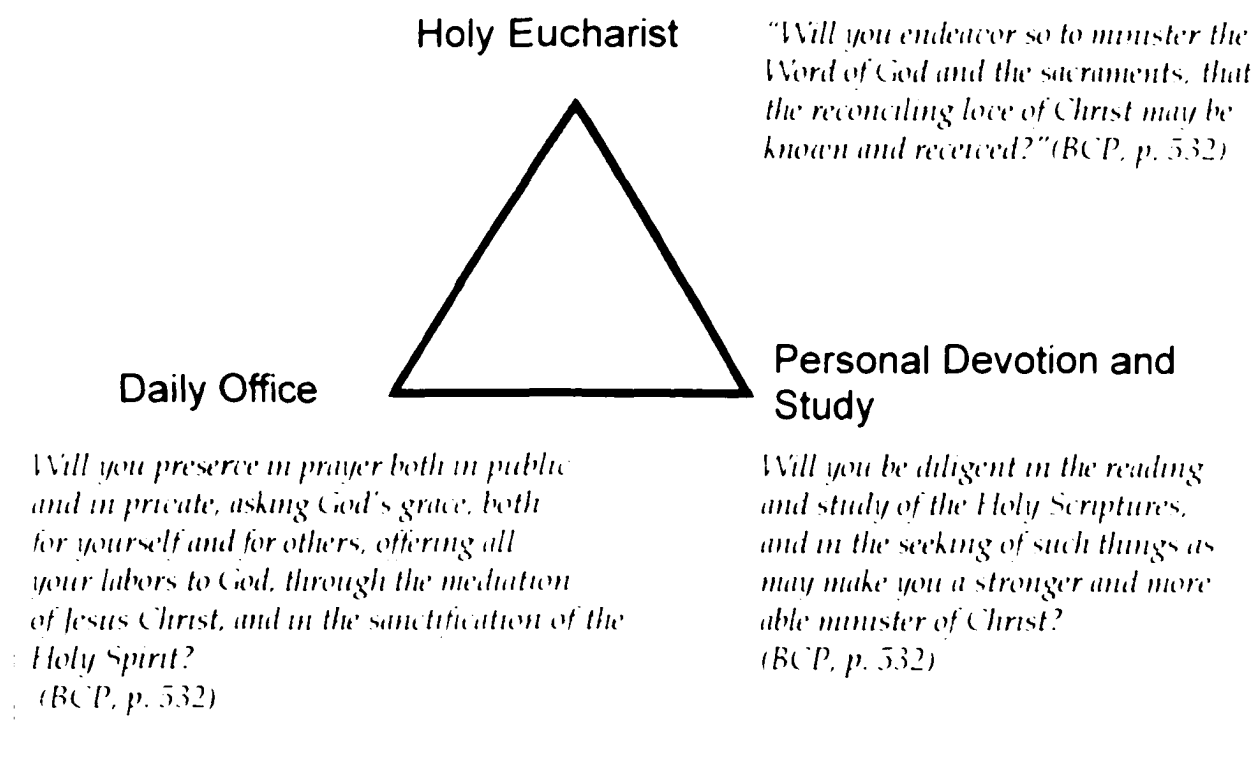


Fig. 1 The Threefold Rule of the Vows

Our worship tradition is based on a three-part structure. Michael Ramsey, the 100th Archbishop of Canterbury, refers to it as the Benedictine Triangle. The

three elements, Eucharist, daily office, and personal devotions, comprise the fundamentals of a disciplined Christian priestly spirituality in the Anglican tradition. The vows call us to define our lives, before all things, as a Christian soul given to prayer. This means we pursue a disciplined practice of the presence of God, centered in the Eucharist and grounded in a daily rule of Office, study, and silence. "To pray, and to teach others to pray, it is all, for given this everything else will follow."¹⁶

This "rule of life" provides the day-by-day, week-by-week, routines, necessary to sustain and ground Christian living. It brings us the enlarged capacity to take hold of the kingdom in its present availability. As Peter Allan explains:

If you have the charge of priesthood laid upon you, then the Sunday liturgy, the daily office and private prayer are simply there, and there is no way around them, even should you want one. They are part of the bargain, and they grow on us as we increasingly sense in them something of the sovereignty of God. In this way they become both a commitment and a joy, even if there are times when we would rather be doing something else.¹⁷

The ordination vows can be used by clergy in their corporate and individual spiritual life as an "overlay," used to assess and make decisions about what to nurture in their own spiritual life and that of the congregation. Using the vows in this way, clergy are able to develop a meaningful personal spiritual rule of life that honors the real context of their life.

¹⁶ Dom Bede Frost, *The Sacred Ministry* (London: SPCK 1970), 19.

¹⁷ Peter Allan et al., *The Fire and the Clay: the Priest in Today's Church* (London: SPCK, 1993), 77, 79, 82.

Life in Balance: A Rule of Life

We are called, near to Jesus, and with Jesus, and in Jesus, to be with God with the people on our heart. This is what we have promised in our ordination vows. This is the meaning of the daily office, of Eucharist, and of personal devotion and study. The introduction to *Daily Prayer*, the text for the liturgy of the hours for the Presbyterian Church U.S.A., emphasizes the point:

Daily Prayer, morning and evening, structures our day in such manner as to remind us that all our time is lived in God's presence. Time is transformed from a measuring device that marks off our chronology into a kind of time that is filled with the presence of God and divine promises for the future.¹⁸

The following suggested rule is one that has been developed to fit the pastor of Saint Michael and All Angels in Mission, Kansas, out of his life circumstances. It serves as one example of fulfilling our ordination vows in the world we live in today. A further treatment of this is found in Appendix B.

PRAYER is the daily recitation of at least Morning or Evening Prayer from the assigned Daily Office in the *Book of Common Prayer*. Whenever possible, the office should be prayed with others. A daily period of silence and contemplation.

STUDY is the daily study time which always includes a reading of and reflection on the sacred scriptures. Additional spiritual reading may be included. The method of Lectio Divina will be used.

¹⁸ *Daily Prayer Supplemental Liturgical Resource 5* (Louisville: Westminster, 1987) 18

WORK is the normal daily routine work schedule as part of the Rule of Life. This is a commitment to a faithful engagement in everyday work. In addition, this also incorporates physical exercise or labor in the regular (if not daily) routine.

STEWARDSHIP is being devoted to a whole-hearted and intentional commitment to follow Christ through the stewardship of talents, assets, and environment in the conduct of ministry as an ordained and baptized person.

REST AND RECREATION provides adequate rest during each day and at night and balances work activities with intentionally chosen personal and family recreation.

Together, these practices represent a "rule of life" (an intentional pattern of Christian discipline), and allow us to participate in the pattern of Christ's own life with God in the world. We enter into the heart of Christ through our prayers, into the mind of Christ through our study, and into the work of Christ as we serve others. These practices are passageways into the transformation of our lives with the aim that we become united with the heart, mind, and work of Christ.

Accountability

The best-laid plans for ongoing formation will amount to very little if they are not accompanied by a spirit and structure of accountability. The ordained are answerable to the Church, to their people, and to themselves and their own sense of integrity, as they grow in their humanity, discipleship, and priestly ministry. Ordained people should also make themselves accountable for their

ongoing formation. With accountability, there is a real possibility for growth and change, indeed, for a conversion of heart. Our responsibility is linked to our commitment at ordination to serve well the people of God through our ministry and through our own personal faith commitment.

A simple way to do this is by sharing their choices and commitments for ongoing formation with our staff and people. We can let our local community know, "This is what I am doing to serve you better." Sharing formational commitments with a spiritual director, friends, and priest support groups also facilitates a sense of accountability. A public position renders priests more visibly accountable for following through on a commitment to grow as human beings, disciples, and ordained ministers of Christ.

Discerning a Missional Identity and Vision for Saint Michael and All Angels Episcopal Church, Mission, Kansas

Two questions raised by the recovery of pastoral and priestly identity as spiritual guides and directors of congregations are: "How do spiritual leaders continue to mature as faithful disciples?" and "How do spiritual leaders guide the ministry of Christian spiritual formation in their congregations?" The first question addresses one of the temptations of spiritual leaders: to become so involved in caring for the needs of parishioners and institutional concerns that the leader finds it difficult to maintain his or her own spiritual practices. We have already addressed this issue in the previous sections of this focus paper.

The second question addresses how spiritual leaders can foster an environment in the congregation in which the spiritual life is nurtured. To answer this question we need to have a vision of the congregation as the primary context for spiritual growth. We need leaders who are spiritually rooted, as well as professionally trained, to guide people in their formation as Christian disciples.

A Process for Visioning a Missionary Identity for Saint Michael's

In a process of discernment, the parish undertook a major refocusing of the vision at Saint Michaels in 1995, prior to the call of the present rector. How do we do this now, after five years of my leadership at Saint Michaels? This conversation needs to go on at all times in terms of calling the parish back to the primary importance of the Great Commission. It needs to be focused on an inspiring vision of the church and helping Jesus make disciples.

We have been impressed by both the Diocese of Texas vision, as well as others such as the Diocese of Milwaukee and the Diocese of Virginia. The Episcopal Diocese of Kansas also is restructuring to become mission focused in this way. The restructuring is based on the vision for the Diocese to nurture, to equip, and to send disciples into the world.

As the current rector, my response to all of this was to build on this excellent work being done in the Episcopal Church and apply it to our congregation. We needed to seek a very simple way to define our vision and came up with the following statement: Saint Michaels is a congregation where

people may “Come and See Jesus, Come to Know Jesus and Come to Serve Jesus.”

We began with the vestry and leadership by scheduling a visioning retreat. (See Appendix C) The visioning process was directly related to issues of identity and involves *becoming* what the church is *called* to be. We are called to understand our corporate spirituality (at its best), and help members to understand, participate in, and live that spirituality.

Defining the congregation is an account of how we see ourselves and of how we understand our identity and purpose as a congregation in relation to our members and the larger community. This organizational self-definition also needs to define how we want to communicate our identity to others. We focused on a particular method of looking at the identity of this parish. We considered our church community in terms of becoming a parish where people may “Come and See Jesus, Come to Know Jesus and Come to Serve Jesus.”

Other monastic rules might serve as models, such as the Benedictine, Ignatian, or Franciscan rules. None of these are as simple or straightforward as the biblical call to “come and see, come to know and come to serve Jesus.” A simple rule that instills and supports action is likely to be most effective. The vision serves as the basis of a simple rule (or process) of spiritual formation in community. It is a broad framework for the mission of the Church that requires our own unique individual definition and adaptation for our own purposes.

Simply stated the, the model for spiritual formation at St. Michael's is that God calls us to proclaim the Gospel ("come and see Jesus"), form disciples ("come to know Jesus"), and serve all of God's children ("come to serve Jesus").

The purpose of the vision is to reclaim Jesus' Great Commission to his disciples:

And Jesus came and said to them, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded you. And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age."¹⁹

This vision focuses the parish on evangelization (invitation and worship), Christian formation (discipleship), and Christian service (mission and ministry).

The Vision is Biblically Based

The second half of the first chapter of John describes the process of gathering and forming people into the Christian faith.²⁰ In these stories, we find the calling of disciples and their identification of Jesus. First, John the Baptist identifies Jesus as the Lamb of God, the one who baptizes with the Holy Spirit, and the Son of God. Then Jesus invites Andrew and another disciple to "come and see," and Andrew goes to find his brother, Peter, and proclaims that he has found the Messiah. Jesus also invites Philip to "follow me," and Philip, in turn, finds Nathanael and proclaims Jesus the one described in the Mosaic Law and the prophets. Then Nathanael identifies Jesus as the Son of God.

¹⁹ Matthew 28 16-20

²⁰ John 1 43-51

Jesus invites people to "come and see," and to "follow me," and to become his disciples. A disciple is not a person who simply studies the teachings of Jesus; a disciple is a person who actually lives with the teacher, shares his life, and a person who truly comes to know Jesus. Jesus invites us to live with him. In this manner, we come to know Jesus.

When Jesus is present in our lives, we as disciples "come to serve Jesus." Through involvement in our unique ministries we see the signs and wonders of lives (including our own) being reoriented towards God.

At this point, we identify Jesus and discover the Good News of the Gospel. In addition, we realize that we too, like Andrew and Philip, have an invitation to make to other people to "come and see Jesus." Those invited or called and formed in the faith and the love of God, respond with the giving of themselves. We want to serve Jesus in our own way with the gifts God gives us. We want to serve the Servant.

From living with Jesus, the first followers became believers, and then went out and proclaimed the Good News of Jesus themselves. Philip became convinced that Jesus was the Messiah, and so he invited Nathanael to "come and see Jesus."

