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# About This Journal

## Editorial Board

The Editorial Board of the Journal of Contemporary Ministry is comprised of:

## Editorial Team

The Editorial Team of the Journal of Contemporary Ministry is comprised of:

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**Ps Astrid Staley** - (Adjunct faculty, Harvest Bible College; Doctoral candidate, Melbourne School of Theology), Section Editor for Pastoral Reflections and Student Articles, Layout Editor.

**Rev Dr Clayton Coombs** - (Academic Dean, Planetshakers College), Book Review Editor.

The Journal of Contemporary Ministry will act as a place for reporting research and discussing issues related to contemporary ministry, including related theological and biblical questions.

**Its goals are to:**

- o Stimulate informed discussion regarding issues faced by contemporary Christian churches and ministries worldwide;
- o Encourage research, including empirical research, into diverse forms and contexts of contemporary ministry and the practical, theological and biblical issues that arise from ministry practice;
- o Enable students and graduates in postgraduate Ministry programs to speak to a wider audience;
- o Build the credibility of Ministry as a field of study and research.

The Journal of Contemporary Ministry will provide a specific forum for Harvest Bible College research students and faculty, and other interested people, to publish the results of their research.

It will also provide a potential publishing venue for paper presenters at Harvest's annual research conference.

**The Journal of Contemporary Ministry will contain these kinds of material:**

o Peer-reviewed articles based on scholarly research (empirical or theological) into diverse forms and contexts of contemporary ministry, and the practical, theological and biblical issues that arise from ministry practice;

o Pastoral reflections and articles that contribute viewpoints, based on personal experience or theological reflection, on contemporary ministry issues. These may be responses to articles from the Journal;

o Book reviews and/or notes of new publications related to contemporary ministry;

o Articles contributed by postgraduate students, which would also be refereed but may not come up to the level required in the first category;

o A list of recent doctoral research theses completed on contemporary ministry relevant to this journal's focus.

**The material we invite covers such topics as:**

o Results of empirical research into aspects of contemporary Christian ministry, e.g. youth ministry, children's ministry, pastoral counselling, pastoral leadership, intercultural ministry;

o Theological and biblical reflection on issues that have arisen from the practices of contemporary Christian churches and ministries, e.g. manifestations of the Spirit, worship styles, leadership culture, interfaith matters, political and social engagement, etc;

o Underlying theological questions that lie behind Christian ministry issues, e.g. the role of women's ministry in local churches, ethnic identity, ordination, apostleship;

o Proposals for new expressions or forms of Christian ministry based on social analysis, e.g. how to reach specific sub-cultures.

For further information, please visit the journal website
www.journalofcontemporaryministry.org

# Editorial

## Christian Critical Thinking and Contemporary Ministry

In our first issue of this journal, I emphasized the need to assess and support our hunches about ministry and church life with proper research. It is too easy for ministers and lay people alike to "jump on bandwagons" and naively accept the reports or strategies for ministry they hear at conferences from "big name" speakers or worse, second-hand versions of these. Not that such speakers are deceitful or wrong but it's too easy to generalize from personal experience, especially if it's the experience of successful ministry, and overlook the unique circumstances involved.

Many years ago the Enlightenment philosopher Immanuel Kant wrote: "To criticism everything must submit." This was part of the Enlightenment view that all legitimate thinking must be justified before the bar of human reason alone. For many such thinkers, reason was in a struggle with tradition and revelation, especially the Bible and the teachings of the Christian church. Christians always found Kant's line of thinking hard to swallow because they trust the Bible as a source of truth and wisdom. However, the advent of postmodernism has also cast deep doubt over the whole Enlightenment project and its faith in reason. Postmodernists are more likely to insist that there is no unadulterated form of human reason; we all see things from a particular perspective and our judgement is skewed by the kind of person we are (Male/female, black/white, etc). So all criticism must begin from a starting point that is not neutral (maybe even a tradition!); this applies to the study of theology and ministry as much as any other discourse.

So where does this leave Christians? And what are the implications for the study of contemporary ministry?

First, we need to read our Bible carefully before we accept the common accusation that believers are (or should be) gullible or irrational. Think of Adam and Eve in the Garden. They were called on to trust what God had said to Adam about the two trees and not try to work it all out for themselves. But on that basis, they were expected to critically assess the suggestions of the serpent about eating from the tree of knowledge of good and evil. God's word was the starting point from which they were to be critical of any other voice. It was their gullible acceptance of the serpent's message that brought about their downfall.

Second, we need to develop what the Bible calls "discernment." Paul calls on his readers to "test everything" (1Thess. 5:21) and to "weigh" the words of prophets (1Cor. 14:29). 1 John calls on its readers to "test the spirits to see whether they are from God" (1Jn. 4:1). John praises the Ephesian church for testing would be apostles (Rev. 2:2) and calls on the believers in Thyatira not to uncritically accept the words of prophets (Rev. 2:20-23).

In other words, the Bible does not endorse a Christian thought that is unthinking or uncritical. When we hear claims about ministry, therefore, we have the right, even the duty, to assess those claims. We need to ask for evidence before we accept a particular line of thinking about ministry.

And third, we need to apply ourselves to study/research and ask questions, including questions that have not been asked before or for which we have a fresh approach. This is what the *Journal of Contemporary Ministry* is all about: reasoned, evidence-based conclusions that do not reject criticism as such, but come from a stance of faith in God.

A year has gone by and we are publishing Issue 2 of the *Journal of Contemporary Ministry*. I have learned so much about journals, journal articles, and editing over the last two years. I've also been blessed and encouraged by readers of our first issue and by the number of new authors who are submitting material to us.

As I reflect on the submissions to the first two issues, the papers presented at the Harvest Research Conference and research projects being undertaken by our new DMin candidates, a few points stand out:

1. There remains so much more research to do. Just when we think it has all been said and done, we find that there come new questions, new perspectives, new ways of looking at old issues and brand new issues as well.

2. There are new voices emerging into the scholarly study of Christian ministry. They are not always as experienced or skilled as the learned "old men" but they have fresh insights to bring to the table.

3. People are finding creative ways of researching topics that might have seemed impossible, or inappropriate, in the past.

4. It takes a lot of effort and thought to produce a quality research article. For every article published in this journal, there are at least as many, which have not reached the standard expected (yet), or are still being developed, or were never started, even though someone had a great idea and even presented it somewhere. Even the papers at the Harvest Research Conference mostly do not become articles in this or any journal, for example.

Let me introduce our authors for this issue and their articles.

As is our practice, we begin with **four articles** that have withstood the rigours of "double blind" peer review and been approved as ready to read. You may not agree with what these authors say but you can at least be assured that they have been read critically by two scholars who didn't know whose work they were appraising as well as by me and others in our editorial team. Some of these articles have been "back and forth" between the author and me many times before they were ready for publication. An article of this kind must not only be academically credible but also relevant and readable.

**Rev Dr Angelo Cettolin** is a senior lecturer in theology and ministry and Dean of Faculty at Eastern College Australia**.** Earlier in his career, he practised law and he has over thirty years of Christian ministry experience as a church planter, senior pastor, missions team leader, and Bible college teacher. He has served in various leadership roles with Australian Christian Churches/AOG, where he holds ordained ministry credentials. He has been a church development consultant and recently embarked on planting a new inner city church in Melbourne, Australia where he is co-lead pastor with his wife Robbie. His article "The Power of Integration: Challenges in researching Pentecostal/Charismatic spirituality" is based on the research he did for his Doctor of Ministry with the Australian College of Theology. In this article, Cettolin probes common ideas about the current state of Pentecostal spirituality in Australia, looking for real evidence about what has happened. He also discusses the issues involved in doing such research into an area as "nebulous" as spirituality.

**Pastor Astrid Staley** is an adjunct lecturer at Harvest and finalising her doctoral studies at Melbourne School of Theology in the area of Postvention care of those bereaved by suicide. Astrid has published a comprehensive pastoral resource, The *Pastor's Handbook: A Complete Theological & Practical Response to Suicide, Entering the World of the Suicide & the Bereaved.* She has also developed Suicide Prevention, Intervention & Postvention Care workshops based on nationally recognized best practice, which are delivered Australia-wide and overseas to Christian audiences. Her article "The Phenomenon of Disenfranchised Grief Experienced by Those Bereaved by Suicide: A Contemporary Pastoral Response" addresses a "hot button" topic. It's a real challenge to the church to face the pastoral issues raised by this rampant problem in many countries, not least Australia.

**Dr Darin Freeburg** is an assistant professor in the School of Library and Information Science at the University of South Carolina, USA. He has an MA in Theology and a PhD in Communication and Information. In his research, he applies principles of Knowledge Management and Information Behaviour to churches in an effort to understand the characteristics of religious knowledge and how churches can be creators, rather than simply disseminators of this knowledge. His article "Trust and Tithing: The Relationships Between Religious Social Capital and Church Financial Giving" explores another issue that pastors find it hard to talk about - money! This article is grounded in strong quantitative research and, while technical in detail, leads to some interesting conclusions, which have the potential to enhance church life and ministry.

**Rev Dr Adrian Turner** serves as a Relationship Manager with Compassion Australia and is an adjunct lecturer with Harvest. He has over forty years' experience in pastoral ministry, including church planting, senior pastor, and other ministry roles. His article "Creative Tensions Inherent within Contemporary Ministry", based on research he undertook for his Doctor of Ministry with the Australian College of Theology, explores some of the dynamics of seeking to lead people to transformation within local churches.

Our **pastoral reflection** for this issue comes from the pastor of one of Melbourne's larger churches. **Pastor Rohan Dredge** has spent the last two decades in full-time ministry in only three different roles. Starting his professional life as a high school teacher, he developed a care for young people, which eventually led to a role as Youth Pastor. He then served at the same church for over eleven years, where he concluded his role as Senior Associate. Subsequent to this, he balanced a combination of ministry and

corporate work, which continues today. In 2009, Rohan accepted the Senior Ministers position at Careforce Church (now Discovery Church) and has led that community through generational transition and cultural change. His pastoral reflection is based on those years of Christian ministry experience.

Our outstanding **student paper** for this issue has also been written by an experienced pastor. **Pastor Mike Keating** is currently the lead minister of a medium sized yet growing church in Kelmscott Western Australia, having spent over 25 years serving in various roles within the Assemblies of God including State Vice President for a decade. He wrote this essay on "'Care' Fullness" as part of his MA studies with Harvest in "The Minister's Personal Development". As a pastor, he wrestles with the dangers to the emotional health of Christian ministers in western countries.

We are fast building two important resources for readers and students in the area of contemporary ministry: **book reviews** and lists of relevant **theses** from around the globe. Reading these sections of our journal will help you keep abreast of developments in this and related fields of enquiry.

I commend all the contents of this issue to you as discerning readers.

In closing, I also want to thank my editorial team - Kerrie Stevens, Astrid Staley, and Clayton Coombs - for all their effort in making Issue 2 happen.



(Dr) Jon K. Newton

Editor

# The Power of Integration: Challenges in Researching Pentecostal/Charismatic Spirituality

Rev Dr Angelo Cettolin

DMin(ACT); GDipBus(Org Dyn); BTh(ACT); BLaw(UTas)

Contact: acettolin@eastern.edu.au

## Abstract

Researchers are at times uncertain about the right methodology to adopt in areas such as spirituality and its associated phenomena. Researching the spirituality of pastors is a challenging exercise. How do you empirically gather and measure information in a scientifically verifiable way? Adopting qualitative methods of research may result in tentative answers, but equally, an over-concern with quantitative data may miss important links and relationships. Some elements of a qualitative approach may be impressionistic and subjective but on the other hand, a scientifically rigorous investigation employing sophisticated statistical analyses is still open to question in its procedures, choice of tools and techniques. Not everything about human beings can be understood by measurement, or in laboratories. However, integrating methodologies, although involving considerable complexity can produce reliable, interesting, and surprising results. The convergence of data in researching the spirituality of Pentecostal pastors showed that in recent years pastors in a modern Pentecostal movement were moving away from classical Pentecostal beliefs and attitudes and increasingly adopting 'Charismatic,' 'Third Wave,' and more mainline beliefs and approaches. The evidence indicated that the Pentecostal spirituality of the pastors was changing. Paradoxically, the influences of the Charismatic Renewal and 'Third Wave' movements seem to have revitalised a classical Pentecostal denomination.

## Introduction

Researchers can be ambivalent about the right methodology to adopt in dealing with 'non-tangibles' such as spirituality. I faced this issue in a research project aimed at determining the basic essentials of spirituality among Pentecostal pastors in the *Assemblies of God in Australia* (*AOG*), now called *Australian Christian Churches* (*ACC*). My basic starting premise was that recent change was occurring with regard to the pastors' own spirituality. The goal of the research was to try and understand what was happening, what was influencing any change, and what the ensuing effects might be.

One objective was to help senior pastors evaluate the strengths and deficiencies of their own spirituality with a view to assisting them to develop a dynamic, mature and relevant spirituality in their own lives and churches. The focus was deliberately on Pentecostal spirituality and its defining features (beliefs, behaviours, and practices). It was necessary to determine what is meant by spirituality, by *Pentecostal* spirituality and whether the spirituality in the AOG/ACC had changed and if so, in what way.[1] There was no consistent understanding regarding the essential characteristic features of Pentecostal spirituality and little research had been done within the AOG/ACC as to any possible developments. The aim was to bring clarity to what has often been a confusing and misunderstood subject area that has only recently begun to attract the attention of scholars. [2]

## Christian Spirituality

Despite the considerable variety of forms displayed in the Christian tradition, there are still certain norms of genuine spirituality with boundaries and limitations. These are found primarily in the Scriptures and the early church creeds. There are a number of common underlying themes and features of genuine Christian spirituality:

*First*, it is not an optional extra as though some people are "spiritual" and others are not. It is how people express their faith in one way or another. All the various forms of "spirituality" deal with a person's relationship with God, and as such are very "personal," although this does not mean private or individualistic (Edgar 2004, p. 15). "Spirituality" has simply become the contemporary word of choice for expressing how we live with God in this world (Thompson 1995, pp. 6-7).

*Secondly*, it is more than a mode or type of relating to God and it refers to the working of the Holy Spirit within believers to make them more like Christ (2Cor. 3:18). For Christians, "spirituality" is the sphere in which the Holy Spirit has direct influence. The suffix "-*ity*" expresses a state or condition of being spiritual, of being indwelt and guided by the Holy Spirit (Toon 1989, p. 13). It is the encounter of the self with God and one's personal response to the God who calls (Johnson 1988, pp. 46, 65). It is based in the love and grace of God rather than human ability. Talents and capacities are important but the initiative and emphasis lies with God (Eph. 2:8) (Edgar 2004, p. 15).

*Thirdly*, it is focused on the triune God, who is Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. An

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[1] The research indirectly reflected on broader issues such as possible changes in church structure, on historical comparisons and on the practices of church members, but these were not the specific foci of the project.

[2] See D Min thesis for full explanation of the research and its outcomes:
https://drive.google.com/file/d/0B_R6oCK8YyDTQkR2bXZmWlFHODg/view?usp=sharing.
The bibliography is found at:
https://drive.google.com/file/d/0B_R6oCK8YyDTZkNOTnlldTh3MW8/view?usp=sharing

activity is a Christian exercise because of the *content* rather than the *method*. The key issue is the intention or the focus involved, rather than simply the technique (Edgar 2004, p. 15). "Spirituality" involves the human response but is always guided by the Spirit to the revelation of God in Jesus Christ (Toon 1989, p. 17).

*Fourth*, "spirituality" finds its characteristics from the Christian belief that humans are capable of entering a relationship with a God who is both transcendent as well as indwelling the human heart. However, this self-transcendence is a gift of the Spirit who establishes a life-giving relationship with God in Christ within a believing community (Sheldrake 1991, pp. 52-53).

*Fifth*, the term "spirituality" also relates to its outworking in the way one behaves and relates to the external world. It is about how Christians follow the Holy Spirit's guidance and how they respond to his action upon their spirit (Toon 1989, p. 17). It is not simply for the "interior life", but as much for the body as for the soul, and is directed to the implementation of both the commandments of Christ to love God and our neighbor (Wakefield 1990, pp. 361-362). A robust spirituality will also be connected to ethics. Mulholland, therefore, defines spiritual formation as "a process of being conformed to the image of Christ for the sake of others" (Mulholland 1993, p. 12). It does not refer to just a privatized experience but it involves the whole of life.

*Sixth*, a helpful working definition of spirituality in the Christian context is that of a "lived experience," one that actualizes a fundamental dimension of being human, the spiritual dimension (Albrecht 1999, p. 23). As Paul the apostle said, "If we live by the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit" (Gal. 5:25).

*Finally*, Russell Spittler characterizes "spirituality" as referring to the cluster of acts and sentiments that are informed by the beliefs and values of a specific religious community. "Liturgy" describes what people *do* when assembled for worship and "theology" defines systematized and usually *written* reflections on the religious experience. By contrast, "spirituality" focuses on people's pietistic *habits*. The elasticity of the term comes from the wide variety in which worshippers express themselves (1983, p. 1096). However, these particular definitions are too restrictive. Liturgical acts and theological beliefs are actually helpful in measuring various expressions of spirituality. In Pentecostal spirituality, as in a number of other traditions, there is, in fact, a close connection between liturgy, theology, and spirituality.

My analysis of 'Christian spirituality' concluded that it implies more than simply a universal human religious experience or quest — it is a descriptive term for the work of the Holy Spirit. It is the attraction to things of the Spirit rather than earthly things and the conscious living of a Christian way of life. It mainly relates to the interior dimension but cannot be separated from its outworking in the external world. Although "spirituality" is a descriptive term of the process and working of the doctrine of sanctification, it also has a wider scope. Although doctrinal theology, particularly of *sanctification*, both forms and informs spirituality, equally spirituality gives shape and substance to theology. It is never merely a natural process in the spiritual development of people or mere human achievement, as is spoken of in much of modern liberal theology. It is a work of God in which believers cooperate. God is the author not the believer (2Cor. 7:1; Col. 3:5-14; 1Pet. 1:29) (Berkhof 1949, pp. 528-535). For Pentecostals, their theology on "the second blessing" experience impacts on their spirituality but equally their spirituality also influences their (Pentecostal) theology.

## Pentecostalism

A distinctive Pentecostal spirituality is generally acknowledged but there appears to be no consistency in understanding its characteristic features. The term 'Pentecostal' is commonly used to refer to those who are committed to traditional or classical Pentecostal beliefs. Of particular importance to them is a crisis-type 'second blessing' experience after conversion, often referred to as 'the baptism in the Holy Spirit,' which is evidenced by speaking in tongues. From the 1960s until recent times, the term 'Charismatic' was used of those who held to the same 'second blessing' experience but generally chose to remain within their churches. Since the 1980s, evangelicals of the 'Third Wave' movement, while they do not classify themselves as either Pentecostal or Charismatic, hold to the validity of the gifts of the Spirit but do not require a climactic second blessing experience evidenced by speaking in tongues. Finally and more recently, the term 'Charismatic' or 'Neo-Pentecostal' has often also been used to describe those that hold to the validity and use of the gifts of the Spirit for today but do not mandate the requirement of speaking in tongues to validate their experience of the Spirit. AOG/ACC pastors and their churches have been influenced by all four streams and approaches and proponents of all these approaches are represented within their churches.

Pentecostal spirituality shares in a basic Christian experience and many of its aims, values and features are not in themselves unusual in other Christian traditions. Pentecostal characteristics, such as visions, dreams, healings, and so forth have appeared before in the history of Christian spirituality through the ages (Albrecht 1999, p. 23). However, Pentecostal spirituality does bring a unique emphasis on the initiative and work of the Spirit in the believer (Ferguson et al. 1998, p. 657).

When the Pentecostal movement emerged at the turn of the 20th century it stressed the *experience* of the Holy Spirit, in particular, the experience of being "baptized in the Holy Spirit" and speaking in tongues. By the turn of the new millennium, however, AOG/ACC pastors seemed to be playing down features of historic or classical Pentecostalism and were moving towards more Charismatic and mainline denominational forms of spirituality. It appeared as if the forces of institutionalisation were at work and influencing the pastors' expressions of their Pentecostal spirituality.[3]

## The Research Question

The research accordingly sought to identify what was emerging in the pastors' beliefs and practices in contrast with earlier Pentecostal spirituality. It was hoped that insights would emerge as to how the pastors might continue to be faithful to the Pentecostal movement's historic radical approach and still develop a mature and relevant spirituality for this day and age. The project was pursued from a researcher's perspective but also as a Pentecostal minister-practitioner seeking to inform and assist fellow pastors in their ministry.

After defining the meaning of the terms 'spirituality', and 'Christian spirituality' the nature of global 'Pentecostal spiritualities' were explored and clarified. I then sought to

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[3] The ACC/ACC seemed to be under the impact of what the pioneering German sociologist Max Weber referred to as, the 'routinisation of charisma' (1947, pp. 400, 439-40). Although my research sought to explore the operations of 'charisma' understood in a theological sense, Weber's sociological understanding of 'charisma' still provided a valuable heuristic device to explore this area.

discover whether the pastors' spirituality had changed from early Pentecostal spirituality; and what were the reasons for and the consequent effect of the changes.

My hypothesis was that the *pastors' spirituality was changing with both beneficial and detrimental results, with:*

- o *less emphasis on Pentecostal/charismatic experiences and practices;*
- o *increasingly mainline (non-Pentecostal) forms of private devotional practices being used;*
- o *a decrease in classic Pentecostal practices in church services;*
- o *a growing involvement in community services and outreach;*
- o *classical Pentecostal beliefs and attitudes often being downplayed;*
- o *increasingly 'Charismatic' and 'Third Wave', beliefs and approaches being embraced.*

## Measuring Pentecostal Spirituality

Spirituality of whatever type, including Pentecostal, can be empirically seen and measured by a range of indicators. It involves gathering and measuring the information in a scientifically verifiable way. My research looked at the various manifestations and different phenomena of Pentecostal spirituality that can be observed and measured. These include rituals, beliefs, behaviours, habits, attitudes, Scripture use, cognitive allegiance, satisfaction levels, accounts, stories, testimonies, experiences, emotions, consequences, results, and out-workings in life. None of these can adequately measure an individual's relationship with God, but they are observable features that point to the way in which people seek to relate to God. A measurement instrument was designed to align with the various features discovered about Pentecostal spirituality, which was derived from the surveys, from personal interviews, field observations and from a thorough review of the literature including primary source documents.

There is some subjective element in this approach and some reliance on what people actually report. This can generate some problems as there are always strong desirability factors. People often affirm what others expect them to say or say more than they actually do perform or really believe. This was minimised by using an appropriately designed Likert-type scale.[4] This was used to measure the pastors' current attitudes to certain of the phenomena of Pentecostal spirituality. It did not, however, seek to measure the exact frequencies of pastors' current practices and it was not possible to compare these frequencies with those of past practices.

## The Research Participants and Data Collection

Senior AOG/ACC pastors were invited to participate in a survey on their spiritual practices accessible by way of a website where participants could post their responses with anonymity. Data was also collected from a second survey from questionnaires posted to key denominational leaders about Pentecostal Spirituality. Interviews were also conducted with some key ministers about their responses to the survey results and their views on Pentecostal spirituality in general. My personal observations supplemented this data and provided the possibility for integrated research employing both qualitative and quantitative techniques. This facilitated a portrait of the pastors' own Pentecostal spirituality and provided incidental information about practices and beliefs in their churches. Together, these varying approaches added to and

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[4] See explanation of Likert scale page 12.

complemented the findings to enable clearer interpretations of the data.

Quantitative data derived from the survey was one aspect of the methodology used to test the hypothesis.[5] Of the 604 senior pastors who were emailed, a total of 135 participated. While the response rate of 22.35% was statistically low, the senior pastors share a very similar demographic. Great care was also taken in the design of the survey with its simplicity of structure, clear explanatory information, easy accessibility, simple operation of a web-based survey poll, no financial cost to the respondent, and assurance of anonymity. All these helped provide a high possibility of a representative sample with this group (Babbie 1998, p. 262).

Pastors were invited to give information on their spiritual experiences over the previous twelve months. The survey was designed to include the various manifestations and different aspects of the phenomena of Pentecostal spirituality that can be observed and measured. The aspects referred to above were placed into five specific categories to create a measurement tool with questionnaires:

1) Experiences and Practices (EXPRA);
2) Private Devotional Practices (PRIDEV);
3) Church Services and Practices (CHSERV);
4) Community Service and Outreach (COMOUT); and
5) Beliefs and Attitudes (BEATT).[6]

These measures were specifically chosen as best reflecting the essential features of Pentecostal spirituality derived from my widespread survey of the literature and also from my own extensive experience of Pentecostalism. Not every question in the survey related exclusively to Pentecostal spirituality and some items, particularly in the Private Devotional Practices Index, related to areas that share common features with other forms of Christian spiritualities. The opinions of experienced Pentecostal ministers were sought as to whether the items in the survey were relevant.

A number of indices or scales were developed for different aspects of the beliefs and practices that related to each of the above five categories. The scores for each question of those that selected either 'frequently' or 'quite often' (or 'strongly agree' or 'agree') were calculated. The average scores of the questions in the five different indices were calculated in each category to give an index average score. The purpose was to determine the extent to which each of these areas was affirmed, or otherwise, by the pastors.[7]

Once the data from the survey was obtained and collated, ministers who held or had held significant leadership positions in the ACC (including National and State Executives, National Department Leaders and other senior positions) were invited to provide their reflections and comments on the results and on Pentecostal spirituality in general. This was to get at the survey's quantitative material in more depth, to obtain information that the survey was not able to uncover and also to verify interpretations

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[5] The survey is a PHP script called Advanced Poll 2.0.3, which runs on a web server based on a script from http://proxy2.de/scripts.php. The template was modified to suit the needs of this research and configured not to record the IP address of respondents, ensuring the survey was anonymous.
[6] Further information on thesis research project and its results can be found at:
https://drive.google.com/file/d/0B_R6oCK8YyDTQkR2bXZmWlFHODg/view?usp=sharing
[7] Details of the survey instrument with questionnaires and results can be found in the research project's appendix:
https://drive.google.com/file/d/0B_R6oCK8YyDTZDgxdUt0T28tdVE/view?usp=sharing

and conclusions attributed to the data.

Eighteen key ministers agreed to be part of the study. Some were followed up, subsequent to the receipt and collation of their written responses, with further interviews where clarification of their comments was needed. This process in comparing the data from the qualitative and quantitative studies ensured that these methods thoroughly and adequately measured the phenomena in question.

## The Data and Results

The survey was not able to capture all the diversity of practices or details on Pentecostal spirituality but covered the most observed and familiar beliefs and practices. However, the questionnaires and/or interviews conducted were able to supply qualitative and anecdotal information to supplement and clarify the survey statistics. Some of the pastors interviewed also provided general reflections on early Pentecostal spirituality comparing current practices of Pentecostal spirituality with their recollections of the past. Three of these ministers were over 60 years of age, and one over 70 years.[8]

## The Research Methodology

This was a piece of social research consisting of a systematic observation of the life experiences of the pastors with the aim to find and understand patterns (Babbie 1998, p. 1). In my view, the best approach would be the combination of both quantitative and qualitative approaches. The quantitative data was subjected to statistical analysis to facilitate interpretation and the hypothesis was tested and evaluated for its tenability using both quantitative and qualitative data.

In more recent years, scientific methods of inquiry have been criticised on the grounds that observation cannot be totally objective or neutral, for in a societal context, values are likely to be introduced in the observation process (Isaac & Michael 1997, p. 1). 'Measures do not encompass the whole of an event … not everything about human beings can be understood by measurement, or in laboratories' (Joubish, Khurram, Ahmed, Fatima & Haider 2011, p. 2086).

Consequently, most scholars generally now agree that both quantitative and qualitative approaches are needed. It was realised that no one methodology can provide all the answers and insights. Burns explains:

> There is more than one gate to the kingdom of knowledge. Each gate offers a different perspective, but no one perspective exhausts the realm of 'reality'…. Since both quantitative and qualitative research, are concerned with observation and recording of the real world they are both clearly empirical (2000, pp. 11, 14).