This process to "come and see, come to know, and come to serve" is not linear, but circular in an upward spiral. A person may enter the process at any point, perhaps by response to invitation, or coming to learn about Jesus in worship, or through Sunday school, or through serving at a food kitchen. Once the path is started, it may lead further.

Lessons we can learn from a new visioning process

First, we can see visioning as a process of connecting to a spiritual path or journey, not simply as a means of adding new church programs or tasks. The vision is a simple statement of our call to (and responsibilities in) spiritual community, invitation, formation, and service. If this vision conflicts with some of a church's expressed or hidden values, it becomes a basis for reevaluating the values. By asking how to act as a parish where people may "come and see Jesus, come to know Jesus, and come to serve Jesus," a parish discerns God's call to live out our baptismal covenants in community.

Second, we can recognize our unique contexts and personalities, and discern God's unique and individual calls to us as a spiritual community. The vision is a broad framework for the mission of the Church that requires individual definition by each member of the parish. There is no single way for a church to serve God, and visioning is not measuring the church against some third party objective standard of what a church should be. Part of God's call is leaving us the possibilities to choose what we are gifted at or enjoy doing.

Third, we are discovering that we cannot simply be church for ourselves; we must help introduce others to Jesus. Our activities need to bring people to Jesus, or serve people for Jesus.

Fourth, we realize that the heart of the discernment process is prayer. Prayer begins in gratitude for the gifts and opportunities we have received, and continues with a careful listening for God's will for the church.

Fifth, we recognize that our discernment processes are ongoing. God calls each church to new realizations and activities, and the process of learning and growth will continue as long as the church community is experiencing spiritual and relational vitality.

Vision Helps the Parish Move from Maintenance to Mission

We are starting with a radical (or "root") vision of Christianity and finding we can use this call to mission as a standard to evaluate and reform our structures. Our vision of: A vibrant congregation where people may "Come and See Jesus, Come to Know Jesus and Come to Serve Jesus" may not seem new, but it requires a significant change of heart.

We live this vision as we proclaim the Gospel, invite others to come and see, and as we form those who are already there and those who come to be disciples. We live it as we become ones for others, and not just for ourselves.

A mission focus is proactive. It is easier for us to lead proactively because we have an agreed goal or standard to lead by. We lessen the situations in which we need to be reactive. We are more focused outward to what we are called to do, which is to bring others into the faith, and support them in their journeys. We become healthy and grow, not just struggle to maintain where we are.

A mission focus helps us become more connected. With a common vision we can share our resources and support one another. By getting on the same page, we can become a larger supportive community. We can act more like the body of Christ.

A mission focus helps us to use our resources more effectively. We are better stewards and more accountable for the gifts we receive because we use them for a decided purpose, and prioritize our activities to accomplish that purpose.

Each of these reasons for becoming mission-focused is somewhat selfish; we do it because it helps us out as a church. The real reason we need to be mission-focused is that churches that help Jesus make disciples transform people's lives. By helping Jesus transform other people's lives, we also transform our own.

Conclusion: Pastoral Oversight and Godly Example

Can professional ministry be an expression of the life of prayer? Our ordination vows mandate a vital and vibrant personal faith and life of prayer. How do I, and any minister, in the midst of the varied pressures and activities of our professional lives, discern and ground that doing in our being in the presence of God?

As the 100th Archbishop Michael Ramsey challenges, to be a priest is to: "To be with God, with the people on your heart."²¹ The priest facilitates community by being a priest, living an interior life of sacrifice, mediating the presence of God on only in sacramental action, but in being himself, "a walking sacrament of Christ the High Priest."²² The priest is, before all things, a Christian

²¹ Ramsey *The Christian Priest Today* 14

²² Ibid

soul, given to prayer. That is, the disciplined practice of the presence of God, centered in the Eucharist, and grounded in a daily rule of office and silence. To pray and teach souls to pray, it is all, for given this everything else will follow. In the Niagara Report of the Anglican and Lutheran Churches, the following conclusion is made:

Therefore, in the spirit of Anglican tradition, we strongly affirm a theological both-and: first, God calls all baptized persons to be agents of the kingdom and missionaries of God's reconciling love in Christ; and second, God also calls some people within the laos to serve Christ's body, the mission community, in particular ways. Among these are the ordained, who share an indispensable call to faithful leadership in the laos on behalf of God's mission. In ecumenical conversations and in the ordinals, the Episcopal Church has consistently maintained that the essential ideas that describe the relationship of ordained ministry to the ministry of the baptized are *pastoral oversight and godly example*.²³

²³ ARCIC I *The Final Report* "Ministry and Ordination," paragraph 9. The Anglican-Lutheran *Niagara Report* (1987), 33

CHAPTER SIX

A STRATEGY FOR SPIRITUAL FORMATION AND PASTORAL IDENTITY AT ST. MICHAEL AND ALL ANGELS EPISCOPAL CHURCH

An apostolic community, those sent into the world as witnesses to God's Kingdom, requires that disciples or agents ("ministers") of Christ be transformed by, and through the Holy Spirit. The Church is an instrument of transformation for the Kingdom of God on earth. As Dallas Willard says:

Churches are not the kingdom of God, but are primary and inevitable expressions, outposts, and instrumentalities of the presence of the kingdom among us. They are "societies" of Jesus, springing up in Jerusalem, in Judea, in Samaria, and to the furthest points on earth (Acts 1:8), as the reality of Christ is brought to bear on ordinary human life.¹

The recovery of pastoral identity as spiritual guidance means that the right direction of the congregation under God would be one that makes spiritual formation in Christlikeness the exclusive primary goal. God's plan for the spiritual formation of the congregation is found in the Great Commission of Jesus: "As you go throughout the world, make apprentices to me from all kinds of people, immerse them in the Trinitarian reality, and teach them to do everything I have commanded you."²

¹ Dallas Willard, *Renovation of the Heart: Putting on the Character of Christ* (Colorado Springs: NavPress 2002), 17.

² Matthew 28:19-20, paraphrase by Dallas Willard.

According to Dallas Willard, this plan for spiritual formation has three stages:

First, making disciples – that is apprentices of Jesus. Second, immersing the apprentices at all levels of growth in the Trinitarian presence. Third, the work of transforming disciples inwardly, in such a way that doing the words and deeds of Jesus is not the focus but the natural outcome or side effect.³

For the work of transformation, within the context of a congregation in the Episcopal Church, the community is gathered and plunged into the Paschal Mystery of death and resurrection in Baptism and Eucharist. There, the ultimate change intended by God may occur. Believers can find means to be transformed into the likeness of Christ to continue God's work in the world. A baptismal and Eucharistic ecclesiology also places the gathered church in the wider context of mission. Transformation and growth in discipleship are not ends in themselves, but through sacramental promise, God's people are assisted by grace so they may announce the good news of the kingdom and serve humankind.

Nevertheless, the sad reality is that one may espouse a particular spirituality without ever becoming a spiritual person. We can espouse the church's mission without ever carrying it out. Norman Shawchuck points out this discrepancy:

A vast gulf sometimes exists between the spirituality espoused by a congregation and the spirituality lived out by its members. This is because many congregations are taught the form of their spirituality without ever being formed by it and many individuals handle the elements of spirituality without allowing themselves to be formed by them.⁴

³ Willard, *The Renovation of the Heart*, 240

⁴ Norman Shawchuck and Roger Heuser, *Leading the Congregation Caring for Yourself While Serving the People* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1993), 123

If preaching and liturgy were sufficient to form the congregation in the likeness and image of Jesus, then every congregation would have been so formed long ago. What is needed, is spiritual guidance and direction of the leader, to use these as a means of tending the spiritual transformation of the congregation so that its espoused spirituality becomes its lived spirituality, and the parish becomes a "school of life." Dallas Willard says, "Christian assemblies will become what they have been in many periods of the past and what the world desperately calls for today: incomparable schools of life—life that is eternal in quality now, as well as unending in quantity."⁵

At the heart of this paper's focus, is the claim that it is the recovery of pastoral identity as spiritual guide, and a director that is a primary catalyst for the spiritual formation of the congregation. It is important to be clear about what we are trying to do. At the heart of pastoral identity and pastoral ministry is the spiritual formation of the congregation. Spiritual formation for the parish basically refers to the Spirit-driven process of forming the inner world of the lives of the community in such a way, that it becomes like and reflects the inner-being of Christ himself.

The pastor's role as a spiritual companion of the congregation is the central work of ministry, and only then can preaching and liturgy become the means of grace and transformation they are inherently meant to be. In leading a congregation, there is little benefit if the pastor attempts simply to use their role

⁵ Willard, *Renovation of the Heart*. 26

or office to represent something they have not accepted as normative for their own life. Perhaps in the entire world, Mother Teresa represents the dynamic relationship between the influences of the leader's example in living the life of the Kingdom:

Just allow people to see Jesus in you: to see how you pray, to see how you lead a pure life, to see how you deal with your family, to see how much peace there is in your family. Then you can look straight into their eyes and say, 'This is the way'. You speak from life, you speak by experience.⁶

A fundamental requirement for the spiritual formation of the congregation is the experience and example of the ordained leader. The ordained are to be seen as "icons, living reminders, and animators"⁷ of the congregations, with whom they worship and serve. The purpose for the ordination of deacons, priests or presbyters, and bishops is to provide pastors or shepherds to serve the community as models, or "icons," of the fundamental priesthood to which all persons are called. "The ordained person is primarily a sign, a sacrament of the priesthood of all Christians, which is the priesthood of Christ."⁸

Because of their call, ordained individuals enter a life-long process of formation in community. They must continue, through prayer, reflection, and collegiality, to cultivate the gifts and responsibilities, which are confirmed in

⁶ Mother Teresa, *Words to Love By* (Notre Dame: Ave Maria Press, 1983), 15

⁷ Bishop Jim Kelsey (Northern Michigan) in a letter to the House of Bishops committee on the "Theology of Priesthood"

⁸ William Countryman, *Living on the Border of the Holy: Renewing the Priesthood of All* (Harrisburg, PA: Morehouse, 1999), xii

ordination. At the same time, as they seek to grow in devotion, insight, and stature, deacons, priests or presbyters, and bishops, remain with all the laos, drawn up into a process of transformation into the likeness of Christ. The baptismal community is the setting in which the calling of the ordained person takes place, the matrix of personal growth, and a model of spiritual formation for the congregation. Community and pastor are one in Christ. Dallas Willard characterizes it this way:

For our Christian groups and their leaders, it means that there is a simple, straightforward way in which congregations of Jesus' people can, without exception, fulfill his call to be an *ecclesia*, his "called out" ones: a touch point between heaven and earth, where the healing of the Cross and the Resurrection can save the lost and grow the saved into the fullness of human beings in Christ. No special facilities, programs, talents, or techniques are required. *It doesn't even require a budget.* Just faithfulness to the process of spiritual formation in Christlikeness exposed in the Scriptures and in the lives of his "peculiar people" through the ages (Titus 2:14, KJV).⁹

A Strategy for Spiritual Formation

Contemporary spirituality desperately needs focus, precision, and roots. More specifically, it needs focus on Christ, precision in the Scriptures, and roots in a healthy sacramental tradition. Recovering what is ours in Christ by going deep into, not away from the tradition, holds real promise. There is plenty of digging to be done in our own back yard. Together we may discover the rich heritage of our own spirituality, and understand the delicate balance of the essential ingredients in Christian spiritual identity. Gregg Clapper makes this point, saying that: "Trying to be a Christian without starting in some specific

⁹ Dallas Willard. *Renovation of the Heart*, 12

tradition is like saying you want to play baseball 'in general' but do not want to join a team. It can't be done! ¹⁰

A strategy for spiritual formation and pastoral identity in the Anglican tradition is found in the relationship among three core purposes of the people of God: worship, discipleship and mission. The three central elements in the Christian life are all part of a whole. They are interdependent. Weakness or distortion in one element eventually brings weakness or distortion in the others. Development is directed toward the strength of each element, and a proper balance and exchange among them in parish life.

Worship, discipleship, and mission are all ways in which we seek Christ and through which Christ comes to us. They are passageways into a form of renewal and development that is directed toward the mind, heart, and work of Christ. In using this pattern for shaping the life and development of the parish, we are directed toward the primary concerns of the Church and are provided a means for integration, stability, and comprehensiveness in that life and development.

A pattern for understanding and living the Christian life can be found in the relationship among worship, discipleship, and mission. This is a conceptual aid to help this parish focus on certain essential elements of its life.

¹⁰ Gregg Clapper *As If the Heart Mattered: A Wesleyan Spirituality* (Nashville: Upper Room, 1997) 12

It is a map, a great help on the journey, and yet not the same as the journey itself.

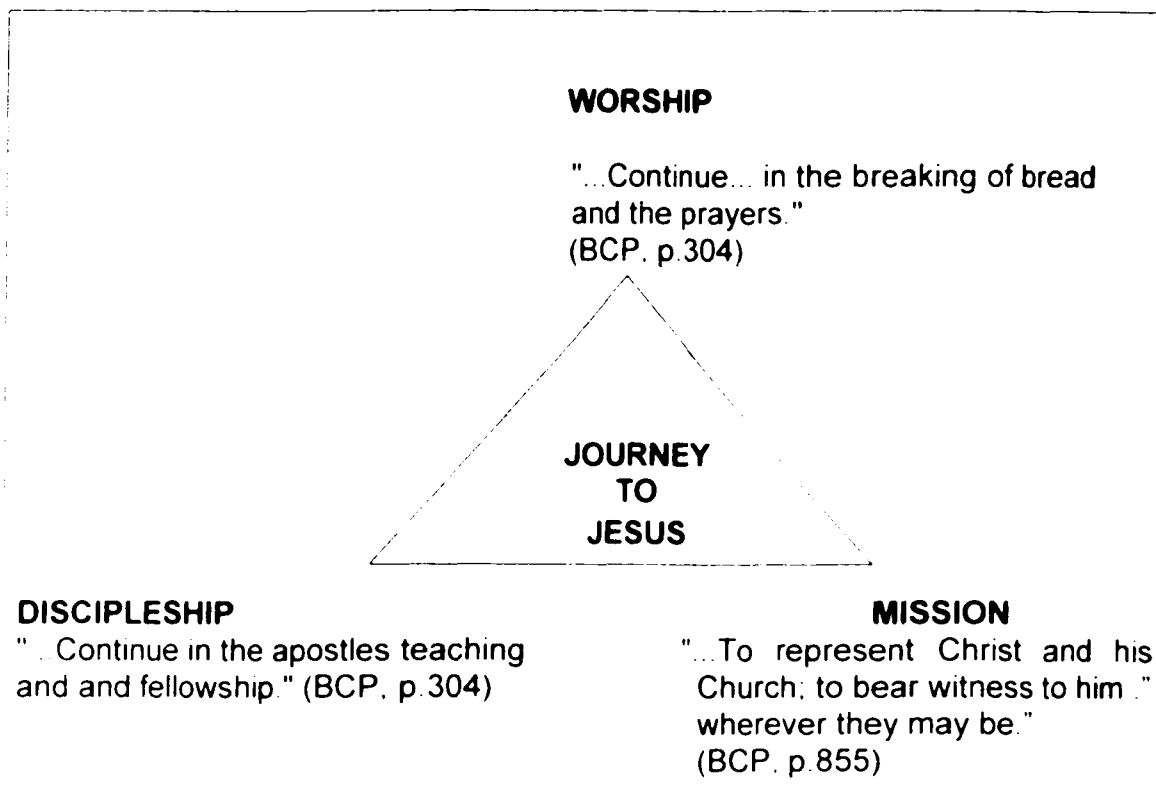


Fig 2 The Christian Formation Model at St. Michael's

This is the model that will become a strategic method of spiritual guidance and formation of the congregation. Anglican spirituality, liturgy, and sacramental life are all powerful tools in forming people into committed and loving disciples. A teaching using the Baptismal Covenant as a model of apprenticeship to Jesus is found in Appendix D.

Worship and Spiritual Guidance

As we look at the patterns of spiritual development in our heritage, we are called to more intentional and strategic attention to those patterns individually and corporately. This is certainly true when it comes to worship. Worship is central to every congregation's life; it both expresses and shapes the community and its life together. Worship is also the primary avenue for the nurture and growth of the congregation's spiritual life. As pastors and priests, we have a unique opportunity to give spiritual direction to the congregation in its worship of God every Sunday.

The earliest description of New Testament worship is found in Acts 2:42. According to Luke, the early Christians "devoted themselves to the apostle's teaching and to the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer." There is the general pattern of the twofold form of worship described in this verse: the gathering around the apostolic teaching, and the breaking of bread. The primitive form of worship is centered around "word" and "table." Worship as spiritual guidance follows this pattern of telling and acting out the work of Christ through recitation of the Word, and dramatization through the Eucharist. From its beginnings, liturgy has been a part of Christian worship. Spiritual guidance and formation through the liturgy became a part of normative Christian experience. The power of spiritual formation through worship and adoration of God is expressed with conviction in these words of the Apostle Paul: "... all of us, with unveiled faces, seeing the glory of the Lord as though reflected in a mirror, are

being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another; for this comes from the Lord, the Spirit.”¹¹

We worship God because God is worthy. One of the results of our worship will be that we are changed, and transformed. Two classic means of grace in worship are the proclamation of the Word of God and the Celebration of Eucharist. As the *Book of Common Prayer* says, “The visible Church of Christ is a congregation of faithful men, in which the pure Word of God is preached and the Sacraments be duly administered according to Christ’s ordinance...”¹²

The recovery of pastoral identity finds one of its most fruitful and authoritative manifestations when one gives their most devotion to the “word” and the “table” as primary means of spiritual guidance, direction, and transformation of the congregation.

A Method of Preaching as Spiritual Formation and Pastoral Guidance

The congregation gathering on Sunday morning is in fact an essential formative context for Christian spirituality. Preaching is one of the communities most ancient and foundational formative practices. Yet, many churches, filled with Biblically illiterate individuals, are often quite wanting in their spiritual development. Thus, we as preachers must be intentional in the creation of sermons that not only *inform* our listeners, but also address the question: How will this Biblical message help *form* and *transform* their lives? What might it

¹¹ 2 Cor 3:18

¹² *The Book of Common Prayer*, 871

mean, practically, for the preacher to recover preaching as a formative spiritual discipline, both for the pastor and the congregation?

Transformative preaching requires sermon preparation that utilizes the practice of classical disciplines of formation as an essential process for communicating the Word of God. The task is itself a spiritual discipline. Requiring significant periods of solitude and silence is as important a part of the preparation as is formal exegesis of the text. I would emphasize the place of fasting, and the critical importance of Biblical meditation.

The study and practice of classical disciplines of formation as part of preparation for preaching takes seriously the reality of ecclesial spiritual formation, that preaching is a mutually formative event. By this approach, we seek to prepare, preach, and respond to sermons that seek to foster practices of spiritual formation in the congregation.

Finding the Fullness of the Word: Lectio Divina

The wisdom, counsel, and skills that have developed around the concern for how we read scripture through the centuries coalesce under the Latin heading, *Lectio Divina*, often translated as “spiritual reading.” We are taught by this method to read the Bible with humility, intimacy, and obedient faith. Dom Marmion, the famous French Benedictine, says, “We read under the eye of God until the heart is touched and leaps into flame.”¹³

¹³ Thelma Hall *Too Deep For Words: Rediscovering Lectio Divina* (New York: Paulist Press 1988) 44

The concern of *lectio divina* as an essential part of transformational preaching is fairly simple to grasp. It means reading personally, not impersonally, reading for a message that affects and transforms who we are and who we are becoming, reading as a means of listening to and obeying God. If we are obliged to preach, teach, or study Scripture, it is important that this task oriented reading does not displace a person-centered reading, and vice-versa. There will be overlaps in sermon preparation, but the specific character of each exercise should be safeguarded.

Good solid study and exegesis gives us the objective meaning of the text, but *lectio* facilitates a more holistic response to God's word. *Lectio divina* deals with the text where study leaves off. It leads to a conscious endeavor to live in accordance with the Gospels. To live what we read. We read to evangelize our lives and to deepen our Christlikeness. What begins as reading becomes reflection, or meditation; this leads to prayer, and ultimately, to contemplative union with God. The Latin terms used traditionally are *lectio*, *meditatio*, *oratio*, and *contemplatio*. A diagram that summarizes schematically what has been said is found in Appendix E.

Before we examine the four-step process of *lectio* as a preparation for transformative preaching, some important clarifications should be made.

First, the movements of this encounter with the presence of God through Scripture is not a programmed or mechanical 1-2-3-4 progression. *Lectio* seeks to enable us to respond to the gift of God's word to us, and to dispose ourselves to obeying it. We go to this form of prayerful reading to give ourselves, in love,

not in seeking to master the text. Secondly, our part in *lectio* is one of consent and of letting go of all that resists God. We are moving from informational reading to formational reading. Our approach is first to listen for God, for what God is saying to us through this text, rather than trying to establish ourselves as the controlling power. It calls for a surrender and letting go, allowing the text to become an instrument of God's grace in our lives. The injunction to love God with all of our heart and soul precedes loving God with our entire mind. Too often there is an ingrained imbalance of the rational, cognitive dynamics of our lives.

Formational reading of Scripture requires a humble, detached, receptive, loving approach. Adrian van Kamm states this well:

To find self formation by means of scripture reading, I must be open in docility to what its text may eventually tell me about myself. Formative reading implies, moreover, my willingness to change my current self in light of the formative insight scripture may radiate to me. The word as formative has power to transform me.¹⁴

Thirdly, reading and prayer are familiar to many, but the other two stages of *lectio* are not. Meditation is that rambling reasoning process in which words and events are prayerfully pondered, thereby opening the possibility of drawing personal meaning from them. Contemplation is a focused resting in God, in which words become less important than the fellowship with God. *Lectio divina*, then, engages the whole person: mind, heart, and spirit, intellect and imagination, will, and affections.

¹⁴ Cited in Susan Annette Muto, *Renewed at Each Awakening* (Denville, N.J.: Dimension Books, 1979) 135

We examine now how these phases can assist in preaching for spiritual formation of the pastor, and congregation.

Lectio: We Read

The process of *lectio* begins with cultivating the ability to listen deeply, to hear "with the ear of our hearts" as St. Benedict encourages us in the *Prologue to the Rule*. When we read the Scriptures, we should try to imitate the prophet Elijah. We should allow ourselves to become women and men who are able to listen for the still, small voice of God (I Kings 19:12): the "faint murmuring sound" which is God's word for us, and God's voice touching our hearts. *Lectio* begins, then, with attentiveness to the speaker, a hearing and listening to God through and in the text. We are seeking to hear the living word of God, intimately present to us in this passage of Scripture.

I need to prepare for this sacred reading by taking time to quiet my body and my mind, in order to bring my whole person into a single focus. With this disposition, I read the text, (most often the Gospel reading for the upcoming Sunday), listening to it interiorly with full attention. This is, even at this stage, a response to a person, the Lord, who calls me to open my mind and my heart to Him. For example, let us take the Gospel lesson for the third Sunday of Easter, Luke 24:13-35, the resurrection appearance to the two disciples on the road to Emmaus. Perhaps I hear the Lord saying to me: "Oh how foolish you are, and how slow to believe..." What might strike me is a realization that I often rely upon

my own insight and wisdom rather than placing my confidence in the reliability of His leading and acting in my life.

If I have been drawn to a particular phrase and it resonates with meaning for me and for the congregation, then I have begun to enter into the next step, *meditatio*.

Meditatio – We Meditate Under the Eye of God

Once we have found a word or a passage in the Scriptures which speaks to us in a personal way, we must take it in and "ruminate" on it. The image of the ruminant animal quietly chewing its cud was used in antiquity as a symbol of the Christian pondering the Word of God. Christians have always seen a scriptural invitation to *lectio divina* in the example of the Virgin Mary "pondering in her heart" what she saw and heard of Christ (Luke 2:19). For us today, these images are a reminder that we must take in the word (that is, memorize it), and while gently repeating it to ourselves, allow it to interact with our thoughts, our hopes, our memories, and our desires. *Meditatio* is the second step, or stage, in *lectio divina*. Through *meditation*, we allow God's word to become His word for us, a word that touches us and affects us at our deepest levels. Meditation moves from looking at the word of the text to entering the world of the text.

Oratio – The Word Touches the Heart

The third step in *lectio divina* is *oratio*, or prayer. Prayer is understood as loving conversation with the One who has invited us into His embrace. Prayer is also an act of consecration and as the priestly offering to God of parts of

ourselves that we have not previously believed God wants. In this consecration prayer, we allow the word that we have taken in, and on which we are pondering, to touch and change our deepest selves. Just as a priest consecrates the elements of bread and wine at the Eucharist, God invites us in *lectio divina* to hold up our most difficult and pain-filled experiences to Him, and to gently recite over them the healing word or phrase He has given us in our *lectio* and *meditatio*. In this *oratio*, this consecration prayer, we allow our real selves to be touched and changed by the word of God.