## The Qualitative Approach

This research method allowed me to approach the pastors in their context and to reflect their language and ethos. As it relied on qualitative principles and methods, it

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[8] The study of spiritual experiences has been the subject of considerable debate. Some argue that one should not take into account what 'actors' say about their actions. On the other extreme, some ethno-methodological approaches insist that such accounts are all we can really know. Although each individual approach has its strengths and weakness, using the collected data together operates as a check and balance on the consistency and veracity of the information and provides clarity and assistance to its interpretation.

was at times more impressionistic, reflecting the role of subjective judgment in generating the data. It involved exploring the attitudes and the opinions of the pastors. Using the structured and semi-structured interview allowed a deeper exploration into the reality of the pastors' own spirituality. It further provided scope for them to volunteer information enabling the discussion to be set in a wider context. This qualitative information also assisted in the interpretation of the quantitative data from the survey.

As little quantitative data was found on historical Pentecostal spirituality to enable specific comparisons to be made a more impressionistic approach as to what was currently happening was adopted. The qualitative research approach provided the flexibility needed to explore this spirituality so that important variables could be identified (Leedy 1997, p. 109). The pastors' thoughts, feelings, and perceptions were important and the meanings they attached were the basis for their behaviour. Only participant observation, questionnaires, and interviews would permit access to these individual meanings. The concern in the qualitative aspects of research was not only for the objective truth but also truth as the pastors as informants perceived it (Burns 2000, p. 338).

The study also involved judgments made by me as an observer and participant, having spent considerable time in the Pentecostal scene enabling me to provide an insider's perspective. Common patterns were sought for, as were discrepancies and inconsistencies. The content as relayed was taken at face value without presuppositions as to what the particular nature of any specific individual's spirituality should be. At times, the report was presented in a more narrative and descriptive style with the hope that it would be of particular benefit to practitioner pastors.

## The Quantitative Approach

By contrast, the quantitative approach started with the hypothesis, which was then tested. The relevant variables of Pentecostal spirituality were identified and put into categories and standardised data was collected from the senior pastors. The data was analysed to determine whether the original hypothesis could be supported or not, and then general conclusions made (Leedy 1997, p. 105).

The Likert-type rating scale, originally developed by Rensis Likert (1932), is one of the most accepted methods of measuring attitudes. Subsequent research has generally confirmed that this method is quite reliable and a valid instrument for the measurement of people's attitude and the direction they are heading. A set of attitude statements were selected to which the participant pastors were asked to indicate their agreement or disagreement to each along a five-point or longer scale. No assessments are used to rank the statements. It is assumed for example, that all subjects will perceive 'strongly agree' as being more favourable towards the attitude statement than 'moderately agree' and 'agree' (Burns 2000, p. 559). The items on the rating scale are all considered approximately equal in attitude or value loading. The participant pastors responded with varying degrees of intensity on a scale varying between extremes of 'frequently' to 'never' for most of the questions and 'strongly agree' to 'strongly disagree' in five of the questions. The scores of the position responses are then added, to yield an attitude score (Isaac & Michael 1997, p. 148).

The advantage of using this method is that it provides more empirical data regarding a pastor's responses rather than subjective opinions. It also produces more homogeneous scales, increasing the probability that a clear particular attitude is being

measured with a strong possibility that it is a valid and reliable measure. The disadvantage of the Likert-type method is that it ranks individuals in terms of the favourableness of their attitude but provides no basis for quantifying how much more favourable one is than another, nor for measuring the amount of change after some experience. It was also necessary to be cautious about the level of reliability and validity, as these are self-report measures and the pastors may give socially acceptable answers or misinterpret questions.

Although the data is easier to analyse statistically, there is a tendency for Likert-type scales to be subject to distortion. The pastors could potentially avoid extreme response categories and gravitate towards the middle of the scale, perhaps to make them look less extreme; or agree with statements as presented, or try to portray themselves in a more favourable light. Care was taken, however, in the inferences made from the scores, realising that they merely summarise the verbalised attitudes that the subjects are willing to express in this specific test situation (Burns 2000, pp. 560-564). Ensuring the questionnaires in the survey were simplified in structure and anonymous assisted in reducing the possibility of distortion.

The survey was designed to derive as much data as possible about potential trends in the pastors' Pentecostal spirituality across a 12 months period and to generally describe what existed at that time. It surveyed their current attitudes (predispositions to react to the phenomena) in relation to Pentecostal spirituality. 'The rating provides an index of the emotive scores of the affective component of each statement'[9] (Burns 2000, pp. 555-556). It must be understood that the survey results were not being used to measure the numerical quantity of occurrences in Pentecostal practices and beliefs or to make direct mathematical comparisons to earlier years.

## Integration

As the responses of individual pastors and general conversations in observation may have been distorted by various factors, reliance was not made on one method only. In my view, the best way to determine the reliability and validity was by an interaction of the quantitative and qualitative data, often called 'triangulation' or 'integration'.[10] If different methods of assessment or investigation produce the same results, the data are likely to be valid (Burns 2000, p. 390). The more the methods contrast with each other, the greater confidence we can have in the results (p. 419). If the outcomes of the survey in this study corresponded to those of my observational study of the Pentecostal phenomena, including the responses and comments of the key ministers, one could be more confident about the findings.

Quantitative and qualitative research approaches represent the two ends of the research continuum. They differ in terms of their epistemological assumptions, theoretical frameworks, methodological procedures, and research methods. Having been viewed not only as competitive, but also incompatible, research paradigms for some decades, they are now considered as alternative strategies for research (Yilmaz

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[9] As attitudes are usually assumed to influence behaviour, attitude surveys are often used in both qualitative and quantitative research and in the triangulation process.

[10] More researchers now use the term 'integration' as 'triangulation' can lead to misconception as sometimes it is advocated to combine different aspects mainly to enhance the validity of the research results. Instead, the term 'integration' focuses on organising the whole. As a research process, integration is well accepted for mixing quantitative and qualitative components so that they become interdependent to develop a complete and profound picture of the research phenomenon (Siddiqui & Fitzgerald 2014, pp. 137, 145).

2013, p. 123). Both 'qualitative and quantitative methods … are legitimate tools of research and can supplement each other, providing alternative insights into human behaviour. One method is neither better nor poorer than the other' (Burns 2000, p. 391). Leedy says 'many research studies would be greatly enhanced if a combined approach were used' (1997, pp. 107-108).

## The Survey Results

Analytic induction, while the study was going on, enabled the hypothesis to be tested and expanded, allowing my research position to evolve in response to emerging insights. At the start, I had an impression that change was occurring within the AOG/ACC movement's Pentecostal spirituality but subsequent investigations revealed that the situation was more complex and required the development of more sophisticated indices. The results from these are presented below.[11]

## Experiences and Practices: Survey Questions 3 - 17

To collate and measure the Pentecostal experiences and practices of pastors in the AOG/ACC, fifteen items were combined to form an *Experiences and Practices (EXPRA)* Scale. Analysis of the frequencies provides evidence of the contemporary importance for AOG/ACC pastors of Pentecostal experiences. The approach taken was to assume these to be normal human responses to the perception of God. All are indicators of a personal relationship with God (although not all are distinctly Pentecostal).

Firstly, some definitions or explanations of terms: 'Praying in tongues' is an experience central to beliefs in the AOG/ACC. Glossolalia has been defined as prayer focused directly to God generally in a humanly unintelligible language. As a paranormal experience, it is viewed as normative within Pentecostalism. Most AOG/ACC attendees would support the view that glossolalia is a supernatural gift, although subject to the speaker's control, which gives the ability to speak in an unknown but genuine language intended for the purpose of prayer (Poloma 1989, pp. 27-28, 36-39). Roger Stronstad says, that for Pentecostals, 'tongues is normative for their experience just as it was normative in the experience of the apostolic churches recorded in Acts' (1995, p. 16).[12]

'Prophecy', may be defined as a gift of the Spirit by which a person speaks in the name of God giving an exhortation, encouragement, reporting a vision, providing illumination or interpreting a message in tongues. It may be given in a public church service or as a personal prophecy privately to an individual. It may involve what the person believes are specific directions or guidance from God or personal confirmation of biblical truths.

The experience of 'falling under the power', also called 'being slain in the Spirit' or 'resting in the Spirit', occurs when a person falls, often backwards, when one or more people 'lay hands' on the person in prayer; this is also attributed to the power of the Holy Spirit. Some practices, such as receiving answers to prayer or 'feeling led' by God to perform a specific action are not distinctively *Pentecostal*, but share common features

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[11] The answers to the Ministerial Information section (questions 1 and 2) reveal that 78% of the pastors had less than 100 people in their churches, while 63% are in churches of 200 or less. The movement's statistics indicated the current average size of an AOG church is 168 constituents. Fifty-nine per cent of all AOG/ACC churches had less than 100 constituents while 3.74% are over 500 with only 1.93% with over 1,000 people (Kerr 2002, pp. 1-3). This helps to support my contention that the survey provided a representative sample of AOG/ACC churches and senior pastors (Cettolin 2006).

[12] See Frank D. Macchia's treatment of the significance of tongues, in 'The Struggle for Global Witness: Shifting Paradigms in Pentecostal Theology' (1999, pp. 8-29).

closely related to Pentecostal experience and nurture their manifestation.

Significantly, all of the 113 pastors (100%) who responded to the question about praying in tongues indicated they had done so regularly. Ninety-two percent indicated they 'received a definite answer' when had prayed. Early AOG (Pentecostal) spirituality was characterized by a strong emphasis on praying in tongues. When it came to having 'given a public prophecy in church', fewer pastors (64%) indicated they had done this. Thirty-four percent had done so only occasionally. Even less (43%) indicated they had 'given a prophecy privately to another person'. Forty-seven percent had 'occasionally'.

The variance of public prophecy compared to private praying in tongues was considered in Margaret Poloma's North American study, which showed the relative openness of pastors to the manifestation of prophecy to have institutional consequences not just individual ramifications. Prophecy is seen as a gift for the church in general and not simply personal spiritual experience. More than Spirit baptism and glossolalia, these 'paranormal leadings can be institutionally dangerous' and cause serious problems of order in a service. This causes some pastors to be wary of some Pentecostal expressions in public with the result that they may attempt to keep a lid on expressions that have given Pentecostalism its distinctiveness (1989, p. 77).

Sixty percent of the pastors reported they have 'felt led' by God to perform a specific action. Less than 13% had 'fallen under the power of the Spirit'. Only 10% indicated they had 'expressed holy laughter'. However, 69 % had 'heard God speak by personal confirmation of scripture'. A mere 14% testify to having often 'received a miraculous healing' (but 60% occasionally). Only 15% have often 'heard God speak through a vision or dream', 54% have occasionally but 27% hardly ever and 4%, never. Only 3% indicated often experiencing 'a demonic deliverance' although 33% had occasionally, 44% hardly ever have and 20%, never. The figures on this question may be skewed by variations in interpretation as to whether the question is asking if the pastor personally received deliverance or was involved in ministering deliverance to someone. In either case, they seem to indicate that a substantial number of pastors have limited experience in this area. Accounts of early Pentecostal spirituality including in the AOG had reasonably frequent references to deliverance ministry. [13]

With regard to more general spiritual experiences, a high 94% indicated they have 'had a deep sense of God's presence'. Sixty-six percent indicated they have 'had a personal encounter with God'. By contrast, only 10% of pastors often had a personal experience of having 'given a message in tongues in church' but 41% indicated they had occasionally, with a large 38%, hardly ever and 11%, never. By contrast, the reflections of the older key AOG ministers recall regular messages in tongues in early Pentecostal services. Finally, 29% had 'danced with joy before the Lord'.

The results of the AOG/ACC pastors' *Experiences and Practices (EXPRA)* show a varied picture. Some individual experiences, like praying in tongues had high-frequency scores. All the pastors indicated they practiced this either frequently or quite often. However, the *EPRA* Index measuring all the responses in this category reveals an overall average of only 45% (of either 'frequently' or 'quite often'). Experiences such as: giving a prophecy privately to another person, falling under the power, holy laughter, receiving miraculous healing, hearing God speak through a vision or dream,

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[13] See the literature review of early Pentecostal publications such as *the Evangel* in my doctoral thesis.

experiencing a demonic deliverance, giving a message in tongues in church and dancing with joy before the Lord, all have lower than the Index's average frequencies. Practices that are more frequent and well above 50% are: praying in tongues, receiving a definite answer to prayer, giving a prophecy in church, feeling led by God to perform a specific action, hearing God speak by personal confirmation of scripture, having a deep sense of God's presence and having a personal encounter with God. Overall, it appears less than half of the practices in this Index have reasonably strong frequencies for AOG/ACC pastors but more than half are less than average in frequency.[14] When integrated with the other qualitative data, the indication is that AOG/ACC pastors are moving away from a number of key Pentecostal practices that form a major part of early classical AOG (Pentecostal) spirituality.

## Private Devotional Practices: Survey Questions 18 - 26

These nine items focus on the pastors' own private devotional practices as part of the expression of their spirituality. These were measured by the frequency of spending time in certain activities and combined into a single *PRIDEV* index. These could not be termed exclusively Pentecostal practices. Ninety-eight percent of the pastors who responded indicated they had spent significant time in 'private bible reading'. Ninety-four percent spent time in 'intentional private prayer'. Eighty-eight percent spent time in 'biblical meditation'. Sixty-four percent indicated they 'read devotional literature'. Sixty- seven percent 'made use of tapes, CDs, DVDs or videos'. With regard to fasting, 22% responded they did so regularly and 59% did so occasionally. Nevertheless, 19% hardly ever fast and 1% never have. Pastors taking the time to go 'on a prayer retreat' is an area of concern. Only 6% go at least quite often, 42% indicate they go occasionally and it may be a concern that 42% admit they hardly ever go, with 11% indicating they never do. Sixty percent indicated they often 'made time to reflect on their life and directions'. A significant number indicated they do so only occasionally (37%) or hardly ever (4%). Journaling was not that popular with only 36% indicating they 'kept a personal devotional journal'.

The *PRIVDEV* Index of *Private Devotional Practices* measured an average figure of 59% of the overall responses to 'frequently' and 'quite often' in this category. The areas that indicated low scores (under 50%) and in my view need improvement, are biblical fasting, going on a prayer retreat and keeping a prayer journal. Areas that showed scores higher than 50% were time spent in private bible reading, intentional prayer, biblical meditation, reading devotional literature and making time to reflect on life and directions. It must be conceded that areas like journaling and reflecting on life and directions have no available historical data for comparison and so our information provides an impressionistic view of any development. These practices are generally regarded as widely accepted aspects of Christian spirituality and the frequencies in the Index may be indicating a trend towards more mainline practices. Certainly, from the *EXPRA* and *PRIVDEV* figures, there appears to be a focus on the more activist practices than the more reflective practices and forms. The challenge here is for AOG/ACC pastors to integrate both aspects in their lives.

## Church Services and Practices: Survey Questions 27 - 38

This category sought to measure the frequency of various Pentecostal practices

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[14] Although not all these practices were clearly identified as part of early AOG/ACC (Pentecostal) spirituality (as seen in my thesis literature survey and from my interviews with older ministers), arguably most are.

within the pastors' churches. 'Tongues and interpretation' may be seen as a particular manifestation or one form of 'prophecy'. One person speaks aloud in tongues in a service and another delivers the 'interpretation' in a known human language. The glossolalic message is an indication that God has a prophetic word for the congregation. Silence follows while the congregation waits for someone to interpret. The more common form of prophecy is where a person may simply deliver a prophetic word (without waiting for a glossolalic utterance to come from another member). Glossolalia may also be used as a means of corporate praise and worship where people pray or sing aloud in tongues while others at the same time pray or sing in English. This requires no interpretation as it is viewed as simply an acceptable congregational prayer or worship form.

From my observations and interviews, it is clear that some Pentecostals are embarrassed by manifestations such as 'falling under the power' and question whether they are truly of the 'Spirit' or the 'flesh'. Some believe it is genuine, but usually due to high suggestibility. 'Dancing in the Spirit' usually refers to spontaneous dancing by the congregation mostly in the same spot (and without partners) and is viewed as a biblical part of corporate worship like praying or singing together. Old classical Pentecostals see dancing in the Spirit as something that occurs when the Spirit takes over a person, leading them to dance in a more trance-like state and they often regard the former 'Charismatic' form of dancing as really done 'in the flesh'.

Only 22% of pastors indicated that 'tongues and interpretation' were practiced regularly in their church. A significant 51% said it was only occasional but a considerable 24%, hardly ever and 3%, never. This appears to be in contrast to accounts given by older ministers of early Pentecostal church services where messages in 'tongues and interpretation' were a regular feature of church life. 'Prophecies' fared better with 58% saying they often took place in their church services, 37% occasionally and 5%, hardly ever. 'Singing in the Spirit' had a significant 71% indicating this took place often. 'Praying in tongues' was similar with 70% saying it occurred regularly in their church with 25% affirming it occurred only occasionally and 5%, hardly ever.

Forty-seven percent indicated 'testimonies of miracles' often occurred in their church services (with 48% occasionally). 'Testimonies of divine healing' were a little less, with 40% indicating they often occurred (54% occasionally). Forty-one percent of pastors said 'testimonies of personal salvation' often occurred in their church services. A low 25% indicated that 'dancing in the Spirit' often occurred in their church. For 'falling under the power of the Spirit', 34% of pastors indicated this often happened in their church (48% indicated it occurred only occasionally).

With regard to 'altar calls/prayer for baptism in the Holy Spirit', 59% indicated this regularly occurred in their church, 38% said it happened occasionally and 4% said it hardly ever occurred. This seems to indicate a significant support for the experience of the classical AOG doctrine of the baptism of the Holy Spirit. All 106 respondents to question 35 indicated that 'altar calls/prayer for healing occurred in their church (90% often and 10%, occasionally). The results show pastors supporting AOG/ACC doctrine and belief that healing is a normal experience. Eighty-two percent indicated 'altar calls/prayer for salvation' occurred.

The *CHSERV* Index in relation to *Church Services and Practices* measured twelve items of 'ritual' in AOG/ACC services. The overall average of either 'frequently' or 'quite often' in this category was 53%. Areas that indicated frequencies below average for this

Index that may be of concern were tongues and interpretation, testimonies of miracles, of divine healing and of personal salvation, dancing in the Spirit, and falling under the power of the Spirit. Areas above 50% were prophecies, singing in the Spirit, altar calls/ prayer for the baptism in the Holy Spirit, healing and salvation and praying in tongues. Overall the Index appears to show change away from the regular occurrences of these Pentecostal spirituality practices in AOG/ACC church services, which is significant as /AOGACC senior pastors have the key responsibility to determine the direction of church services.

## Community Service and Outreach: Questions 39 – 43

This category sought to measure the aspect of spirituality that relates to outward mission and service. Sixty percent of pastors regularly speak 'to a non-church person about Christ', 38% do so occasionally and 2%, hardly ever. Over half the pastors had often 'prayed for a specific person to receive Christ'; for a significant 45% this occurs only occasionally with it hardly ever for 10%. Often 'inviting a non-church person to church', scored a little lower at 45%. Those who often served 'in a church outreach or community welfare program' were again well over half (57%). Those who often 'served in a community service, social action or welfare not connected to the church', was significantly low at 20%, (with 28% occasionally, a large 40% hardly ever have, and 13% never).

The *COMOUT* Index for this section measured the above five items, which came to an average of 48%. Three items in this index measured over 50%. Two items were well below 50%: inviting a non-church person to a church service and for serving in a community service or social action or welfare unconnected with the church. My research thesis showed that apart from information on the Good News Hall in the Depression years there is not much data on Pentecostal social outreach ministry (Chant 1984, pp. 48-51; 96-97). With the lack of record in Pentecostal publications and other accounts, one could reasonably infer that social welfare ministry was not a strong aspect of early AOG (Pentecostal) spirituality. Data from the views of the key AOG/ACC ministers showed a mixed picture but generally indicates more involvement by pastors in these areas now than previously.

## Beliefs and Attitudes: Questions 44 - 50

These questions deal with the beliefs and attitudes of AOG/ACC pastors as a measure of (Pentecostal) spirituality. A high 97% of pastors agreed with the statement, 'in general I feel very positive about my church', a low 3% were neutral or unsure and only one respondent disagreed with the statement. Again a high 94% agreed that in general they felt 'very positive about being a pastor', only 4% neutral or unsure and one respondent disagreeing. Almost all the respondents agreed with the statement that, 'over the past year I have grown in my faith', with only one respondent neutral or unsure.

The *BEATT* index, as an average of the total items, measured 69%. If question 46, in relation to baptism in the Holy Spirit being able to be experienced without tongues, was taken out of the equation, the Index would measure a high 77 per cent. Four items specifically dealt with baptism in the Holy Spirit and 'the tongues issue'. Spirit baptism is understood by classical AOG Pentecostals to be a work of the Spirit distinct from and usually subsequent to conversion. The sign or tangible evidence, is, *speaking in tongues*. The Survey looked at pastors' beliefs and attitudes about the statement that the 'baptism in the Holy Spirit may be experienced without tongues' (question 46). Four per

cent strongly agreed and 16% agreed with 20% neutral or unsure about this, indicating that 40% of senior pastors appear to be unsure or neutral about a cardinal doctrinal belief of the AOG/ACC. Only 60% of pastors either disagreed (35%) or strongly disagreed (25%) with the statement. This is despite the fact that AOG/ACC pastors must have this experience of speaking in tongues before being ordained. Of the 135 pastors who responded to question 50, that 'speaking in tongues is necessary as evidence of Spirit Baptism', 77% either strongly agreed (30%) or agreed (47%) with 13% neutral or unsure, 10% disagreed with only one respondent strongly disagreeing. Again, it appears nearly one-quarter (24%) have some uncertainty or disagreement with the denominational doctrinal position. The difference between the responses to questions 46 and 50, may indicate that some AOG/ACC pastors, particularly those from neo-Pentecostal backgrounds, are doing their own reinterpretation of 'initial evidence' in Article 5:13 of the United Constitution of the AOG National General Conference and/or they may be simply reiterating the accepted doctrinal position.

Seventy-five percent of pastors either strongly agreed (26%) or agreed (49%) that, 'speaking in tongues should be a requirement for leadership in the church', 12% were neutral or unsure, 11% disagreed and 2% strongly disagreed (question 48). However, with question 49, only 5% strongly agreed and 16% agreed that 'speaking in tongues should be a requirement for church membership/partnership'. Nearly 80% of the 120 pastors who responded to this would probably not insist it be a requirement for membership (19% were neutral or unsure, 48% disagreed with 31% strongly disagreeing).

The emphasis on altar calls for healing and baptism in the Spirit seem as strong as ever but there was a decline in the exercise of spiritual gifts such as public messages in tongues and prophecy and visions and dreams, which may be institutionally problematic. The increase in congregational sizes may also make pastoral control over exercise of these gifts difficult. Despite this, AOG/ACC pastors still appear to be emphasizing the importance of affective aspects of Pentecostal spirituality within an organization that has come out of humble beginnings to become one that is institutionally modern and reaching the middle class.

## Conclusion

One must be tentative about drawing conclusions based on the survey data alone, but we can be more confident when it is integrated with the information from the qualitative data of the key denominational ministers and older ministers I interviewed and my own observations over a number of years. This study was not simply a general essay made after a brief field visit. Considerable time was spent in the empirical world of the Pentecostal scene collecting and reviewing data. As a qualitative researcher my natural tendency was to become involved in the study. However, when applying the quantitative methods, I sought to be more detached. In my view, an integrated qualitative and quantitative approach enhanced the research.

The research showed that experiences were important in the birthing, development and renewal of Pentecostal spirituality as a form of Christian spirituality. Data collected from AOG/ACC pastors in Australia showed that experiences of the presence of the Spirit of God are still important today but there is some development in their spirituality with a varied picture emerging.

Low frequencies in some of the classical AOG Pentecostal practices indicate a lessening in some of the oral, narrative and participatory liturgies. This could be

expected, partly because of an increasingly literary society in Australia and the continual influence of Evangelical theology (Jagelman 1998, p. 36). There also appears to be a change of emphasis with regards to experiencing the immanent presence of the Spirit of God. There is a movement away from the more classical spiritual expressions such as messages in tongues or prophecy by individuals, to the more corporate and controlled spiritual expressions, such as combined singing in the Spirit and community praise and worship in church services.

Overall, there is less emphasis on the classical expressions of Pentecostal experiences and practices over recent years. Pastors still pray regularly in tongues during private devotions but also frequently use more mainline (non-Pentecostal) forms of devotion. In the worship services, there is a clear decrease in classical Pentecostal practices. However, there is a positive growing involvement by AOG/ACC churches in community services and outreach. As far as the classical Pentecostal beliefs and attitudes are concerned, pastors and increasingly adopting 'Charismatic' and 'Third Wave' beliefs and approaches. The convergence of evidence indicates Pentecostal spirituality is changing for AOG/ACC pastors and their churches, with less emphasis on, and perhaps even marginalization of, the 'supernatural' gifts of the Spirit. At the same time, paradoxically the influence of the Charismatic renewal and 'Third Wave' movements appear to be revitalizing a classical Pentecostal denomination enabling it to better engage people in current Western culture.

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# The Phenomenon of Disenfranchised Grief Experienced by Those Bereaved by Suicide: A Contemporary Pastoral Response

Ps Astrid Staley

DMinCand(ACT); MA(Min)(HBC); BA(Min)(HBC)

Contact: astaley@harvest.edu.au

## Abstract

For each completed suicide, many lives are forever changed and indications are that subsequent generations feel the impact. This is a sure guarantee that in the course of pastoral ministry life, caregivers will confront at least one, if not several suicide-bereaved people.

The question arising is, how do we respond pastorally into this area? Historically, pastoral responses toward those left to navigate the aftermath of such a tragedy have not been in the main compassionate. Instead, suicide death has invoked violent responses from those mandated to provide comfort and hope, consequently leaving the bereaved at risk to disenfranchised grief.

One way forward in eliminating the potential for disenfranchised grief is providing ongoing education in this highly complex area. A quantitative study of contemporary pastoral responses to suicide prevention, intervention, and postvention training was undertaken. Seminars exposed caregivers to a greater understanding of the multifarious issues involved in the life of a suicide and challenges faced by the bereaved, along with awareness of historical legacies still imprinted upon our thinking. The training sought to influence pastoral responses where needed to one of greater empathy, thereby eliminating the potential for suicide-bereaved people experiencing disenfranchised grief.

## Introduction

Pastoral responses toward suicide-bereaved people have historically been less than compassionate, thereby leaving those left to navigate life in the aftermath of such a tragedy at risk to disenfranchised grief. Contemporary pastoral responses still tainted with historical legacies toward the suicide act, along with an inadequate understanding of the multifarious issues involved in the life of one who has died by suicide and unique challenges faced by the bereaved in the event of such a tragedy, put those bereaved by suicide at risk of disenfranchised grief. This discussion is committed to raising awareness in the mind of a pastoral caregiver of some of these issues, and in so doing influencing pastoral responses toward greater empathy.

This paper will firstly define *disenfranchised grief* along with some of its contributing factors. Secondly, I embark on a *historical overview* of pastoral responses to a person who has died by suicide and those bereaved by suicide and finally, articulate outcomes from a *quantitative study of contemporary pastoral responses* to suicide prevention, intervention, and postvention training. The hypothesis of the research was that raising awareness of the unique challenges faced by suicide death in the mind of a pastoral caregiver would prove to be a positive avenue to influencing pastoral responses toward greater empathy, thus eliminating any potential for the bereaved experiencing disenfranchised grief.

## Defining Disenfranchised Grief and its Contributors

At the 1985 Thanatology Conference in New York, in a conference paper simply entitled "Disenfranchised Grief," Kenneth Doka, a highly respected and prolific contributor in bereavement studies, formalized the term '*disenfranchised grief*' to encapsulate the grief experience. The impetus for Doka's paper was narratives of people's loss. The common denominator that emerged from these narratives was the *absence* of "social support for their losses" (Doka 2008, p. 224). The absence of social support in their darkest hour sent a clear message to the bereaved experiencing variegated losses,[1] that they were not 'entitled to grieve.' The following definition of this phenomenon, one that is widely accepted (Stoebe et. al. 2008; Kelley 2010), emerged from Doka's observation of loss-narratives. Disenfranchised grief is

> grief that results when a person experiences a significant loss and the resultant grief is not openly acknowledged, socially validated, or publically mourned ... although the individual is experiencing a grief reaction, there is no social recognition that the person has the right to grieve or a claim for social sympathy or support (2008, p. 224).