Contemplatio – The Heart Leaps into Flame

Finally, we simply rest in the presence of the One who has used His word as a means of inviting us to accept His transforming embrace. No one who has ever been in love needs to be reminded that there are moments in loving relationships when words are unnecessary. It is the same in our relationship with God. Wordless, quiet rest in the presence of the One who loves us has a name in the Christian tradition. That name is *contemplatio*, or, contemplation. Once again, we practice silence, letting go of our own words. This time we simply enjoy the experience of being in the presence of God. It can be expressed by these words of Jesus: "Anyone who loves me will keep my word, and my Father will love him and we shall come to him and make a home in him."¹⁵

The fruit of deepened contemplative prayer shows in my professional and personal life. It deepens my understanding of Scripture, which deepens my

¹⁵ John 14:23

preaching. Sitting at the feet of Christ deepens my love for Him. My heart begins to break over what breaks the heart of God. I discover a fresh and moving compassion for the lost, because I know how much it pains God's heart.

Hearing the Sermon as a Formative Event

For years, homiletics has been defined by extreme choices, propositional exposition or encounter, explanation or experience, ancient text or today. Transformational preaching is a new paradigm for preaching that emphasizes integration.

Integration describes the way that two distinct entities can come together without compromising integrity. Integrity is about wholeness (like an integer, which is a whole number). Integrative preaching, then, is about bringing things (like head and heart, text and today, truth and experience) together without sacrificing the integrity of either concern at all.

Traditionally, preachers have emphasized the cognitive path, explaining the propositions of the text and sermon, making things clear and making things orderly. The idea is that if the truth is made comprehensible to the mind, the listener will be compelled to respond, and the preacher will have done his or her job.

More recently, preachers have been rediscovering intuitive experiences as an avenue to listener apprehension. Gripping stories and emotional appeal compel a listener to want to respond to the message on offer. Whether the propositions can be explained is less important when a listener feels a need to

respond. Integration describes the bringing together of seemingly contrary options in such a way, that the integrity of each substance remains uncompromised.

The Process

There are three essential steps toward the process of helping the congregation hear the sermon as a formative event. They are reflection, response, and routine. *Reflection* is the process by which members of the congregation personalize the Biblical message and take ownership of its truths. Then opportunities for *response* (both during the service and throughout the week) enable them to walk out what they have learned. Finally, the establishment of spiritual disciplines, *routines*, enables Biblical truth to be acted out and woven into their very lifestyles.

After the sermon has concluded, a period of silent reflection is given as a corporate response. During this time a series of questions in the bulletin sermon insert can help stimulate the reflection process:

- 1) What implications does this sermon have for my day tomorrow?
- 2) What is my first action step?
- 3) What needs to change in my thought-life?
- 4) Is there anything I am avoiding?

The following actions, as appropriate to the sermon, allow the congregation to respond to what they have heard from God's Word. Asking individuals to write out a short prayer in the bulletin insert would allow them not

only to respond immediately, but also to take home a copy of that response as a reminder during the week. Another option is to allow the congregation to create an action plan by writing down one or two challenges.

Finally, it is by coming to the “table,” and receiving the nourishing, healing life of Christ through the sacrament, that the Word can be celebrated and dwell in our hearts.

Holy Eucharist as an Integrating Discipline for Spiritual Formation And Pastoral Guidance

Robert Webber, and others, suggest that Acts 2 provides the seminal information for a development of early Christian practice. This passage combines with an understanding, that Christian worship developed against the backdrop of Jewish religious practice of the synagogue and Temple, and provides a glimpse of the house worship that characterized the first 200 years of Christian worship:

The structure of worship most highly recommended is the fourfold pattern, which is rooted in Scripture and history, particularly the first six centuries of the Church. The description in Acts 2:42 of the earliest Christian worship recounts how early Christians gathered around the apostles' teaching and the breaking of bread in the context of prayer and fellowship. This passage provides evidence that from its inception, Christian worship had two primary focuses: Word and Table. To gather and to be sent forth established the fourfold worship pattern: Gathering, the Word, Thanksgiving, Dismissal.¹⁶

A core principle in the recovery of pastoral identity, is that worship is a formative event. The way a congregation worships determines the way a congregation lives. *Lex orandi lex credendi* means, the rule of prayer is the rule

¹⁶ Robert Webber, *Planning Blended Worship* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1998), 20

of faith. The ancient pattern of gathering, Word, table and dismissal has great value for spiritual formation.

It is important to remember that all Christian worship is liturgical. The word liturgy comes from two Greek words: *leitōs* meaning people, and *ergon*, meaning to work. Non-liturgical worship would be worship in which the congregation was completely disengaged, rendering them an audience or spectators. All actions of response, standing, singing, greeting, receiving an offering, etc. are liturgical acts of participation. Biologically speaking, responsiveness is a sign of life. In Christian worship, God reveals Himself to his people, and they respond to his revelation with words, actions, postures, movements, sounds, prayers, gifts, etc.

As we have said, there are two means of proclaiming Christ. The Word and sermon proclaim God's plan of redemption and the sacrament reenacts it. Both Word and sacrament, by the power of the Holy Spirit, bring us transformation by the grace of God. The benefits of Christ are opened to us as we hear and receive with faith and confidence.

The table of communion is a celebration of Christ. In the four-fold action of "taking," "blessing," "breaking," and "giving" the bread and wine, Christ creates, redeems, and restores humanity. This action dramatizes the death and resurrection of Christ through sign and symbol, and is made real again, newly present to us.

The central act of Christian worship in the early church was the breaking of bread. By the daily breaking of bread, Christ's followers were celebrating the presence of the risen Lord in their midst, who was made uniquely present in this

way. That is to say, that the Eucharist is an integrating event, the climax of worship, and a powerful means of spiritual formation. Through it, the active saving and healing presence of Christ is at the table. When the elements of bread and wine are taken in confident faith, the transforming and nourishing power of Christ (for the healing and salvation of the person) is made available. It is not simply a memorial of what has been done. It is an active participation and encounter with the risen Jesus that is transforming. Worship is characterized more as the celebration of an event, rather than the unfolding of an idea.

Ralph Martin, professor of New Testament at Fuller Seminary describes the action of the table this way:

The key term is "remembrance": "this do in remembrance of me." But the church is not engaged in a backward glance and recall as a neutral or detached observe of what happened in the dim past... "Remembering" shares in the dynamic quality of evocation. Past events are regarded as triggering a set of evocative experiences in which those dated events live again; as they are rehearsed they are relived, and relived with all the potency they once had for their original audiences and participants.¹⁷

The Eucharist is the place where the priest or pastor can help people to release both, the divine, and human aspects of worship. We can, by our example and faithful teaching help them see that it is more than their table fellowship with one another, because it truly is a sharing, a "joining together with angels and archangels and all the company of heaven".¹⁸ We proclaim the Lord's death until he comes, and we also feed upon his life now.

As a teacher and interpreter of the Eucharist, as the one who leads the

¹⁷ Ralph Martin, *The Worship of God* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1982), 215

¹⁸ *Book of Common Prayer*, 362

people in their sacramental worship, we have an immense role. This priest has found, as celebrant of the Eucharist, that I am privileged with a unique intensity to "be with God with the people on your heart."¹⁹

The disciplines of worship provide the matrix in which grace is most likely to flood our lives, and produce a stable spiritual identity in the midst of a rapidly changing world. When worship, reading of the Word, prayer, spiritual reading, meditation, and the Eucharist cease being duties and become authentic means of grace, the formation of personal spiritual identity advances rapidly. The presence and power of Christ is communicated to his people in a special way as the family gathers around the holy table.

Table worship at Saint Michael's is being seen anew, as a celebration of the presence of the risen Christ. Living in Christ is living the Eucharist. Living the Eucharist is walking with the risen Christ on that journey to Emmaus (like the disciples, often uncertain, despairing or afraid, yet still accompanied by Jesus.)

Discipleship and Spiritual Guidance

The pastor as a spiritual guide inducts people into a life of discipleship or apprenticeship to Jesus. In that life there will be three primary themes developed: helping people grow in intimacy with God, accepting their ultimate identity as the beloved of God, and discovering their unique voice and way of Kingdom responsibility and life mission.

¹⁹ Michael Ramsey, *The Christian Priest Today* (London: SPCK, 1975), 16

It is instructive to look at how the early Church nurtured these themes in seekers. By the fourth century, a four-stage catechetical system had been developed. Interestingly, this system blended evangelism and spiritual formation. This model for making disciples swept across the Roman Empire in the third century. It resulted in the conversion of pagans to Christianity, and to the first dramatic change in culture in the long history of Christianity. This process is being revived today, and promises to revolutionize the way we evangelize and assimilate converts into the faith. Dr. Robert Webber has adapted this model for congregations in his book, *Journey to Jesus: The Worship, Evangelism, and Nurture Mission of the Church*. This ancient-future approach to worship, evangelism, and discipleship has the potential to empower the recovery of pastoral identity and the spiritual formation of the congregation. This book and model will become the strategy for making disciples at Saint Michael's, beginning in the Fall of 2002. It will be introduced to a core group, to spend one season going through the entire process themselves. An outline of planning for this discipleship process is found in Appendix F-G.

Journey to Jesus: A Curriculum for Christlikeness at Saint Michael's

A chief source for our knowledge of worship, evangelism, and discipleship in the early Church is *The Apostolic Tradition* written around 215 A.D. by Hippolytus, a bishop in Rome. The ancient method of spiritual formation was a process in the local church, not a one-time decision made without a support community. This process brought a person into Christ, and full communion with

the Christian community through periods of development, with growth culminating in baptism.

For example, the following phases of conversion are set forth in *The Apostolic Tradition*: 1) A time for Christian inquiry known as the seeker period, 2) a time of instruction when the converting person was known as a hearer, 3) an intense spiritual preparation for baptism when the candidate was known as a kneeler, 4) and a time after baptism for incorporating the new Christian into the full life of the church, when the newly baptized person was known as faithful.²⁰

Each period of formation was set off by a passage rite that marked the transition to the next period of growth. These passage rites included the rite of conversion into the church, a rite of the covenant, and the rites that surround baptism. Consequently, early church disciple making consists of four periods of growth, framed by three passage rites (see the "Journey to Jesus" chart in the appendix section). Robert Webber explains this four-step process of taking a prospective Christian from the seeker, through hearer, through kneeler, to faithful stages, and shows how to use this process in the local congregation.

Seeker-Follow Me

The first step is to reach out to the unchurched and to bring them into the church and to Jesus. The process of evangelism in a highly religious,

²⁰ Robert E. Webber, *Ancient-Future Faith: Rethinking Evangelicalism for a Postmodern World* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1999), 148.

postmodern, but thoroughly secular, world needs to take its cue from the practice of the early Church. The first principle of early Church evangelism is that people come to Christ through the Church. This turns current practice on its head. In contemporary evangelism we have said, "Come to Jesus, then find the church of your choice." In response to early Church practices, though, we should be saying "Come to the church where you will find Jesus."

The second principle of the early Church is that the primary way to evangelize is through the contacts Christians have in their social networks (e.g. families, neighborhood friends, fellow workers). We invite the people we want to evangelize to come to church with us. Here at the church they meet Jesus in the hospitality of the people, and in worship. Worship is the key to evangelism because worship is faith experienced. In worship, we embody truth, proclaim it, sing it, pray it, teach it, and enact it. We bring the seeker to church where they are surrounded, by truth expressed in the hospitality of the people and in living, engaging worship that encounters people with the truth that is found in Jesus Christ. In the meantime, the unchurched person is engaged in a thoughtful encounter with Jesus and His call on their lives, as they study the booklet *Follow Me*.²¹ This study has been especially designed for the process of evangelism, and for a one-on-one engagement with a Christian mentor and friend from the church where the seeker is a guest.

When the seeker has accepted Jesus as his or her savior, he or she now goes through the first passage rite, the rite of conversion. This rite, done in

²¹ Robert Webber, *Follow Me*. (Wheaton, IL: IWS Resources 2001)

worship, does what good rites do. It is a rite of transition, in which the new convert publicly rejects Satan and his ways, and turns to Jesus. In this rite of renunciation and affirmation of faith, a disciple of Jesus has been born.

Hearer- Be My Disciple

Now what does the church do with the new convert? Many churches admit they don't know what to do with the newly born. How do they disciple them? How do they bring the new believer into a deeper and lasting commitment to Jesus Christ and to the Christian way of life?

In this stage of the process, the new converts were put into a three year process of discipleship, during which they were formed into committed Christians. They were discipled into the church and into the practices of being a disciple. It introduced the new Christian into what it means to be in the Church. They were taught the worship of the Triune God, a worship that praises the Father, thankfully remembers the work of the Son, and invokes the Holy Spirit. They were taught how to pray the scripture using the ancient *Lectio Divina* method of contemplative scripture encounter.