Disenfranchised grief brings into focus the *social aspect* of grief, how the community in which the deceased was previously connected and which the bereaved is part of, acknowledge and respond to their loss. These social responses are governed by what Doka (2008, p. 225) refers to as 'social norms.' Social norms are rules on interactions with the bereaved, *how* one grieves, how *long* one grieves, *who* can *legitimately* grieve, and most importantly what losses are deemed *worthy* of acknowledgment. Societal

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[1] Participants in Doka's study were those whose losses were accompanied by additional relationship complexities, such as same sex relationships, heterosexuals with significant dyadic relationships outside the marriage union, couples living together, and those engaged or merely dating at time of death (2008).

rules on interactions with the bereaved have dictated historical responses to suicide, catapulting the bereaved into disenfranchised grief.

In addition to the social aspects of grief, Kauffman (2002, pp. 61-78) identifies an *intrapsychic dimension* associated with disenfranchised grief, whereby the bereaved *internalize* societal grieving rules. In this instance, disenfranchised grief is deemed *self-initiated* because of the bereaved's felt shame and guilt over their attachment to the deceased, assessing their grief as either inappropriate or unworthy and thereby disenfranchising their reaction to the loss. Additionally, modes of death such as AIDS-related death, child death, homicide, death by mutilation or alcoholism, or deaths that draw negative media attention may further prevent the bereaved from reaching out for support because of anticipation of probing questions or judgment from others, consequently, making them vulnerable to disenfranchised grief (Rando 1993).

Neimeyer (2002, p. 96) raises another dimension to disenfranchised grief namely *empathetic failure*. This is the inability of a person or society as a whole to understand the *significance* and *meaning* of a loss to the bereaved. It would be a reasonable suggestion that any combination of aforementioned contributors to disenfranchised grief might be evident in any one person's loss-narrative, especially where the loss contravenes accepted societal norms.

## Historical Societal and Pastoral Responses to Suicide

Cain (1972) argues that historically, judicial and religious systems enforced rules that governed social responses to the person who died by suicide and those bereaved by suicide. If a person's loss fell outside accepted social parameters, as in the case of suicide, the bereaved experienced disenfranchised grief from without and within, being deprived of all that social recognition entails i.e., financial support, funeral ritual, communal mourning, and within the context of this discussion, pastoral care.

Centuries of stigma toward the suicide act have alienated suicide-bereaved people. The emergence of Christianity birthed stronger denunciations against the suicide act than in any epoch prior to it. The early Church fathers and Church Councils rendered verdicts devoid of compassion to distance themselves from the romanticized and often-heroic notions toward the suicide act from within the Greco-Roman world. The Donatists' overly eager march toward martyrdom, often inciting people to kill them in the name of Christ, provided additional impetus (Droge & Tabor 1992, pp. 167-180; Alvarez 1972; Amundsen 1996; Tarnas 1999). However, in so doing the pendulum would swing from what were overly permissive attitudes toward suicide to the extreme of demonizing the suicide act.

Cyprian (ca. 200/ 210-248AD) in *Treatise VII*, *On the Mortality,* stated unequivocally that no one could exercise his/her prerogative in hastening death as the timing of one's death rests with God alone (ANF05: 24). Church Councils from Ancyra (314AD) to the decree of Carthage (348AD), along with bishop of Alexandria, Timothy (381AD), stated that prayers could only be offered on behalf of the suicides if madness were apparent, whilst most made no concession for any form of pastoral care (Droge & Tabor 1992; Gearing & Lizardi 2009).

In the *City of God,*[2] Augustine (354-430AD) stated explicitly that fear of punishment or dishonour, notions deemed acceptable within the Greco-Roman world, were

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[2] Book 1, Chapter 20: 14 "That Christians Have No Authority For Committing Suicide In Any Circumstances Whatever." http://www.ccel.org/ccel/schaff/npnf102/Page_14.html

unacceptable reasons for ending one's life. Arguing from Exodus 20: 13, "Thou shall not murder," he stated that Christians had no authority to take life, either their life or that of another (Schaff 1997, pp. 20, 14). Eight hundred years later Aquinas (1225-1274AD), in *Summa Theologica* affirmed Augustine's position offering the following three reasons to which we must agree,

> First, because everything naturally loves itself ... suicide is contrary to the inclination of nature, and to charity whereby every man should love himself. Hence, suicide is always a *mortal sin*, as being contrary to the natural law and to charity. Secondly, because ... every man is part of the community, and so, as such, he belongs to the community. Hence, by killing himself *he injures the community* ... Thirdly, because *life is God's gift to man*, and is subject to His power, Who kills and makes to live (2.64.a5., *Italics added*).

While the reasoning here may be sound, the practical response to it was not. Successive church councils, in addition to state and civil laws throughout Europe and England from the tenth century to the nineteenth century, handed down harsh punishments not only for the suicide posthumously [3] but also those bereaved by suicide. The church deemed suicide an unforgivable sin, condemning suicides to hell, and refused their burial on church grounds. The bereaved were denied pastoral care in any form and ostracized from the church community (Tarnas 1999, pp. 29-31, 153).

State and civil laws deemed suicide a *crime* against the state and sanctioned the posthumous punishment of dragging the bodies of suicides through the streets, hanging them on gallows, driving them through with stakes, hanging them on street corners or publicly burning them (Colt 1987, p. 6). Family members were judged as accessories to the crime and deprived of any material gain from deceased estates, shunned and driven out from their community (Parsons 1993, p. 642). The motivation for such barbaric posthumous torture was two-fold; firstly, to act as a deterrent to others considering the same fate, and secondly, guided by superstitious beliefs that such extreme measures would prevent the evil spirit possessing the deceased from returning and harassing the living to end their life (Cain 1972).

By default, the suicide's next of kin became innocent hostages of these crude measures (Shneidman 1983, pp. 541-549; Silverman 1966/1972). These actions by church and state clearly dismissed the victim's worth as a human being and made their family members social and religious outcasts (Rubey & Clark 1987, pp. 152-153). Because of these austere measures, the only recourse the bereaved had was to retreat from the community, which at times required relocation to different provinces where they were unknown, to begin life afresh, hoping all the while that none would cross their path and expose their past (Kaslow, Samples, Rhodes & Gantt 2011).

Family members who happened upon the corpse in the immediate time following the death are documented as going to elaborate measures to conceal the instrument of death; i.e., ropes, knives, or any other apparatus at the scene. Additionally, suicide notes were burned, and corpses placed in different settings to disguise any possibility of identifying the body as a suicide. Family members claimed the deceased was mentally ill in an attempt for not only the deceased but also the bereaved to maintain social standing within the community, thus enabling the bereaved to procure pastoral care and burial of their loved one on church grounds. Nevertheless, they were buried in

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[3] Dante (c. 1265-1321AD), in *Canto 13*, graphically depicted suicides tormented and confined in the second round of the seventh circle of hell (Durling 1996, pp. 199-217).

specially designated areas separate to others, as it could not be determined conclusively that they were insane (Cain 1972; Dunne & Dunne-Maxim 1987; Schneidman et. al. 1983).

Despite the bereaved choosing to live a lie in order to preserve the dignity of the deceased and their connection to the community, none could escape the *intrapsychic dimension* associated with disenfranchised grief, that which is *self-initiated*, namely the felt shame and guilt over their attachment to the deceased. Despite participating in ritual and communal mourning and having a burial place offered their loved one, the bereaved most likely deemed their grief as both inappropriate and unworthy in the *context of suicide loss*, due to prescribed social norms. This would therefore significantly disenfranchise their *true* grief reactions to their loss (Kauffman 2002, pp. 61-78). Additionally, they lived with the perpetual fear of discovery, which further complicated their grief journey.

Family members not so fortunate as to be first on the scene, and thus unable to disguise the mode of death, bore the brunt of the community's *empathetic failure* (Neimeyer 2002, p. 96). They were robbed of both church and community support, deprived of the power of rituals, a burial place for their loved one, and often subjected to the additional trauma and humiliation of watching their loved one tortured posthumously. Undoubtedly, the violence directed at the bereaved and their loved one posthumously served to amplify this empathetic failure (Rubey & Clark 1987, pp. 151-158). Both groups of bereaved suffered some form of disenfranchised grief, whether the bereaved participated in ritual under false pretence, or where the bereaved were entirely deprived of the power of ritual (Cain 1972).

## Contemporary Attitudes and Practice

Europe in 1770 witnessed the initial shift in responses toward suicide when Geneva officially abolished laws permitting violent posthumous punishment. France in 1870 prohibited discrimination as to where someone who died by suicide could be buried and in 1824, England's parliament made allowance for their burial on church grounds between 9pm and midnight (Mac Donald & Murphy, 1990). The significant shift in approaches to suicide death in the nineteenth century occurred, Werth believes, due to suicide being considered more of a "social, medical, psychological and statistical problem" rather than as previously viewed through "theological, moral, philosophical lenses and legal terms" (1996, pp. 17-18; Cain 1972). The Suicide Act of 1961 amended the laws of England and Wales pertaining to suicide, ruling it no longer a criminal offence. While current laws relating to suicide death in Australia vary between States and Territories, any prior criminal association has been eliminated (Beaton, Forster & Maple 2013). In Victoria, the Crimes Act 1958 Section 6A states, "The rule of law whereby it is a crime for a person to commit or to attempt to commit suicide is hereby abrogated" (Crimes Act 1958).

Contributing to ongoing shifts in attitude toward suicide, though differing in approach to understanding causations, was the substantial research by French sociologist Durkheim in 1858-1917, and German sociologist 6 years his junior, Karl Emil Maximilian Weber (1864-1920).[4] Durkheim laid foundations in the study of suicide upon which others have built. In his famous work *La Suicide* (1897/1951), he proposed

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[4] Weber's study in sociology focused on the economical aspect, such as capitalism and bureaucracy, while Durkheim focused on the social workings of society and the level of a person's integration in society (Gerth & Mills 1946; Durkheim 1951/1979).

the following four classifications of suicides. *Egoistic,* where an individual lacks integration and becomes detached from all aspects of society, *altruistic,* where individuals are rigorously governed by customs and habits, *anomic,* where there is a disruption or a level of confusion in an individual's relationship to society and *fatalistic*, when a person's relationship to society around them is excessively regulated and rigid. In Durkheim's thinking, suicide exposed the deep crisis prevalent in modern society. (Staley 2015, p. 202).

Rick and Kay Warren[5] along with many other Christian writers with lived experience of suicide loss like me, after having experienced postvention care or often the absence of it within the Christian community, seek to heighten awareness of the challenges faced by those who have lost a loved one in such a tragedy. The aim is to inform current pastoral responses when confronted with someone struggling with suicidal-ideations[6] or someone bereaved by suicide. The anticipated corollary to greater understanding is facilitating empathetic pastoral encounters, thereby eliminating the potential for disenfranchised grief.

Informal discussions with suicide-bereaved people outside the parameters of this research highlighted how contemporary pastoral responses towards one who dies by suicide and the bereaved within the Christian community remains varied. Some of these discussions took place following my conference paper presentations at the secular National Suicide Prevention Conference of 2013 and 2015, in the Q & A segment.

Several Christians in the audience offered public comment of how the believing community had robbed them of a funeral rite for their Christian loved one lost to suicide. One testimony that stood out was that of a Salvation Army minister. He shared how he had lost count of the number of times he officiated at funerals of someone who died by suicide because the Church pastor/leader of the church, where the deceased person was associated, refused to do so. Testimonies of those from Pentecostal and Orthodox streams who had suffered the loss of a Christian loved one to suicide also voiced their inability to access pastoral care during their grief and the denial of a funeral rite or community support. One woman from an Orthodox church recalled how the priest told her bluntly that her mother was in hell. Aside from the Salvation Army minister, because of their experience, these people, no longer attend church.

The following two comments reproduced here in de-identified form were offered through discussions on Facebook. One suicide-survivor wrote,

> You're kidding ...? Committed, Holy Spirit filled believers accepting and dealing well with death at own hands??! Whilst my Heavenly Father must ultimately hold me partly accountable, the suicide of my son and (later) his mum (my first wife), brought only condemnation and a piteous mocking at their choice of eternal location. As a generality, the thing the Church does best is to shoot its own wounded. I cannot entertain a liberal interpretation of scripture common as in a great many Aussie churches. However, I continue to struggle in my Pentecostal communities to find truth tempered with compassion. So often, and yet again I am living out the nightmare, that love in Pentecostalism is conditional upon showing the on-going fruit of

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[5] "Kay Warren: A Year of Grieving Dangerously." *Christianity Today*. March 28, 2014.
[6] Whilst many people may have fleeting thoughts about suicide, the term 'suicidal-ideation' refers to someone who has persistent thoughts about ending his or her life, made a plan and gathered the means execute it.

"living in the victory" and continuously standing upon The Word. Oh Lord; live in me (June 11, 2013).

Another suicide-survivor wrote,

> … I write this comment coming from the one who has been in that dark place and have had taken 3 attempts on my life. I do not even fathom to know why I still live and when I have shared this with others within the Pentecostal church that I was attending at that time in my life the answer that was given to me was, cast the demons out of me. The damage that was done, took years of wasted pain to overcome in fact I felt lonely more than ever. I left the church and stayed in bed for 8 years just wanting to end it all the only reason why I did not die in those years is because my family took out 24-hour watch in turns near my bed and showering etc … (June 11, 2013).

These aforementioned pastoral responses are not uniform across denominations; however, they are reminiscent of historical responses to suicide, toward those struggling with suicidal-ideations and those bereaved by suicide. The only possible outcome for these bereaved people is disenfranchised grief. The significance of ritual and its impact on the bereaved where absent cannot be overstated and warrants mention, as its absence contributes to the experience of disenfranchised grief.

## The Significance of Ritual

The experience of disenfranchised grief affects both the deceased and the bereaved alike. Rites of passage, such as funerals, act as a medium to restore the deceased's dignity, an apt reminder that no matter what the cause of death, the deceased are not as dead animals, to be discarded like road kill. Despite the fact that humanity is from dust and returns to the dust, all have a name and deserve acknowledgment. Funerals were not intended as a medium to scrutinize the death or pass judgment, but to recognize and celebrate a life lived (Wiersbe 2006, pp. 109-112, 144).[7] Ritual provides an opportunity to reframe memories, creating a different memory of the deceased that does not define them by their final moments. Suicide-bereaved people not only mourn the death of a loved one but also the violent mode of death. Anderson aptly states, "healing from violent death begins when a life is remembered beyond its violent ending" (2010, p. 128).