This stage ends with the rite of covenant. A passage rite that emphasizes the two sides of conversion: God has chosen you; you choose God's provision in Jesus Christ. While this choice was initially made in the rite of conversion, it is publicly proclaimed once more, as the new convert digs into a deeper level of faith commitment. Now, where do you carry the new convert?

Kneeler-Walk in The Spirit

Passage rites transfer people from one stage to the next. Now the new convert is transitioned into a period of learning about spiritual warfare. In the early Church, new converts were known as kneelers in this state of growth. The term "kneeler" beautifully describes this period, a time of humility and submission, as the new convert learns how to be subject to the power of the Holy Spirit. A booklet prepared for this, teaches the principles of spiritual warfare. What does it mean to put off the old man and put on the new? In addition, how do you do it? Then, like the third century practice, (which *Journey to Jesus* adapts for the twenty-first century), the new convert learns the meaning and practice of prayer through a study of the Lord's Prayer. Finally, the new convert learns the meaning and uses of faith, through an exposure to the Apostles' Creed. In addition, as in the early Church, the convert is taught that the battle with the enemy is fought through prayer and steadfast faith.

This period ends with the passage rite of baptism, and for those who were previously baptized with the renewal of baptismal vows. In baptism, the new convert renounces the devil and all his works once again, and affirms faith in Christ. God's sign of baptism is administered in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. This rite is completed with the seal of the Holy Spirit as the new Christian is anointed with oil and the laying on of hands. But the journey isn't over. Now the new convert is assimilated into the full life of the church, and becoming a participatory member of Christ's Church.

Faithful-Find Your Gift

The final stage of the *Journey to Jesus* is a full incorporation into the life of the church. Now the convert is a member of the faithful. Arriving at this stage doesn't mean that the journey is over by any means. It's simply the final step into an earthly path of spiritual formation that continues to death.

A study for this seven-week period of spiritual discipline forms the new Christian into a full, active, and conscious participation into the life of the new community. During this period, the new Christian is schooled in three aspects of the Christian life. First, his or her gifts are discerned, and they are given a ministry in the church. Then, he or she is asked to see how all of their work is an offering to God. Here, the emphasis is on integrating faith and worship with his or her life work. One should praise God, as the *Book of Common Prayer* states, "Not only with your lips, but also with your life."²² Finally, now that the baptized person is within the full eye of the church, they are directed to be a witness, to bring others to the church and to Christ by mentoring them on the journey to Jesus.

This stage of spiritual formation does not have a passage rite that leads to another stage of depth. Rather, the rite that characterizes this lifelong path is the Eucharist, a continuous rite of spiritual nourishment. In the Eucharist, a two-sided action occurs again and again. On the divine side, the Eucharist is God's feeding. In this divine action, we continuously are brought, again and again, to a face-to-face personal encounter with God's Incarnation, the Word made flesh, crucified

²² Book of Common Prayer 101

and risen for our salvation. We feed on the personal and powerful presence of God's saving energy, as we remember His work on our behalf. As we eat bread and drink wine, we ingest this salvation, and allow ourselves to be fed by His saving presence, while being transformed by His life within us. In the rite of the Eucharist, the journey to Jesus has both ended and begun. What we moved toward, we now live out of. The new life has become a reality. Our new calling is to endure to the end. Our goal is a long obedience in the same direction.

The book *Journey to Jesus* will be used as a ministry tool to further revitalize the congregation. It can help prepare the congregation to become an evangelizing community. The process can also be helpful to lapsed Christians who wish to revitalize their own faith, and return to the full life of the church. Longing for a credible spirituality, the desire for community, and the demand for authenticity, this process will meet the needs of our culture. This is a way of ordering and organizing the experience of conversion, entrance into the church, and spiritual formation. Utilizing this ancient model of the formation of disciples, people are enrolled by baptism and, thereby, committed to a lifetime involvement with the missionary imperative of making new disciples.

It is not a virtue to make the catechumenate a rigorous and demanding process. On the other hand, it is betrayal to compromise what it means to live under the reign of God.

Mission and Spiritual Guidance

The pastor as a spiritual guide enables the congregation to grasp the truth about the need for personal involvement in mission, and in making the world a

better place for all. Part of this task of spiritual guidance is to help people break free from the narrow vision of living for themselves alone, and moving them to risk for others. The church is called today to be a missionary community to our secular culture. As Michael Tessman says:

As the Church moves relentlessly into a post-Christian and post-modern era, parish ministry takes on a more missionary quality. Missiologically, evangelization and catechesis become ministries as much in and to the Church as from the Church to the world. Many of the decisions which we parish priests must make, share the dynamics of missionary strategy. Missionaries have to speak the Gospel into an alien culture, and they must make strategic decisions about how to present the Gospel in such a way that it has the best chance of being received.²³

This means that there are parts of our culture that we can affirm. It also means there are times when we must knowingly stand apart from our culture, to call prophetically to it, and to call it to transformation. We must be a counter-cultural force to the conspicuous consumption, self-centeredness, and avarice that dominates much of popular American culture. We must continue the transformation from a Christendom and maintenance culture, to a missionary community.

The baptismal and Eucharistic ecclesiology of the Episcopal Church is evident in the new set of questions in the Catechism that replaces definitions of individual duty:

- Q. What is the mission of the Church?
- A. The mission of the Church is to restore all people to unity with God and each other in Christ.
- Q. How does the Church pursue its mission?
- A. The Church pursues its mission as it prays and worships, proclaims the Gospel, and promotes justice, peace and love.

²³ Michael Tessman, from a sermon 11 May 1999, at Nashotah House Theological Seminary

- Q. Through whom does the Church carry out its mission?
A. The Church carries out its mission through the ministry of all its Members.²⁴

This statement of God's reconciling mission to the world has challenged the Episcopal Church, calling us to discover new ways of understanding ourselves and our congregations as messengers and ministers of God's Kingdom. Called to restore all people to unity with God and each other in Christ, we commit to being a healthy dynamic, inviting church, reflective of the diversity of our society, deeply rooted in faith and the Gospel, so that we live out our baptismal promise to be disciples who make disciples of Jesus Christ. One creative strategy of evangelism is the ALPHA Course recently begun at St. Michael's.

Implementing the Alpha Course at Saint Michael's

The 64th General Convention of the Episcopal Church in 1973, defined evangelism as, "the presentation of Jesus Christ, in the power of the Holy Spirit, in such ways that persons may be led to believe in him as Savior and follow him as Lord within the fellowship of his Church."

The sad fact is that in the Episcopal Church many have been sacramentalized without ever being evangelized. We need to call for clear decision, not only from those beyond the Church, but also even from those within it.

²⁴ Book of Common Prayer 855

Recognizing this reality, I have made a conscious decision to hire a lay staff person to be the "Director of Evangelism and Small Group ministry" at St. Michaels. The major thrust of this position would be the implementation and development of the *Alpha Course*.

Thousands of people around the world are now taking part in Alpha Courses, a ten-week practical introduction to the Christian faith designed primarily for nonchurchgoers, and those who have recently become Christians. Alpha is primarily an evangelistic course. It aims to convince people of the reality of Jesus Christ, and the difference made in our lives when we accept Jesus and his claims. Alpha's presentation of salvation concentrates mostly on the immediate effects of turning your life to Christ, such as the forgiveness of sins and having a living relationship with God.

It is important not to confuse being simple with being simplistic. Alpha's strength is that it presents directly, and simply, the personal consequences of Jesus' saving work.

In January of 1999, we made a decision to implement this course as a form of mission and evangelism. We are accustomed to presenting the whole faith from the beginning of any formation. Nevertheless, the strength of Alpha and its effectiveness appears to flow from its sharp focus on the person of Jesus Christ, and the meaning of his saving death and resurrection. Long time members of the parish who benefit from Alpha, find that it is the clear proclamation of the basic Gospel message that promotes clear-cut, personal conversion.

Touching Jesus through the Church

We made the decision to utilize Alpha on the principle that evangelism is most effective through the local church and within community. John Stott has described evangelism through the local church as “the most normal, natural and productive method of spreading the Gospel today.”²⁵

Another consideration is the way in which the Alpha Course fits into our overall vision of: “Come to See Jesus, Come to Know Jesus, and Come to Serve Jesus.” Alpha is our frontline effort of evangelism, which serves as a kind of incubator of new Christians, who then are ready to go on to the catechumenate model of the spiritual formation program, “Journey to Jesus”. Alpha does well as an introduction to this program and others, providing for the personal experience of Jesus Christ, and establishing friendships, that are so vital to a person's decision to remain as a member of a local parish.

Here is what we have discovered about using Alpha in an Episcopal parish context. First, Alpha works, and the key to Alpha's success is its combined message and packaging. Alpha clearly and concisely presents basic, unchanging Christian truths in a package that is acceptable to people today. Without the presentation of basic Christian doctrine, the further riches of the faith would fall on deaf ears.

The fruits of Alpha in the Episcopal Church are evident. In addition to increased church attendance, small faith sharing communities are forming, and

²⁵ John Stott, *The Contemporary Christian* (Nottingham, England: IVP, 1992), 241

participation in spiritual formation programs is growing. All of our formation offerings have increased from Bible studies and small groups, to classes on prayer and Benedictine spirituality.

Secondly, Alpha is a tremendous Christian witness. For those who only see division among denominations, Alpha creates a spectacle of Christians united in acceptance of Alpha as a common tool of evangelization. Alpha does not promote the individualistic idea that the Christian believer can achieve salvation on his or her own. Alpha deals admirably with the vital ingredient of a personal response to the Gospel message, and to the person of Jesus, which Episcopal programs of evangelization and initiation sometimes neglect. It is up to us, then, to lead people forward into an understanding of Church.

We have found that Alpha's emphasis on the individualistic approach can only be a weakness if the necessary teaching is not done afterwards. The call for a personal commitment to Christ should be seen as a strong base on which to build.

Finally, Alpha provides an effective tool for parish evangelization, and helps to reach the unchurched and inactive Episcopalians. Alpha feeds the catechumenate programs and other parish programs. Alpha also supports the ongoing process of adult formation. Alpha helps to build community, and often encourages involvement in the liturgical life of the parish. We have found that Alpha mobilizes and equips the laity to the work of evangelization and service. Alpha is pre-catechetical, and not an alternative to our Journey to Jesus formation program, which can be a logical next step for Alpha graduates.

As spiritual guide of the congregation, I seek to convey to the entire congregation the following two things: Mission is not an option for Christians, it is simply part of being in Christ, and mission and evangelism are not two things, but one. To be sent is to carry transforming life, or, the Good News. It is to be alive with the life of Jesus, which communicates both grace and truth. Sharing good news is always the goal and focus of the Christian's journey with Jesus Christ.

Conclusion

The strategy for spiritual formation and pastoral identity at Saint Michael's must be judged by how far it assists God's people to hear and answer God's call. The Church shows all these things to itself through worship, discipleship, and mission. When it gathers to celebrate Holy Communion, it takes the bread and cup of the new covenant, and proclaims in hope, the Lord who died and was raised. It returns to be with the Jesus who shared his food with sinners, and the Jesus who broke bread at Emmaus. It identifies with the lost to whom Jesus came, and it recognizes the Jesus who triumphs over death in all its forms (e.g. passivity, violence, isolation or whatever else). In addition, it reminds us again and again, that it is together that we meet Jesus, as we admit our need of him, and so our need of each other in his Body, the Church. Our incompleteness, and the brokenness of all our relationships are put into God's hands, so that his power may work through them, so often against all our expectations.

For all these reasons, we recognize that the local church is always the primary agent of spiritual formation and spreading the Good News. The quality of

its life is the means of mission. Furthermore, to speak of the quality of its life is not to say that it evangelizes only by success, but quite the opposite. Honesty, before God and others, is a central aspect of our witness. Our willingness to repent and to change is crucial, because then others can see that Christian humanity is still a humanity like theirs, fragile and movable, and that God is always ready to grant us new beginnings.

CONCLUSION

“In returning and rest you shall be saved; in quietness and trust shall be your strength”¹

I want to take a more personal approach to this conclusion and give voice and witness to my own recovery of pastoral identity. My Doctor of Ministry course work began with Dr. Dallas Willard's two week seminar on "Spirituality and Ministry" held in a retreat setting in Colorado Springs, Colorado. It was a seminal event and experience for me. I recall my first impression this way.

It was Sunday, July 17, 1994. After a full morning of ministry in my parish at the time, (which was Trinity Episcopal Church in Greeley, Colorado), I began my two-hour journey to the Fountain Valley School in Colorado Springs. I had been anticipating the beginning of my Doctor of Ministry program for some time and was especially eager to begin this class with its "retreat" setting. It had been a long hard pull in my ministry over the past ten months, and I was in great need of renewal and rest.