Additionally, rites serve to integrate the bereaved and affirm them back into the community in their changed status, allowing the community to share in the grief and grieve together as suicide death rarely only effects immediate family members. Together the "bereaved and community construct a new identity" (Freeman 2005, p. 137).

Research[8] confirms that for each completed suicide, 10-25[9] lives are forever changed and indications are their impact is felt in subsequent generations. Aquinas

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[7] Wade on the profound mystery of rites adds, "We're biodegradable but some mysterious programming deep in our minds insists on a respectful decomposition" (Wade quoted in Wiersbe 2006, p. 112).

[8] At the time of writing this article, the National Suicide Prevention Australia Media Release of March 8, 2016 stated the need for, "… Australia to take drastic action to stem the tide of suicide, in light of the report released today by the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) showing that 2,864 Australians died by suicide in 2014 (2,160 males and 704 females). This is an increase of 342 deaths following the previously reported 2013 figure of 2,522. For the past 10 years, the suicide rate in Australia has

highlighted this impact when he stated, "every man is part of the community, and so, as such, he belongs to the community. Hence, by killing himself he injures the community" (2.64.a5; Carr 2004, pp. 86-89).[10]

Furthermore, where suicide death remains unannounced within the community, this stymies grief conversations with the bereaved, thereby creating an 'elephant in the room.' Stigma historically associated with suicide death has contributed to both the avoidance of the word's use and stigmatizing language (Beaton, Forster & Maple 2013). This, in turn, hinders transparency and opportunity for therapeutic encounters, and for some, forcing a measure of dishonesty into these encounters; all of which contribute to the phenomenon of disenfranchised grief.[11]

Contemporary pastoral responses still accompanied by a level of stigma (*empathetic failure*) reflected in historical sources place the bereaved externally (*through the absence of community support*) and internally (*intrapsychic dimension*) at risk of disenfranchised grief. The aforementioned lived narratives of suicide-survivors indicate that this is still a concern. Determining how prevalent this phenomenon is remains difficult, as statistics of the number of bereaved within the Christian community who have experienced or are experiencing disenfranchised grief are not available. Many will bear the burden in silence, and others will walk away from their faith community.

The following quantitative study of contemporary pastoral responses to suicide prevention, intervention, and postvention training addressed these historical legacies. In offering education about the numerous issues in the life of a person who dies by suicide and the challenges faced by the bereaved, I sought to influence pastoral responses where needed towards greater empathy, thereby eliminating the potential for suicide-bereaved people experiencing disenfranchised grief.

## Quantitative Study of Contemporary Pastoral Responses

In 2010, the cataclysmic event of my 22-year old daughter, Jade's suicide, punctuated my life, providing an immediate impetus for commencing a study of pastoral responses in this area. Following eight months of severe postnatal depression, Jade took her life and the life of her 8-month old son.[12] Two years beforehand, Jade showed signs of experiencing mental health issues. Prior to the birth of her son, she experienced antenatal depression and at the time of her death was at the extreme end of the postnatal continuum namely, postnatal psychosis. A secondary impetus for my study

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not dropped." Suicide Prevention Australia, http://suicidepreventionaust.org/news/ Accessed March 9, 2016. For chart detailing Australian statistics see Hunter Institute of Mental Health: http://www.mindframe-media.info/__data/assets/pdf_file/0018/12834/Suicide-figures-ABS-2016_final3.pdf Accessed March 9, 2016.

[9] This figure incorporates those within close proximity to the deceased i.e., family members and others such as emergency responders, health care providers, co-workers, and acquaintances also affected by the suicide. http://www.suicidepreventionfnq.org.au/statistics.html Accessed January 4, 2015.

[10] Aristotle, in *Nicomachean Ethics Book V*, added an additional perspective that the suicide deprived the state of monetary value and labour declaring, "... he is treating the state unjustly" (Ross 1994-2009, p. 10).

[11] The areas noted in this paper as contributors to disenfranchised grief or the challenges suicide-bereaved people face post-loss, are by no means exhaustive, merely an introduction into this complex area.

[12] Her son's name is omitted to respect his father's wishes that no mention of his name be included when writing on Jade's death.

came from engaging with the narratives of others within the Christian community who also experienced the loss of loved ones to suicide.

As part of this study, Christian caregivers from within New Zealand and Australia were invited via email to participate in a 5-hour workshop designed to provide further understanding of the challenges faced by not only the bereaved but also those struggling with suicidal-ideations. Email invitations were sent to Evangelical and Pentecostal churches, Bible Colleges, and Christian institutions, to which 133 Christian caregivers responded.[13]

Pre and post-seminar surveys accompanied workshops. Pre-seminar surveys aimed at evaluating the caregiver's *current knowledge* on the subject prior to the seminar. Post seminar surveys measured participants' *subjective evaluation* of knowledge and skills gained through information presented. Post-seminar surveys focused on two outcomes, firstly, identifying *shifts toward responses* considered critical in facilitating empathetic encounters and secondly, *nil shifts* in response to workshop content.
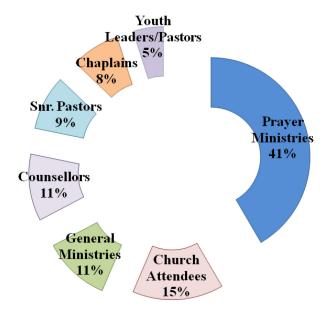
Of this self-selecting number, 32 failed to complete significant portions of both pre and post-surveys and, therefore, the data was excluded, leaving 101 completed surveys. The surveys completed anonymously, used a Likert Frequency Scale (*Never, Seldom, Usually, Always*), and Agreement Scale (*Strongly Disagree, Disagree, Agree, Strongly Agree*). The option of 'Unsure' on the Likert scale was removed in favour of a 'forced choice scale,' thus avoiding the difficulty of interpreting why a neutral position was chosen (Leedy & Ormrod 2005, pp. 185-86). From the various regions where workshops were conducted Table 1 details attending numbers (Att. No's) of Evangelicals and Pentecostals, numbers completing surveys (C/S), and identifies combined ministries represented. Subsequent to this, Chart 1: *Evangelical & Pentecostal Ministries Represented* captures attendees as percentages.

**Table 1:** *Numbers of Evangelicals & Pentecostals Completing Surveys & Ministries Represented*

| Seminar Location | Att. No's | Pent (C/S) | Evan (C/S) | Combined Ministries Represented who Completed Surveys |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| *Victoria* | 83 | 19 | 36 | Snr. Pastor (3) Pastoral Care (9) Prayer/Healing (17) Counselling (6) Connect Group (1) Chaplain (3) Church Attendees (12) Youth Leader (2) Families Ministry (1) Elder (1) |
| *Newcastle* | 8 | 4 | 3 | Snr. Pastor (2) Pastoral Care (4) Counselling (1) |
| *Qld* | 30 | 20 | 7 | Pastoral Care (8) Prayer/Healing (4) Chaplain (3) Counselling (4) Women's Ministry (2) Snr. Pastor (3) Church Attendees (3) |
| *Tasmania* | 5 | 2 | 3 | Snr. Pastor (1) Elder (2) Youth Worker (1) Chaplain (1) |
| *Auckland* | 3 | 1 | 2 | Mission Care (2) Youth Leader (1) |
| *Wellington* | 4 | | 4 | Youth Leader (1) Chaplain (1) Church Leadership (2) |
| **TOTAL** | 133 | 46 | 55 | |

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[13] AU - 480 Churches, 144 Christian Schools, 14 Bible Colleges, 14 Christian Community outreaches, 652 in total. NZ -145 Churches, 32 Christian Schools, 4 Bible Colleges, 181 in total. 7 participants responded from NZ & 126 from Australia.

**Chart 1:** *Evangelical & Pentecostal Ministries Represented*



Participants were not required to disclose their church affiliation, merely whether they identified with an Evangelical or Pentecostal stream. Of those who completed surveys, 11 males and 35 females identified as Pentecostal and 17 males and 38 females identified as Evangelical.[14] The breadth of participant ages ranged from 18-79. Participants were not required to indicate years in ministry, only their area of ministry. No incentives, financial or otherwise, were offered, and filling out surveys was non-obligatory.[15] The data from 101 completed surveys formed the basis of the research findings.

## Workshop Content

The seminar content and accompanying surveys were framed from literature reviews identifying areas that historically have contributed to the phenomenon of disenfranchised grief experienced by suicide-bereaved people. The following five sessions provided an avenue for confronting some of these legacies, endeavoring to grow caregiver understanding in the areas indicated by their titles along with practical tools when engaging someone with suicidal-ideations or someone bereaved by suicide.

Session 1: *Historical & Theological Issues to Suicide*
Session 2: *Identifying Biological, Psychological & Socio-Cultural Issues in Suicide & Self-Harm*
Session 3: *Postvention: Caring for Those Bereaved by Suicide*
Session 4: *Practical Tools*
Session 5: *Challenges to Caregivers*

The seminar hoped to shift participant responses found in pre-seminar surveys still tainted by these legacies toward responses considered key to facilitating empathetic encounters in post-seminar surveys. The research identified this group as the *Target Audience*. Participants were asked to respond to specific statements under the following four sections.

**The General Understanding Section**:[16] Participant responses to statements in the pre-seminar surveys intended to discover their understanding of commonly held

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[14] 32 participants who failed to complete significant portions of both surveys, therefore excluded, were unable to be identified with any specific stream, ministry, gender, or age group as this information was omitted.

[15] Attendees were charged a nominal fee to cover venue hire, food, Certificate of Attendance, and Handbook resource.

[16] Statements: 1) A person who dies by suicide will do so without warning of their intention. 2) A person who dies by suicide is mentally ill. 3) Multiple suicides within families are influenced by hereditary factors. 4) A suicide is more likely to occur in families with unresolved issues. 5) A person who dies by suicide is selfish. Frequency Scaled - *Never, Seldom, Usually, Always.*

fallacies surrounding suicide. Information presented explored the complexity of issues involved in the life of a person who dies by suicide and the means to identify people at risk to suicide. Potential contributing factors surveyed were mental health, genetic predispositions, learnt behaviors, suicide contagion, sociological factors, and supernatural influences.

**Care for the Bereaved Section**:[17] Participant responses to statements in the pre-seminar surveys intended to discover the participant's level of understanding of the needs of someone bereaved by suicide. Information presented sought to make the caregiver more conversant with aspects of the grief journey faced by the bereaved person, and appropriate language for funerals and in a general discussion on suicide.

**The Caregiver Section**:[18] Participant responses to statements in the pre-seminar surveys sought to determine what level of preparation their formal ministry training had offered them in dealing with suicide-bereaved people and how they felt about engaging with people's grief. Information brought to the fore during the seminar emphasized the demands placed upon caregivers in these interactions and considered ways they can best contribute to the bereaved's healing journey. Also incorporated were practical approaches in ministering to someone at risk to suicide and someone bereaved by suicide.

**Theological Beliefs**:[19] The statements were based on historical and theological responses toward suicide. Participant responses to statements in the pre-seminar surveys intended to discover their theological beliefs in relation to suicide. The content of the seminar then wrestled with the theological questions Christians must address when dealing with a suicide death and offered a balanced biblical view on the topic, challenging some of the possible residual theological legacies etched in participant thinking.

## Target Audience *Favourable* and *Nil* Shifts

Determining whether Likert-scaled alternatives chosen by the participant were considered '*favourable*' or '*less favourable*' was predicated upon literature on the given topic. Survey statements were then formulated from this information. Alternatives were ascribed a score from 1-4. Scores of 1 and 4 represented two extremes of both the frequency and agreement scale. A score of 1 represented the '*negative'* end of the continuum, chosen alternatives '*less favourable'* to facilitating an empathetic pastoral response. A score of 4 considered at the '*positive'* end of the continuum, alternatives

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[17] Statements: 1) Those bereaved of suicide only need pastoral care for the first 6 months. 2) 2 years is the appropriate length of time for grieving loss. 3) It is best to avoid using the word 'suicide' at the funeral service. 4) It is best to move those bereaved of suicide on from grieving as soon as possible. 5) It is best to have all the answers before you minister to those bereaved of suicide. Frequency Scaled - *Never, Seldom, Usually, Always.*

[18] Statements: 1) I consult secular resources in understanding this area of ministry. 2) My Christian ministry training has prepared me to minister to those bereaved of suicide. 3) I struggle with engaging with people's grief. 4) I struggle with understanding why people commit suicide. 5) I find it difficult to offer assurance of salvation for a Christian who dies by suicide. 6) I am hesitant to engage Christian counsellors to assist in this area of ministry. Frequency Scaled - *Never, Seldom, Usually, Always.*

[19] Statements: 1) I believe that a Christian who dies by suicide goes to hell. 2) I believe that a Christian who dies by suicide has committed an 'unforgivable sin.' 3) I believe that a Christian person dies by suicide due to lack of faith. 4) I believe that a Christian who dies by suicide does not have opportunity to repent before they die. 5) I believe that a Christian who dies by suicide is influenced by the demonic. Agreement Scaled - *Strongly Disagree, Disagree, Agree, Strongly Agree.*

'*favourable'* to facilitating an empathetic pastoral response in ministering to the bereaved.

There was a combined average percentage of 21.21% *nil shift* in post-seminar data from '*less favourable'* alternatives chosen in pre-seminar data. In the absence of a longitudinal study, I can only offer the following as some possible reasons for this:

- o *Inadequate reflection time on information presented*
- o *Reader interpretation of statements*
- o *Challenges in responding to questions from a not-yet-experienced context*
- o *Cognitive dissonance, retreating into established biases*
- o *Insufficient time to delve into topics in greater depth*

Conceivably, participants may have required post-seminar reflection to digest the copious information presented. The pastoral handbook resource hoped to assist to that end.[20]

Pre-seminar survey data indicated that an *overall combined average* of approximately 70% of initial responses was '*favourable'* thereby, conducive to facilitating an empathetic encounter with the bereaved, with a combined average of approximately 30% (identified as the *Target Audience*) choosing alternatives '*less favourable*' (L/F). These alternatives were considered unhelpful to facilitating an empathetic pastoral response.

## Summation of *Overall Shifts* in Data

Table 2: *Overall Average Denominational Shift in Data*, offers the overall combined average of percentage *favourable and nil denominational shifts per section* evident in post-seminar data. Highlighted areas in *favourable* or *nil* shifts of blue and green respectively, articulate which groups' evidenced greater shift. The 30% *target audience* (T/A) became the focus when evaluating post-seminar survey data for *favorable* shifts (F/S) or *nil* shifts (N/S) toward compassionate pastoral responses from within Evangelical (*E*) and Pentecostal (*P*) streams.

**Table 2: *Overall Average Denominational Shift in Data***

| General Section | | Bereaved Section | | Caregiver Section | | Theological Section | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Evan (*E*) F/S | Pent (*P*) F/S | Evan (*E*) F/S | Pent (*P*) F/S | Evan (*E*) F/S | Pent (*P*) F/S | Evan (*E*) F/S | Pent (*P*) F/S |
| 6.2% | 8.2% | 11.64% | 9.16% | 13.63% | 11.6% | 6.14% | 3.7% |
| | | | | | | | |
| Evan (*E*) N/S | Pent (*P*) N/S | Evan (*E*) N/S | Pent (*P*) N/S | Evan (*E*) N/S | Pent (*P*) N/S | Evan (*E*) N/S | Pent (*P*) N/S |
| 16.4% | 20% | 13.14% | 30.22% | 25.5% | 31.53% | 16.3% | 13.7% |

**General Understanding Section:** Prior to the workshop, an overall average of 22.2% Evan (*E*) and 26.9% Pent (*P*) chose *less favourable* responses (L/F) to statements. Of this T/A, following information presented at the workshop, 6.2% *E* and 8.2% *P*

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[20] Responding on a separate form asking for feedback as to the content and presentation of the seminar, which was not part of the research, many indicated they would have liked a 2 or 3-day seminar to cover issues presented in greater depth. Realizing time constraints in discussing these areas, the pastoral resource accompanying the seminar given to each participant, delved deeper into seminar content allowing for post-seminar reflection.

shifted to more *favourable* responses. *P* had a greater *nil* shift average toward a *favourable* alternative of 3.6%. A final average total of 83.60% *E* and 79.97% *P* evidenced a *favourable* response.

**Care for the Bereaved Section:** Prior to the workshop an overall average of, 24.4% *E* and 35% *P* chose *less favourable* responses to these statements. Of this T/A, following information presented at the workshop, 11.64% *E* and 9.16% *P* shifted to more *favourable* responses. *P* had a greater *nil* shift average toward a *favourable* alternative of 17.08%. A final average total of 86.86% *E* and 69.78% *P* evidenced a *favourable* response. As the overall percentage outcome of Pentecostals fell below 75%, the research delved into individual statements[21] offered under this section and what literature reviews on each offered as potential challenges to responses.

**The Caregiver Section:** Prior to the workshop an overall average of, 39.1% *E* and 42.4% *P* chose *less favourable* responses to these statements. Of this T/A, following information presented at the workshop, 13.63% *E* and 11.6% *P* shifted to more *favourable* responses. *P* had a greater *nil* shift average toward a favourable alternative of 6.03%. A final average total of 74.52% *E* and 68.46% *P* evidenced a *favourable* response. The research delved into individual statements offered under this section and what literature reviews on each offered as potential challenges to responses, as the overall percentage outcomes for both fell below 75%.[22]

**Theological Beliefs Section:** Prior to the workshop an overall average of, 21.5% *E* and 15.6% *P* chose *less favourable* responses to these statements. Of this T/A, following information presented at the workshop, 6.14% *E* and 3.7% *P* shifted to more *favourable* responses. *E* had a greater *nil* shift average toward a favourable alternative of 2.6%. A final average total of 83.63% *E* and 86.31% *P* evidenced a *favourable* response.

By way of a **summative statement**, the *overall average percentage total shift* of *E* to a *favourable* response in the post-seminar data was 9.6% and 8.32% *P* with an overall average total percentage *nil shift* of 18.19% *E* and 24.23% *P.* The combined average percentage *nil shift of Evangelicals* and *Pentecostals* toward a favourable alternative was 21.21%. The research narrowed its focus to the final average total percentage shift in Care *for the Bereaved* and *The Caregiver Sections*, which fell below 75%. Possible reasons were explored as to why caregivers did not evidence a greater shift in these two sections; however, in the absence of a longitudinal study, ascertaining this with a high degree of certainty remains problematic.

## Panoramic View of Entire Data

At the outset, it was stated that contemporary pastoral responses still tainted with historical legacies toward the suicide act are at risk of contributing to the ongoing experience of disenfranchised grief for suicide-bereaved people. Lived loss-narratives confirmed this as a reality. The hypothesis of the research was that raising awareness of the unique challenges faced by suicide death in the mind of a pastoral caregiver would prove to be a positive avenue to influencing pastoral responses where needed towards

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[21] Examination of individual statements (footnote 16), is beyond the scope of this paper. However, it is suggested that perhaps responding to questions from a not-yet-experienced context or retreating into established biases may have been an influence. In the absence of any longitudinal study, precise reasons as to why are unavailable.

[22] Examination of individual statements (footnote 17), is also beyond the scope of this paper. The same process as above was offered in exploring reasons why this was the case.

greater empathy. This empathy would, in turn, benefit pastoral encounters with those struggling with suicidal-ideations and those bereaved by suicide.

Pre-seminar survey data indicated that an average of 27.39% *E* and 30.16% *P* identified as the *Target Audience* (T/A) were in need of the information presented in the workshop. The seminar addressed historical legacies noted in literature reviews, some of which are mentioned in the earlier portion of this paper. Participants were presented with a greater appreciation of the unique challenges faced by the person who dies by suicide and the bereaved along with practical approaches to ministering to someone at risk to suicide, and someone bereaved by suicide.

The *Target Audience* overall average percentage *total shift* of, 9.6% *E* and 8.32% *P* to a *favourable* response (F/R) in post-seminar data, is a positive indicator of the value of training in this complex area. Ongoing opportunity for caregiver training is offered in the form of 10 x 15-minute free Suicide Prevention Training videos that capture key elements of the seminar's presentation, along with links to *The Pastor's Handbook* and additional resources.[23] Researching precisely why a combined average percentage of 21.21% did not shift toward alternatives that are more favourable could be the goal of a longitudinal study in the future. Insights gleaned would prove valuable to the ongoing training of Christian caregivers.

## Conclusion

A brief overview of historical societal and pastoral responses to suicide since the inception of the church noted how suicide-bereaved people have historically been unable to access empathetic pastoral care from within their believing community. Lived narratives of loss testify how some have walked away from the faith, feeling deserted in their darkest hour of need, whilst others may choose to remain connected to their faith community yet emotionally and mentally suffer in silence. They are wounded people in need of rescue from disenfranchised grief through an empathetic pastoral encounter. If contemporary pastoral responses are to divest themselves of historical legacies and break the cycle that has resulted in disenfranchised grief for suicide-bereaved people, confronting these ingrained legacies is essential. Additionally, ongoing education into the challenges faced by not only those lost to suicide but also their loved ones left behind to pick up the pieces of shattered hopes and dreams, will also prove beneficial.

Pre-seminar data noted that an average of approximately 27.39% Evangelicals and 30.16% Pentecostals chose alternatives considered from literature reviews as being '*less favourable*' to facilitating an empathetic pastoral encounter. These were identified as the *Target Audience* and became the focus for evaluating post-seminar data for *favourable* shifts. The research did witness a positive shift in responses within this target audience of 9.6% Evangelicals and 8.32% Pentecostals. The shift highlighted the value and necessity of training in this area. Ongoing education in this highly complex area will continue to benefit caregivers, thereby eliminating the potential for suicide-bereaved people experiencing disenfranchised grief.

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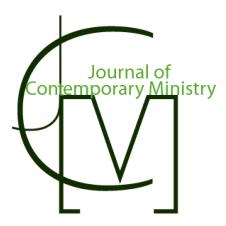[23] The option of Face-2-Face training or Free video training aimed at Christian audiences in Suicide Prevention, Intervention & Postvention Care Training: https://astridstaleyblog.wordpress.com/
*The Pastor's Handbook: A Complete Theological & Practical Response to Suicide, Entering the World of the Suicide & the Bereaved* (Rev. Ed.) and a condensed version available from: http://www.lulu.com/spotlight/staley2atbigponddotnetdotau

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# Trust and Tithing: The Relationships between Religious Social Capital and Church Financial Giving

Dr Darin Freeburg

PhD(Comm&Info)(KentStateUni); MA(TheolStud)(NTS); BA(MNU)

Contact: darinf@mailbox.sc.edu

## Abstract

There are a number of motivations for Christians to give financially to a church. The current study looked at Social Capital—especially as it relates to the concept of trust in God and bonds with a church community—to see if relationships exist that suggest a possible motivation for financial giving. Participants from American Protestant churches in the Midwest completed an online survey intended to elicit responses about their church financial giving and their levels of a specific religious measurement of Social Capital (SC). Analysis showed that increased trust in God, as well as increased sense of bonding with others in the church was significantly related to increased percentages of individual giving. However, increased trust in one's self—another measure of trust in SC—was only related to an increase in the frequency of giving with no increase in the actual percentage or amount. This study has important implications for churches as it suggests that some of the very ideals that distinguish it from other organizations — trust in God and increased bonding with others — also have positive relationships with its economic stability as people tend to give more financially when they exhibit these characteristics

## Introduction

This study analyzed the correlations between social capital (SC) and an individual's financial giving to the church. It looked specifically at Religious Social Capital (RSC) to allow for deeper analysis into the church context. The purpose of the study was to identify possible motivations for financial giving, to provide church leaders with a better sense of how to motivate this giving. First, a review of the relevant literature in

the area of SC and church financial giving is presented. Particular attention is paid to how these two concepts might be related. The next section outlines the methods used in the study, including sample and measurement tools. Finally, an analysis of the data is presented with a discussion of implications.

## Literature Reviews - Social Capital

The SC concept has received much attention in the literature, although differing conceptualizations have caused confusion over what is meant by the term. The current study accepts the definition of SC as "features of social life—networks, norms, and trust—that enable participants to act together more effectively to pursue shared objectives" (Putnam 1995, p. 2). It is the social connectedness of individuals within a group, and the levels of trust and cooperation that allow them to do things together. The use of Putnam's conceptualization of SC is in line with much of the research currently being conducted on SC, as Carpiano noted that recent studies have "almost exclusively relied upon Putnam's . . . conceptualization of social capital" (2006, p. 165).

SC is embedded in relationships, results from participation in a group, and is a result of the social obligations that arise from these relationships. It is a set of resources that is located in relationship itself; SC is *embedded* within the relationships among people (Burt 1992, p. 58; Coleman 1988, p. 111; Nahapiet & Goshal 1998, p. 243). Put rather simply, SC is that which allows a community or person within a community to accomplish something that would not be possible to accomplish without SC (Coleman 1988, p. 98). Putnam later defined SC as more directly and explicitly related to *community engagement*, and defined it as the "norms and networks of civil society that lubricate cooperative action among both citizens and their institutions." (1998, p. v). He included "civic engagement, healthy community institutions, norms of mutual reciprocity, and trust" upon which all social institutions rely (p. v).

## SC and Churches

Because SC is inherently relational and developed within groups, churches offer important examples of communities where levels of SC can be meaningfully measured. Putnam included churches in his outline of the concept, noting that "Church-related groups constitute the most common type of organization joined by Americans" (1995, p. 14). He even pointed to declining church membership in the United States as an example of declining SC (Putnam 1998, p. v).

There is evidence for these SC assets or outputs within churches. For instance, SC development in churches is evidenced through the development of civic skills (Verba, Brady & Schlozman 1995). These civic skills are often afforded to the disadvantaged or lower socioeconomic classes in churches (Prins & Ewert 2002, p. 18). In this way, churches provide people with resources they would not have had without the church.

**Why Putnam's Conceptualization?** Putnam's focus on trust and community engagement as the defining features of SC has been critiqued (Portes 1998; Carpiano 2006). Portes argued against what he perceived to be a solely positive portrayal of SC, one that does not account for possible abuses of SC, including the use of that capital to exclude people (1998, pp. 15, 18). However, it is difficult to provide in the definition of a term all of its potential uses. Putnam himself acknowledged that SC in gangs lead to effective corporation "to the detriment of the wider community" (1995, p. 665).

Carpiano argued that Putnam's definition of SC only focuses on the conditions that lead to SC, while true SC is the "actual or potential resources that are rooted in . . . social

networks" (2006, p. 168). Thus, he contended that Putnam's conceptualization of SC is not actually SC but, rather, *social cohesion* (p. 168). However, this critique is not considered to be a valid reason not to use Putnam's definition in the current study. This is because the trust and social ties leading to social cohesion are considered to be resources on their own, rather than mere conditions for resource development. Trust is something one can give or receive, and it is particularly important for the current study in analyzing how this social cohesion affects financial giving. These are the resources that can lead to the transfer of other resources in a church—including financial resources. However, to say that the trust and collaboration allow for resources is not to say that trust and collaboration are not themselves resources.

## Observable SC

SC includes three primary types: bonding, bridging, and status bridging SC. Bonding SC describes the ways in which individuals in a group create strong relationships with a select few (Putnam 2000, p. 22). Bridging SC, on the other hand, refers to the ways in which individuals make a broader net of relationships that are not as strongly tied (pp. 22-23). Status bridging SC provides opportunities for people of one group to interact with those in another and is especially important in terms of higher and lower socioeconomic status (Wuthnow 2002, p. 670).

The Williams Religious Social Capital Index (WRSCI) (2008) was used in the current study to measure levels of SC. The WRSCI looks at the horizontal dimensions of bonding and bridging noted by Putnam, but specifically asks about how this occurs in a church context, for example, meeting new people in church. It also includes the vertical upward mobility dimensions noted by Wuthnow (2002), but specifically asks about how the church helps make these links and connections.

The WRSCI also looks at the concept of trust — noted by Putnam (1995) as a defining feature of SC's role in allowing individuals to act together — in churches, looking at an individual's trust in God, himself or herself, and other people. These are important distinctions in the way trust operates:

1) Trust in other people is externally oriented, and is the typical conceptualization of trust noted in other SC measurements. Coleman (1990) argued that trust is grounded on the assurance that a given relationship will be beneficial—ideally for both the trustor and trustee.