As I arrived on the campus, I began to sense that the Lord had planned something very precious and valuable for me. That was confirmed as I went to my first lecture the next day.

¹ Isaiah 30 15

From the moment Dr. Willard began to speak, I was thrilled with what I heard. He said that his hope for us, because of this seminar, would be that we would grow more joyous and strong in the riches of Christ. He spoke of the hardness of life for pastors and churches, and the need to find healthy, fruitful ministry, to be living water flowing to others. Yet, the effects of our culture upon us shatter us inwardly.

I have practiced spiritual disciplines for many years, as they were taught to me by my Anglican tradition, and particularly while I was in seminary at Nashotah House in Wisconsin. Our life was centered in the observance of the Rule of St. Benedict, although modified for our community.

Yet, I cannot ever recall hearing a more compelling, lucid, and transforming foundation for spiritual life than what I heard from Dr. Willard on this day. His systemization and conceptualization of the spiritual life virtually took my breath away. I was stunned with amazement.² The biblical concepts of "spirit" and the "spiritual" were given a renewed place of centrality for me.

Of crucial importance for me were the following truths that continue to have transforming effect upon me. First, I am an unceasing spiritual being with an eternal destiny. I am an embodied spirit in my basic nature. God is the Father of my spirit. Spiritual life is the capacity to reach out to God and appropriate Eternal life, an unending *kind* of life. It is a gift through the Word of the Gospel,

² I heard the voice of *Another*, of whom it was said "for he taught them as one who had authority and not as their scribes" (Matt. 7:29)

which itself is spiritual life.

Secondly, spiritual disciplines are a range of activities through which a person interacts and cooperates with God and with the spiritual order, deriving from God's personality and action. The environment for the spiritual life is the Kingdom of God.

Thirdly, the spiritual life in a human being depends on the degree to which you are dominated and integrated into the spiritual Kingdom of God. If your focus is simply the visible, you will not grow. Disciplines are ways to concretely move ourselves into dominance by the Spirit. We need to live our lives in proper subordination (God, human spirit, soul, and body). Finally, the Gospel of Christ is "the availability of the Reign of the Kingdom of God." It is not the Gospel of "sin management," or the Gospel of the "liberation of desire."³ Jesus proclaimed the Gospel of the availability of the rule of the heavens and the promise of entering into an unending kind of life. It is about life. All that is required to rise up and enter the unending kind of life of the Kingdom, is faith in, and reliance upon, Jesus

The recovery of priestly and pastoral identity must begin with the stark vision of life in the Kingdom of God. The recovery of pastoral identity starts with the discipleship and spiritual formation of the spiritual leader. We must simply be apprentices of Jesus Christ. We are aiming to live in the Kingdom of God, and in this present life, as fully as possible. It is only then that we can become intentional about our vocation. Spiritual formation is a life-long task that we share

³ Dallas Willard. Lecture from "Spirituality and Ministry". Fuller Seminary. 18 July 1994

with other followers of Jesus Christ. Its aim is for ordained people to become better disciples of Jesus Christ and, specifically, to become more transparent sacramental signs of him, in whose person and name they act. The life of discipleship is a shedding of illusions and the embrace of real or authentic self in Christ.

If spiritual formation is to be the central focus of the local congregation, the spiritual leaders, especially the priest/pastor, must take hold of the vision of apprenticeship to Jesus in the Kingdom of God as the central reality of the Good News. It is not a matter of trying to bring perfection to ourselves or to the church. It is certainly not an attempt to purify the church. That would be a grand illusion, and where it has been tried, great tragedy has occurred.

What can be pursued is the matter of clarifying our basic vocation, as well as the congregations, in light of Christ's call to us. That is what we mean by the recovery of pastoral identity and the spiritual formation of the local congregation.

Pastoral identity may be existentially experienced in different ways, but the most important factor is the ordained person's sense of who he or she is by his or her relationship with Jesus Christ, whom they make sacramentally present. That is simply to say, that Jesus Christ and his Kingdom has priority, and there is no other foundation for engaging the world as a priest (or as a Christian, for that matter).

The recovery of pastoral identity must be ongoing. Pastors of congregations, by their ordination, are configured to Jesus Christ, Head and Shepherd, for the sake of mission to the Church and world. This is how they are

because of ordination. That new way of being, however, does not automatically translate into a new sense of self, or a new psychological and spiritual identity. In fact, that internalization and appropriation of what has happened through ordination is a lifelong task. The sacrament of marriage would be another example. The "two become one," but that grace of union must be appropriated in a lifelong journey of love and devotion.

Priestly or pastoral identity is something given sacramentally. That is to say, it is a means of grace. It is also something consciously appropriated. In both elements, priestly identity shapes existence, or the way of being in the world. Ordained people have a complex identity, which corresponds to the way they exist in the world. If they only filled a specific religious function in society, their identity would be quite simple. In fact, to be ordained places us in the world in three principal ways that are interrelated. We exist as human beings. We also exist as believing Christians, or disciples of Jesus Christ in his Church. Finally, we exist in a unique sacramental mode, as part of the order of presbyters in the Church.

The assumption is that we are not Christians or disciples merely in name. Rather, we have embarked on an intentional, or deliberate, spiritual journey. In this way, we are committed to a growing and transforming relationship with the Lord, by the power of the Holy Spirit. This is our grounding identity, the foundation upon which the specific sacramental presence and ministry in the Church, as pastors and priests, is built.

How will we know that our pastoral identity is dynamic, and contributing to the spiritual formation of the local congregation? The “cardinal virtues,” faith, hope and love, identified in Paul’s great hymn to love in 1 Corinthians 13 are a powerful measure.

First will be a growing faith and confidence, a ruthless trust in the goodness and love of God towards us. A growing faith gives evidence of a growing relationship with a loving God and an insight into the revelation of God in Jesus Christ, accompanied by a greater practical wisdom of what that revelation means for living.

Second will be a growing hope. Hope in God enables us to trust in the promised future that God gives us. Hope is the song of the future and the willingness to dance to its tune today. In the course of our earthly journey, growing hope is clear from the ever-more practical, direct, and generous ways that gospel values lead us to take action in the world to open a way for God’s kingdom. God’s future.

Finally will be a growing love. Progress in the spiritual life has always been identified with a growth in agape, the love of God, and linked to that, the love of others. Growing love is manifested in a progressive attachment to Jesus Christ, a greater willingness to share in his paschal mystery, a more authentic worship of God in spirit and truth, and an expanding and deepening compassion for others.

Local congregations are complex realities to be sure. To be the pastor of a parish is a demanding task and responsibility, as well as a complicated, multifaceted ministry. At the same time, the case for complexity should not be

overstated. Pastors do have a clear and single focus: to be present to and active in their parish communities as the abiding sacramental presence of Jesus Christ, and to be the pastor and spiritual director of the flock. We need to claim decisively, and courageously, our pastoral identity as spiritual guides. We are to induct people into the spiritual life and discipleship to Jesus.

This way of ministry has become a source of great joy for me in the midst of very challenging and dangerous times to be a pastor. It is what keeps me faithful to my call. Wherever God may lead me, I know my calling and I will serve him in it, in my time, and in my place. I have learned the secret of the easy yoke, and pray that I may continue to be a student of Jesus, seeking to increase in Christlikeness through a faithful use of the spiritual disciplines.

It is my hope, that this study of pastoral identity and spiritual formation of congregations, contributes to the healing and vitality of the ordained ministry, as we continue to move into the challenging times of the third millennium. I close with words that capture the heart of my prayer, for myself, and for all those who have said "yes" to the call of God to serve as ordained servants of Jesus Christ. It was the hymn for the invocation of the Holy Spirit at my ordination.

Come down, O love divine, seek thou this soul of mine,
and visit it with thine own ardor glowing; O Comforter, draw near,
within my heart appear, and kindle it, thy holy flame bestowing.

O let it freely burn, till earthly passions turn to dust and ashes in its heat
consuming; and let thy glorious light shine ever on my sight,
and clothe me round, the while my path illuming.

And so the yearning strong, with which the soul will long, shall far outpass the

power of human telling; for none can guess its grace,
till he become the place wherein the Holy Spirit makes his dwelling.⁴

⁴ Bianco of Sienna (?-1434)

APPENDIX A

TO REKINDLE THE FIRE OF THE HOLY SPIRIT AND TO RADIATE THE LOVE OF CHRIST

THE CONTEMPLATIVE TRADITION

We see Jesus praying, and we listen to his teaching on the life of intimacy with God.

THE HOLINESS TRADITION

We see Jesus confronted with Satan in the wilderness, and we listen to his teaching on the importance of a pure heart.

THE RENEWAL TRADITION

We see Jesus ministering in great power, and we listen to his teaching on the comfort, wisdom, and strength that come from the Holy Spirit.



THE SOCIAL JUSTICE TRADITION

We see Jesus helping the sick and the needy, and we listen to his teaching on the importance of caring for our neighbor.

THE EVANGELICAL TRADITION

We see Jesus proclaiming the Kingdom of heaven, and we listen to him reading from the Scriptures.

THE INCARNATIONAL TRADITION

We see Jesus integrating sacred and secular while observing the liturgical tradition of his faith.

From the life of Jesus there emerges a full and complete life with God:

Devotion to God

Virtue in thought, word and deed

Empowerment by the Spirit

Compassion toward all people

Proclamation of the good news of the Gospel

Balance between faith and work, prayer and work.

A BALANCED VISION OF DISCIPLESHIP

I. Introduction

- A. The need for a theology of growth**
- B. Transformation is the goal**
- C. General Overview of the six traditions**

2. THE CONTEMPLATIVE TRADITION - THE PRAYER FILLED LIFE

- A. What is it? - a life of intimacy with God**
- B. Why should I explore it? Because through it we experience the Divine Rest that overcomes our sense of alienation.**
- C. How do I practice it? The prayer of the heart - centering - contemplative prayer.**

2. THE HOLINESS TRADITION - THE VIRTUOUS LIFE

- A. What is it? A life which is functional and whole - a life of virtue**
- B. Why should I explore it? Because through it we are enabled to live whole, functional lives in a dysfunctional world.**
- C. How do I practice it? Example - Fasting**

3. THE RENEWAL TRADITION - THE SPIRIT EMPOWERED LIFE

- A. What is it? A life immersed in, empowered by, and under the direction of the Spirit of God.**
- B. Why should I explore it? Because through it we are empowered by God to do his work and to evidence his life upon the face of this earth.**
- C. How do I practice it? Invite the Spirit to fill you, to come upon you.**

4. THE SOCIAL JUSTICE TRADITION - THE COMPASSIONATE LIFE

- A. What is it? A life dedicated to the love and care of our neighbor.**
- B. Why should I explore it? Because through it God develops within us the compassion to love our neighbor and frees us from the shackles of self-centeredness.**
- C. How do I practice it? Acts of mercy.**

5. THE EVANGELICAL TRADITION - THE WORD CENTERED LIFE.

- A. What is it? A life founded upon the written and proclaimed word of God.**
- B. Why should I explore it? - Because through it we obtain the knowledge of God which grounds our lives and enables us to give a reason for the hope that is within us.**
- C. How do I practice it? Engage in Bible study**

6. THE INCARNATIONAL TRADITION – THE SACRAMENTAL LIFE

- A. What is it? A life of participation in the means of grace.**
- B. Why should I explore it? – Because through it we encounter the real presence of Jesus and the strengthening gifts of Gods grace.**
- C. How do I practice it? Participation in the weekly worship of the community of faith.**

APPENDIX B

Christian Way of Life

Fr Rob Lord+

Christian discipleship means Christian discipline. The two are synonymous. What follows is a simple, minimal rule of life for those who take seriously their Baptismal Covenant. "Rule" refers here to a "regula" or regulator, not a "lex," or law.

1. "The Apostles teaching" - regular reading of Holy Scripture on a daily basis in addition to disciplined study of the Christian Life in all its aspects.
2. "The Apostles Fellowship" - regular and faithful participation in the life of our congregational and diocesan families. A real sharing in the life of the local Christian family.
3. "The Breaking of Bread" - regular Eucharistic participation, at least on Sundays, and other major feasts.
4. "The Prayers" - daily personal and private prayer, including some form of the Divine Office, using a form provided in the Prayer Book, i.e. Morning and/or Evening Prayer, with the appropriate lectionary readings. Conscious practice of the presence of God.
5. Repentance - daily self examination leading to regular repentance and conversion of heart, and to reconciliation with God and our fellow human beings. (Especially see the form for Reconciliation of a Penitent in the BCP).
6. Proclaiming the Good News - verbal evangelism to accompany life-style evangelism, recognizing that Gods grace in our lives can be an unspoken testimony, but without verbal witness to Christ, who is the source of our power, it may be misunderstood as private virtue.
7. Seeking and serving Christ - stewardship of Gods gifts, including the habit of tithing as a minimal response to Gods gracious bounty, taking responsibility for our moral behavior and physical health, our "time, talent, and treasure".
8. Seeking justice and peace - active involvement in some aspect of Christ's care and concern for this broken world, with the recognition of Gods image in all our fellow human beings.

APPENDIX C

Strategic Goals 2001-2003 AGENDA Come and See Jesus, Come to Know Jesus and Come to Serve Jesus

Saturday, August 25th 2001

(9:30 am- 10:30) Vestry Business

Prayer And Introduction

COME AND SEE JESUS (Evangelization, Invitation) 10:30

Scripture Reflection: John 1:43-51

Questions

Group Discussion

Break

Group Discussion: Who Comes To Church? 11:30

Evangelization Goals

12:30 Lunch

COME TO KNOW JESUS (Christian Formation) 1:00 pm

Scripture Reflection: Acts 8:26-40

Questions

Group Discussion

Formation Goals

COME AND SERVE JESUS (Christian Service and Mission) 2:00pm

Scripture Reflection: Matthew 25:31-40

Questions

Group Discussion

Service Goals

Strategic Goals 2001-2003 OUTLINE

Come and See Jesus, Come to Know Jesus and Come to Serve Jesus

I. INTRODUCTION

Prayer: Almighty and everliving God, source of all wisdom and understanding, be present with those who take counsel for the renewal and mission of your Church. Teach us in all things to seek first your honor and glory. Guide us to perceive what is right, and grant us both the courage to pursue it and the grace to accomplish it; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Explanation of Objective:

We have a special opportunity to come together today to continue to discern and proclaim God's vision for this parish. The process is directly related to issues of identity and involves *becoming* what the church is *called* to be. We are called to understand our corporate spirituality (at its best) and help members to understand, participate in and live that spirituality.

Defining the congregation is a statement of how we see ourselves and of how we understand our identity and purpose as a congregation in relation to our members and the larger community. This *organizational self-definition* also needs to define how we want to communicate our identity to others.

The Vestry is called with the Rector and the congregation, to define and clearly articulate the unique mission of the congregation to respond to God's calling in the world, and identify (i) the populations, communities or areas the congregation is called to serve, (ii) the congregation's goals; (iii) how the goals are to be accomplished, and (iv) ways for the congregation to recognize progress toward the goals. This is a continuing process, and it is a process we have an opportunity to re-initiate today.

Basic visioning steps:

1. Evaluation: Where are we? Who are we? What is our current reality?
2. Vision: Where is God calling us?
3. Strategy: How do we get there? (Avoid the temptation to jump directly to this discussion.)

We need to talk for a moment about what visioning is not. It is not measuring ourselves against some third party objective standard of what a church should be. We need to be careful not to think that there is a single Way for a church to serve God. We need to be aware of our unique context and personality and recognize that God has a particular call for us. And that part of God's call is leaving up to us the possibilities of choosing what we are gifted at or enjoy doing.

So three things are important in our discussions. One is respecting and encouraging everyone's input because there is no single, objective "right" answer and because we need to develop as accurate a picture of ourselves as we possibly can. Second, it's important that we especially focus on our gifts and what we like to do and see how we might use them further. Third, it's important that we are ever aware that, in God's love for us, God allows us to choose for ourselves and that we want to make choices that support the mission of the Church.

The purpose of the vision is to reclaim Jesus' Great Commission to his disciples: And Jesus came and said to them, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded you. And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age."

The vision for Saint Michael and All Angels Episcopal parish that God calls us to is:

- Proclaim the Gospel ("Come and See Jesus")
- Form disciples ("Come to Know Jesus")
- Serve all of God's children ("Come to Serve Jesus")

The vision is told as a story and not as a program. If it conflicts with some of this Church's expressed or hidden values, it should be one basis for re-evaluating these values. Today we are asking how this parish acts as a parish where people may "Come and See Jesus, Come to Know Jesus, and Come to Serve Jesus." Then we can begin to consider what particularly God calls this congregation to be for us to live out our baptismal covenants in community.

II. COME AND SEE JESUS (Evangelization, Invitation) (60 minutes: 10

minutes for reflection, 10 minutes for cards, 40 minutes for discussion)

I would like us to begin today with a scripture reflection from the Gospel of John. I will read the gospel and then invite your reflections.

Scripture Reflection: John 1:43-51

The next day Jesus decided to go to Galilee. He found Philip and said to him, "Follow me."

Now Philip was from Bethsaida, the city of Andrew and Peter. Philip found Nathanael and said to him, "We have found him about whom Moses in the law and also the prophets wrote, Jesus son of Joseph from Nazareth." Nathanael said to him, "Can anything good come out of Nazareth?" Philip said to him, "Come and see."

When Jesus saw Nathanael coming toward him, he said of him, "Here is truly an Israelite in whom there is no deceit!" Nathanael asked him, "Where did you get to know me?" Jesus answered, "I saw you under the fig tree before Philip called you." Nathanael replied, "Rabbi, you are the Son of God! You are the King of Israel!"

Jesus answered, "Do you believe because I told you that I saw you under the fig tree? You will see greater things than these." And he said to him, "Very truly, I tell you, you will see heaven opened and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of Man."

Questions (10 minutes)

Some observations: Personal experiences of invitation: Jesus chooses the people who will be called. we only make the invitation

Answer on cards:

1. Why are you a member of St. Michael's? What keeps you coming to church?
2. How were you invited into the parish?
3. How are new people invited into St. Michael's?

4. What else could we do to invite people into St. Michaels?

[Fourth card is collected.]

Group Discussion (45 minutes)

Catalogue: for example: Alpha
 Any active evangelism
 Worship – music, liturgy, preaching, prayer
 Pastoral care
 Fellowship opportunities
 Outreach
 Educational opportunities

BREAK

Group Discussion: Who Comes To Church?

How many? Average weekly attendance?
 Members?

Where do they live?

What are their educational levels?

What are their economic levels?

What are their ages?

How diverse are they?

What type of person would find a home at St. Michael?

Do different services, groups or activities have different populations?

Do we need more people here? Why?

Evangelization Goals

What does this community value in the area of evangelization?

What is unique and special about these values?

What does God seem to be calling the parish to do at this time? It may be that the ministry of the past few years is affirmed and continued. It is also possible that while the former direction of ministry is affirmed, the parish will recognize that new challenges call for new resources.

What resources do we bring to the mission of the Church in the area of evangelization and what resources do we need to bring?

What resources do we need from the larger diocesan community (skills, networks for sharing, consultants, workshops, training, funding, support)?

What are the main goals of the parish?

When will they be accomplished?

Who is responsible for accomplishing these goals?

SATURDAY August 25, 2001

III. COME TO KNOW JESUS (Formation) (60 minutes: 10 minutes for reflection, 10 minutes for cards, 40 minutes for discussion)

Scripture Reflection: Acts 8: 26-40

Then an angel of the Lord said to Philip, "Get up and go toward the south to the road that goes down from Jerusalem to Gaza." (This is a wilderness road.) So he got up and went.

Now there was an Ethiopian eunuch, a court official of the Candace, queen of the Ethiopians, in charge of her entire treasury. He had come to Jerusalem to worship and was returning home; seated in his chariot, he was reading the prophet Isaiah. Then the Spirit said to Philip, "Go over to this chariot and join it."

So Philip ran up to it and heard him reading the prophet Isaiah. He asked, "Do you understand what you are reading?"

He replied, "How can I, unless someone guides me?" And he invited Philip to get in and sit beside him. Now the passage of the scripture that he was reading was this: "Like a sheep he was led to the slaughter, and like a lamb silent before its shearer, so he does not open his mouth. In his humiliation justice was denied him. Who can describe his generation? For his life is taken away from the earth."

The eunuch asked Philip, "About whom, may I ask you, does the prophet say this, about himself or about someone else?"

Then Philip began to speak, and starting with this scripture, he proclaimed to him the good news about Jesus.

As they were going along the road, they came to some water; and the eunuch said, "Look, here is water! What is to prevent me from being baptized?" He commanded the chariot to stop, and both of them, Philip and the eunuch, went down into the water, and Philip baptized him. When they came up out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord snatched Philip away; the eunuch saw him no more, and went on his way rejoicing.

But Philip found himself at Azotus, and as he was passing through the region, he proclaimed the good news to all the towns until he came to Caesarea.

Answer on cards:

1. What types of Christian education or formation do you participate in?
2. What types of Christian education or formation are offered by St. Michaels?
3. What types of Christian education or formation are most helpful to you or your family?
4. What additional Christian education or formation or changes in Christian education or formation would you like to see at St. Michaels?

[Fourth card is collected.]

Group Discussion (40 minutes)

Catalogue:

BREAK

Formation Goals

What does this community value in the area of Formation?

What is unique and special about these values?

Are these values in line with the vision where people may "Come and See Jesus, Come to Know Jesus and Come to Serve Jesus?"

What does God seem to be calling the parish to do at this time? It may be that the ministry of the past few years is affirmed and continued. It is also possible that while the former direction of ministry is affirmed, the parish will recognize that new challenges call for new resources.

What resources do we bring to the mission of the Church in the area of formation and what resources do we need to bring?

What resources do we need from the larger diocesan community (skills, networks for sharing, consultants, workshops, training, funding, support)?

[If there is time here, summarize evangelization goals and formation goals and ask whether anything is missing.]

IV. COME AND SERVE JESUS (SERVICE) (60 minutes: 10 minutes for reflection, 10 minutes for cards, 40 minutes for discussion)

Scripture Reflection: Matthew 25:31- 40

"When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, then he will sit on the throne of his glory. All the nations will be gathered before him, and he will separate people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats, and he will put the sheep at his right hand and the goats at the left. Then the king will say to those at his right hand, 'Come, you that are blessed by my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world; for I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me, I was naked and you gave me clothing, I was sick and you took care of me, I was in prison and you visited me.'

Then the righteous will answer him, 'Lord, when was it that we saw you hungry and gave you food, or thirsty and gave you something to drink? And when was it that we saw you a stranger and welcomed you, or naked and gave you clothing? And when was it that we saw you sick or in prison and visited you?'

And the king will answer them, 'Truly I tell you, just as you did it to one of the least of these who are members of my family, you did it to me.'

Answer on cards:

1. What pastoral care or outreach activities are you involved in? What needs of others does the parish minister to?
2. What pastoral care or outreach activities are others involved in?

3. How are these pastoral care or outreach activities connected to St. Michaels?
4. What additional pastoral care or outreach activities would you like to see St. Michaels?

[Fourth card is collected.]

Group Discussion (40 minutes)

Catalogue: outreach activities
 pastoral care activities

Service Goals

What does this community value in the area of service?

What is unique and special about these values?

Are these values in line with the vision where people may "Come and See Jesus, Come to Know Jesus and Come to Serve Jesus?"

What does God seem to be calling the parish to do at this time? It may be that the ministry of the past few years is affirmed and continued. It is also possible that while the former direction of ministry is affirmed, the parish will recognize that new challenges call for new resources.

What resources do we bring to the mission of the Church in the area of service and what resources do we need to bring?

What resources do we need from the larger diocesan community (skills, networks for sharing, consultants, workshops, training, funding, support)?

Goal prioritization

[Pass out stickers. **What are three indispensable activities of this church in your opinion? Rate them with stickers on the Evangelization, Formation and Service newsprint sheets.**]

What are the main goals of the parish?

When will they be accomplished?

Who is responsible for accomplishing these goals?

How are we going to test and strengthen our self-identity within the broader parish community?

- a. What are ways to share this vision and gather further input (i.e., parish survey with focus groups or follow up visits by Vestry members or larger parish gathering)?
- b. How will the parish formally adopt this vision (so it is celebrated, communicated, published and proclaimed frequently so that all church members can share in this identity)?

Prayer: O God, you have made of one blood all the peoples of the earth, and sent your blessed Son to preach peace to those who are far off and to those who are near: Grant that people everywhere may seek after you and find you, bring the nations into your fold, pour out your Spirit upon all flesh, and hasten the coming of your kingdom; and grant that in our vocation and ministry we may truly and devoutly serve you; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. Amen.

APPENDIX D

THE BAPTISMAL COVENANT AS A MODEL OF DISCIPLESHIP Book of Common Prayer: 304-305

1. Lifestyle: *Bible, Church and Eucharist.*

Will you continue in the Apostles teaching and fellowship, in the breaking of bread, and in the prayers? I will with Gods help.

Acts 2:42 – the lifestyle of the early church.

1. How does individual lifestyle reflect these beliefs? As we vow to follow this same lifestyle, what are the practical ways in which we carry this out? School, work, family, neighborhood, recreation?
2. What does it mean to call the Bible, “the sacred memories of the people of God”?
Consider: what change and event into a memory?
3. As the early church met for this sacramental meal (the Eucharist) they experienced the presence of a living Christ in their midst. Do we view our participation in the Eucharist as an act of commitment to the community of faith?
4. What is a life of prayer? Are the essentials to a life of prayer? What are they? How can work be prayer? How can play be prayer? What are the different types of prayer in the Eucharist?

2. Reconciliation: What if I fail?

Will you persevere in resisting evil, and whenever you fall into sin, repent and return to the Lord? I will with God's help.

Romans 7:15-25

Our struggles	Hate	Envy	Exclusion	Possessiveness
	Violence	Exploitation	Competition	Pride
	Selfishness	Greed	Manipulation	Fear
	Abuse	Jealousy	Destruction	Lust

Do you sense a degree of helplessness in dealing with this struggle? Can this aspect of self be attributed to something from the past? If so, what are we doing to remedy the situation? Do Christians have a special responsibility to be free of these personal restraints?

The Rite of Reconciliation of a Penitent Pg 447-452 BCP.

Note in the Prayer of Confession in both forms that the penitent confesses not only to God and to the priest, but to the Church. What are the consequences of our sin for the Church? How is the Church affected by the sinfulness of its members?

How does the process of repentance and forgiveness "act out" the story of the Prodigal Son (Luke 15:11-32)

3. Outreach and Evangelism: Making a Difference for Other People.

Will you proclaim by word and example the Good News of God in Christ? I will with Gods help.

Consider these concerns of people who have not heard the Gospel:

- A desire for ways of coping with weakness
- A lack of purpose
- Isolation and insecurity
- A search for meaning

What does Christianity have to say to these concerns?

Why do we tend to keep these good things to ourselves? What we have received from others is intended to be passed on.

70 – 80% of those who come to church started attending because of another's personal invitation.

4. Love and Service: Making a Difference in Personal Relationships

Will you seek and serve Christ in all persons loving your neighbor as yourself? I will with Gods help.

In the Church, servanthood is the hallmark of behavior.

What are some ways in which Christians serve a hurting and broken world?

Mother Teresa says that when we serve the poor and the destitute we are serving Christ in the "distressing disguise." For each of us, who wears the distressing disguise?

Matthew 25:35-41 Why do we not choose to serve the poor? Because we do not recognize Christ in them or because we do not wish to serve them?

5. Responsibility and Action: Making a Difference in Our world.

Will you strive for justice and peace among all people and respect the dignity of every human being? I will with Gods help.

1. Peace is the fruit that grows on the tree of justice.

How do we help the tree of justice grow? What serves as water for the tree of justice? Fertilizer? What would pruning of the tree represent?

2. Never pray for anything for which we're not willing to be used as part of the answer.

This statement can be used as an excuse either for not praying, or for not praying for anything that might require God using us.

Think of other "reasons" why you cannot be used by God for the purpose of justice?

3. Do I not destroy my enemy when I make him my friend?

Consider individuals, groups or nations which we as Americans regard as our enemies.

Practically speaking, how can we make these opponents our friends?

RCL+ 3/25/02 Adapted from teaching of The Rt. Rev. William C. Frey, retired Bishop of Colorado.

APPENDIX E

Lectio Divina (Holy Reading)

An ancient way of deepening friendship with God by listening for his living voice addressed to us in Scripture and responding to him in prayer.

This ancient art, kept alive through the centuries by Benedictine monks has historically been among the most widely used approaches to Scripture. Sadly in Protestant and evangelical circles it is largely unutilized.

Try to avoid approaching this process mechanically ("5 easy steps to Lectio Divina")... Think of this worksheet more like training wheels on a bike. Once you've learned how to ride there's no need for them.

Lectio is not goal or end product oriented, and it's not about acquiring more knowledge of Scripture although that may happen. It's about nurturing our friendship with God. For the sake of learning I've broken Lectio into 5 movements.

5 Movements

- *From hurry to stillness*

The process begins by slowing down. This can be as simple as sitting still for a couple minutes, and taking some deep breaths. Some find a form of "centering prayer" like "palms up—palms down" helpful. The point is to begin in a place of physical stillness and quiet.

- *From stillness to listening (lectio = reading)*

I hesitated to even use the word "reading" because of all our modern notions of what that means. This part of Lectio Divina is more akin to listening to the voice of a friend or lover than reading words from a printed page. The words are the medium but the goal is relationship and loving dialog. View the passage more as the words of a recently received love letter than a text book. Lectio means reading with the "ears of our heart" (St. Benedict). As we read we're looking for that word or phrase that leaps off the page or stands out from the other words. We look for the word that "shimmers" or shines... a word or phrase that draws us in with the promise that it has more to say to us. One writer calls lectio "reverential listening." We wait for a word that is addressed to us personally... not loudly... but intimately... not forcefully but as a still small voice whispering to us.

- *From listening to rumination (meditatio)*

Meditatio takes that word or phrase and internalizes it until it becomes a part of us. Meditatio involves gently repeating the word or phrase and letting it interact

with our thoughts, feelings, experiences, our hurts, and our hopes. This part is repetitious and is reminiscent of a cow chewing its cud. "The image of the ruminant animal quietly chewing its cud was used in antiquity as a symbol of the Christian pondering the word of God." (Fr. Luke Dysinger) During this time, we don't ask questions of the text - we let it question us. This is not a time for study, referencing resource material, or looking up key words. Again our goal is not to dissect the text but to nurture our relationship with God, to foster intimacy.

- From rumination to response (oratio = prayer)

Oratio is the loving prayerful dialogue where we respond to God's invitation to be near Him, to be yoked to Him as apprentices in Life.

- From response to rest (contemplatio)

Contemplatio returns us to where we began: silence. This is a time when words become less important and there's a period of restful silence in God's presence.

**The words are
the medium but the goal is
relationship
via loving
dialog**

**Here's how it might look:
Lectio Divina with John 14.5-14**

- Preparation - you sit down in a comfortable spot, Bible in hand. You center yourself by closing your eyes. You take several deep breaths, inhaling and exhaling deliberately, slowly. As you inhale you softly repeat 'Lord, I receive all that you want to give me.' (palms up) As you exhale, 'Lord I release all the tensions and frustrations of yesterday.' (palms down)

- Reading/Listening (Lectio) - After a couple minutes of preparation, you begin reading the passage out loud but softly, murmuring it. You end up reading the same passage several times through. Each time you feel drawn to the phrase: "He will give you another Counselor."

- Meditation - As you repeat this phrase several times you recognize that God is speaking to you about who you turn to for advice and help. You have a growing sense that you've been overly focused and dependent on human friendships and not relying on your Divine Counselor.

- **Prayer** - You respond to these promptings with confession and a fresh commitment. You write in a prayer journal: "Father, thank you for giving me the Holy Spirit to be a constant companion and counselor. Forgive me for not seeking His advice. Please help me today to repeatedly turn to you at least as much or more than to my other friends." At this point you can return to the text if time allows or move into...
- **Contemplation** - The time is ended with a brief period of silent reflection and resting in the knowledge that God deeply loves you and receives your prayers.

Summary and Review

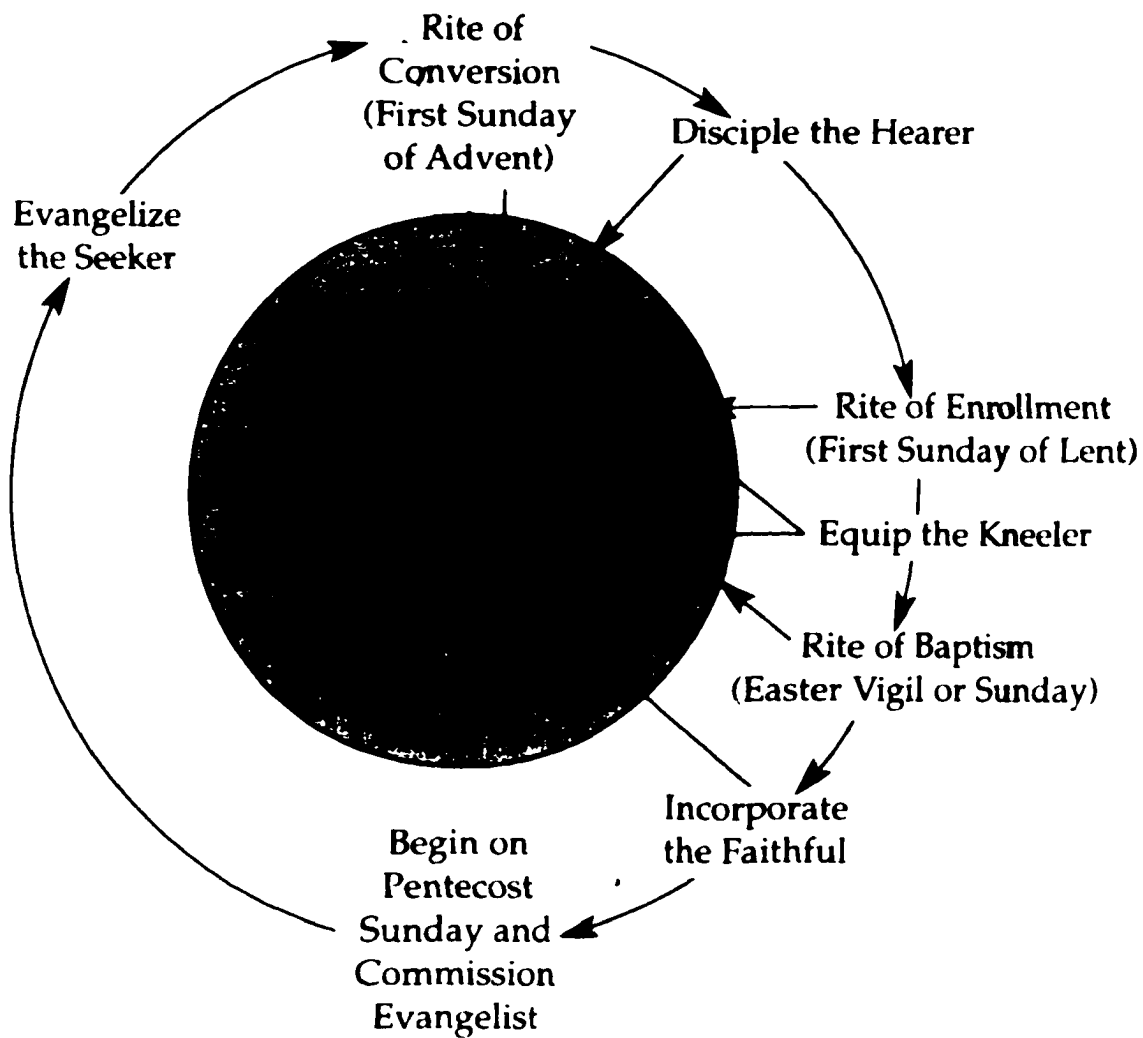
As we approach Scripture desiring to deepen our friendship with God we:

- read the passage (lectio) asking, "What does the text say?"
- meditate on a word or short phrase (meditatio) asking "What is God saying to me through this text?"
- pray our response to God (oratio) out loud or in writing.
- rest silently in God's loving presence (contemplatio)

Resources

- The book *Listening to God-Using Scripture as a Path to God's Presence* by Jan Johnson (NavPress) provides guidance for using lectio in a group setting. The book also arranges several passages of Scripture topically in a way that honors the intent of lectio to let God speak to us and shape us.

APPENDIX F



APPENDIX G

JOURNEY TO JESUS

STAGE	SPIRITUAL GOAL	CONTENT	PASSAGE RITE	RESOURCE
Seeker	Conversion	The gospel	Rite of conversion	<i>Follow Me!</i>
Hearer	Discipleship	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discipled into what it means to be <i>church</i> • Discipled into what it means to <i>worship</i> • Discipled into how to <i>read and pray Scripture</i> 	Rite of covenant	<i>Be My Disciple!</i>
Kneeler	Equipping	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Equipping for spiritual warfare • Equipping with prayer (the Lord's Prayer) • Equipping with Faith (the Apostles' Creed) 	Rite of baptism	<i>Walk in the Spirit!</i>
Faithful	Incorporate	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Incorporated into the full life of the church • Discern and use gifts • Stewards of creation • Becoming a witness 	The <i>Eucharist</i> is the continuous rite of nourishment	<i>Find Your Gift!</i>

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