2) The current study also seeks to understand the role of trust in God. This trust is not as easily and directly observable as trust in other people.

3) Trust in one's self is internal. Williams does not provide a detailed description of this trust, noting that the SC he measures is based on "a relationship between two or more individuals based on trust" (2008, p. 329). The very idea of trust in one's self seems conceptually odd in a scale of relationships. Indeed, an arrogant or overconfident individual can trust him or herself and take no part in community.

## Financial Giving

Churches rely on the financial contributions of their attendees in order to function. The 2007 American Express Charitable Gift Survey found that the median gift to religion in America was $75, though the average was $284 (The Center on Philanthropy 2007). Similarly, a 2013 study conducted by *Connected to Give*—a collaborative project that looks at the relationships between religion and charitable giving in America—found

that, of the respondents that gave more than $25 to a religious or charitable organization, the median donation to a religious organization was $350 (Connected to Give 2013). The mean donation was $1,500. Yörük (2013) analyzed 2003 and 2005 data from the Center of Philanthropy Panel Study and the philanthropy module of the Panel Study of Income Dynamics. Linking these two data sets, Yörük noted that 50% of respondents gave to religious organizations. The average giving amount was $1,057. However, the standard deviation[1] was $2,909. Such a high standard deviation shows that there were a few high givers that skewed the mean. This is likely due to general income levels, in that higher income individuals give a larger amount but a similar percentage.

The question of financial giving is especially important given the statistics that show individuals in America are participating less in the organized church. Research from the Barna Group (2013) shows that 59 percent of American *Millennials*[2] who grew up in a Christian church stop attending when they get older. More troubling for American Christian churches is the finding that 52 percent of these Millennials have no church affiliation. This represents a significant potential decrease in overall amounts of financial giving.

**What encourages people to give money?** An important question to consider for the current research is the motivation for individuals to contribute money to the church. This typically centers on notions of tithing and faith. Some point to a belief in the practice of tithing as a motivation for financial giving, which is the common Christian practice of giving 10% of one's income to the church—although the exact nature of this percentage is not universally accepted (Dahl & Ransom 2002; James & Jones 2011). However, tithing is a complex theological issue outside of the realm of the current research. The theological tradition of the tithe is a contested history (Davis 1987; Brace 1998, pp. 15-18; Kaufman 2015, p. 2), and it is not within the scope of the current research to consider this history in full. Rather, the current research considers levels and behaviors of giving, without a necessary analysis of tithing as a theological concept. The focus of the current study is on possible links between SC and financial giving

Others point to *faith* as a motivation for financial giving (Davis 1987, p. 94; Showers, et. al. 2011). Showers et al. described a *faith factor* in financial giving that encompasses "religious values shared by this group of religious givers, regardless of income, race, or education [that] may provide a more plausible explanation of the motivation for charitable giving behavior" (p. 183). In analyzing the development of faith in schools associated with the Council for Christian Colleges and Universities, Holcomb and Nonneman included trust in the Creator as part of the definition of faith (2004, p. 94). Therefore, faith is defined in the current study as identification with others sharing religious values, and identification with God—understanding that a full definition of such a complex concept is beyond the scope of the current research.

Faith so defined could provide an important motivator for financial giving in the current study. Research on church affiliation among Millennials shows the importance of this personal identification with religion. Although showing a decline in organized church affiliation among Millennials, the Barna Group research suggests that facilitating an external connection with God is something that will draw Millennials back to the

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[1] Standard Deviation is a measure of how spread apart the data is from the average. When this spread, or dispersion, is large, there are outliers on the high or low end of that spread.
[2] Barna Group identified Millennials as 18- to 29-year olds.

church. The finding that 68% of Millennials who remain active in the church believe that "Jesus speaks to them personally in a way that is real and relevant" supports this (Barna Group 2013). Only 25% of Millennials no longer affiliated with church believe this. This importance for attendance could also show importance for financial giving.

**Observable Financial Giving:** King and Hunt's (1975) Index of Attendance and Giving (IAG) was used to provide a measure of financial giving in churches. This 12-item scale includes elements of attendance, church activity, and financial contribution to church—although financial contribution was the primary reason for its inclusion (see Appendix B). Questions of attendance and activity were included to more clearly define the sample, whereas questions of financial giving were directly related to the research questions driving the current study. King and Hunt provide for a deep understanding of financial giving by indicating both percent of total income and the frequency of the giving behavior itself. This is important in understanding whether or not the actual behavior of giving has an impact separate from the amount given.

**SC and Financial Giving**: A central question for the current research is whether or not SC has any relationship with one's financial giving behavior. Forbes and Zampelli found that SC had significant positive impacts on charitable giving, such that they argue, "For the philanthropic community, investments in social capital formation should pay clear dividends" (2013, p. 2488). Although SC is clearly related to charitable giving, however, it is not clear that SC is a *cause* for increased giving. For religious groups in particular, it is possible that the act of giving itself engenders feelings of trust and commitment.

## Methodology - Procedures

This study randomly sampled congregations within a specified geographic area in the Midwestern United States.[3] A list of Christian churches from the Mainline Protestant and Evangelical traditions in America was compiled using distinctions made by the Association of Religion Data Archives (The ARDA 2010a; The ARDA 2010b). This list constituted the sampling frame, and only churches within the Midwestern United States were included. Using a systematic sampling, where every 10th church in the list of churches was selected, five churches were then included in the study. One church from each of the following denominations participated in the study: Presbyterian Church USA (PCUSA), Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA), North American Lutheran Church (NALC), American Baptist Churches USA (ABCUSA), and United Methodist (UM).

A letter of invitation was emailed to the clergy of each congregation, asking each of them to disseminate information with the attendees of their congregation about taking an online survey. Pastors were encouraged to discuss the research from the pulpit as well as distribute information in church bulletins and newsletters. Attendees of each congregation were asked to complete a 15-minute survey about their church behavior. This survey was constructed and completed using the online survey software, Qualtrics. Data from the survey was then exported into the software, SPSS, for statistical analysis. SPSS is commonly used for such analysis.

## Participants

A total of 81 respondents took the online survey, although eight respondents left many questions unanswered, as they were not forced to answer each question. Thus,

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[3] The Midwest denotes states in the middle geographic region of the United States.

most statistics are based on 73 usable survey answers. Of these, 77% of respondents indicated an affiliation with the PCUSA, and 23% indicated affiliations with the ELCA, NALC, ABCUSA, or UM. Thus, the highest response rate was from the PCUSA church included in the study (see Table 1). Response rates are calculated based on the percentage of potential participants that actually complete the survey. Because exact attendance on a given Sunday at each of these churches was not known, it is not possible to provide exact response rates.

Table 1: Participant Denomination

| Denomination | Number of Participants |
|---|---|
| PCUSA | 56 |
| ELCA | 7 |
| NALC | 3 |
| ABCUSA | 2 |
| UM | 5 |
| **Total Participants*** | **73** |

*Based on those completing the majority of the survey.

Gender was equally represented between male (43%) and female (57%) (see Table 2) and the vast majority of respondents (92%) were over the age of 34 (see Table 3). Education levels from high school to professional degrees were equally represented, with 52% having at least a 4-year college degree, and 48% having a Masters Degree or higher (see Table 4). The majority of respondents (63%) had been a member of the congregation for more than six years.

Table 2: Snapshot of Participant Gender

| Gender | Number of Participants |
|---|---|
| Male | 41 |
| Female | 32 |
| **Total Participants*** | **73** |

*Based on those completing the majority of the survey.

Table 3: Participant Age

| Description | Number of Participants |
|---|---|
| **Age** | |
| 18-34 | 6 |
| 35-49 | 13 |
| 50+ | 54 |
| **Total Participants*** | **73** |

*Based on those completing the majority of the survey.

Table 4: Participant Education

| Education | Number of Participants |
|---|---|
| At least 4-yr college | 38 |
| Masters and above | 35 |
| **Total Participants*** | **73** |

*Based on those completing the majority of the survey.

## Measurement

The survey consisted of 12 items from the WRSCI to measure levels of SC, and 12 items from the IAG to measure levels of attendance, activity, and financial giving. Specifically, the WRSCI measured levels of *religious* SC; thus, this concept will be referred to as Religious Social Capital (RSC). In SPSS, descriptive statistics were first determined to provide an overview of the participants. Descriptive statistics provide a statistical look at various characteristics of the participants, and include averages, standard deviations, etc. For this study, the descriptive statistics about denomination, gender, age, education level, and length of time at a congregation were important in describing the participants. The researcher also looked at levels of attendance and overall church activity. Because measurements on these items were categorical, meaning they could be grouped into categories of responses rather than on a sliding scale, chi-square tests[4] were conducted. These tests provide an indication of whether or not the responses to questions about attendance and church activity differ significantly from the assumption that they will be the same for all participants.[5] Levels of financial giving were analyzed using the same chi-square tests and assumptions.

Next, statistical tests were conducted to analyze the relationships between financial giving and RSC—the primary goal of the research. Because the RSC scales asked respondents to rank their agreement on a 5-point scale, it was necessary to conduct one-way ANOVA tests.[6] These tests provide an indication of potential significant differences between the average score on RSC—from 1 to 5—and levels of financial giving, i.e. is RSC significantly different among those participants who gave a little or a lot? Further *post-hoc* statistical tests were performed if significant differences were found.[7] Sometimes respondents will answer a 1 to 5-scale question in similar groupings, i.e. most indicate 1 or 4. In these cases, it makes sense to change this from a 1-5 measurement and into a less than or more than 3 measurement. This provides only two *groups* of respondents, rather than seeing them all on a 5-point scale. In these cases, the measurement was re-coded in SPSS. To analyze the differences between measures on the 5-point scale and these categorical measures that are now in two categories, t-tests[8] were conducted. These tests provide an indication of potential significant differences between a 5-point measurement like RSC and a measurement that only has two possible answers—such as the recoded measurements just discussed. This differs from the one-way ANOVA that looks at questions that have more than 2 possible answers. Chi-square tests were conducted to note areas where participant characteristics significantly differed from an expected average.

To further explain the various tests used, a helpful example is to consider student ratings of a local restaurant. A one-way ANOVA would be used to identify differences in ratings across a number of different students. A t-test would be used to identify differences in ratings between just males and females. A chi-square test would be used

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[4] A chi-square tests the goodness of fit between the observed values and the expected values.

[5] To say a result is significant means that the findings can be attributed to real differences and are likely not due to chance alone.

[6] A one-way ANOVA tests if there are significant differences in the average values across three or more different groups.

[7] A one-way ANOVA is only able to show that there is a difference, but not where these differences exist. This makes it necessary to conduct post-hoc tests to show what specific groups account for the overall difference noted in the one-way ANOVA.

[8] A t-test looks for significant differences in the average values across two different groups.

to find out if a particular student group is more likely than expected to go to a particular restaurant or not.

## Results - Sample Group Characteristics

Questions of attendance and church activity were included to provide a more detailed description of the sample group. This helps set the boundaries for what the results can actually say about other groups of people, i.e. the limited generalizability of the results (see Tables 5 & 6).

**Attendance**: The majority of respondents indicated that they attended church once a week (N = 44), and on 3 or more Sundays per month (N = 64).[9] This was originally asked on a 3-point scale, but because participants indicated a wide range of attendance, the attendance variable was re-coded as a 2-condition categorical variable showing more or less attendance. This allows for a more meaningful analysis with more participants in each group, although it limits the specificity of the measurement. A chi-square was conducted to determine if there were significant differences in these levels from the even distribution expected. Analysis shows that, if not prevented by unavoidable circumstances, participants were more likely to attend at least once a week (N = 60) than less than once a week (N = 13), $\chi^2[1, N = 73] = 30.26$, $p < .001$.[10] Thus, most participants were weekly church attendees (see Table 5).

**Church Activity**: A chi-square was also conducted to determine if there were differences in the overall levels of church activity among participants. This was measured by number of evenings spent at church meetings or in church work. There was no significant difference from the average expected in the number of evenings participants spent at church meetings or church according to the original question, $\chi^2[5, N = 72] = 10.17$, $p > .05$. This was originally asked with six possible answers, from never to more than once a week. However, due to varied responses, level of activity was re-coded as a 2-condition categorical variable showing more or less than once a week at evening church activities. This, again, grouped more individuals into a category allowing a more meaningful analysis, although limiting the scope of the findings. Analysis shows that there are significant differences in levels of activity, $\chi^2[1, N = 72] = 29.39$, $p < .001$. Participants were more likely to spend less than one evening a week at church activities (N = 59) than more than once a week (N = 13). This revealed lower overall evening participation among participants (see Table 5).

Next, a chi-square was conducted to determine if there were significant differences in participant's ratings of their own activity in the congregation. This was originally asked with four potential answers, from inactive to very active. However, responses varied widely, so results were re-coded as a 2-condition categorical variable showing more or less activity. Analysis shows significantly more participants than expected indicated they were very active or somewhat active (N = 67) than indicated they were somewhat inactive or inactive (N = 6), $\chi^2[1, N = 73] = 50.97$, $p > .001$. Thus, participants were more likely to rank themselves as highly active, even though they showed lower levels of evening participation (see Table 5).

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[9] N shows the number of participants with a particular response.
[10] In a chi-square result, this formula shows that the number of participants answering the question (N) was 73, and that the actual measurement of the chi-square ($\chi^2$) was 30.26. The number immediately before N indicates degrees of freedom (1). The *p* value shows the significance (<.001).

A chi-square was then conducted to determine if there were significant differences in the satisfaction that church activities brought to participant's lives. This was originally asked with four potential answers; from strongly disagree to strongly agree. Responses varied widely, so results were re-coded as a 2-condition categorical variable simply showing agreement or disagreement with the statement, "Church activities (meetings, committee work, etc.) are a major source of satisfaction in my life." Analysis shows that participants were significantly more likely than expected to agree with this statement (N = 58) than disagree (N = 15), $\chi^2[1, N = 73] = 25.33$, $p > .001$ (see Table 5). The majority of respondents also indicated that they had taken Holy Communion during the past year (N = 55). Both measures indicate high levels of church activity and participation.

Table 5: Analysis of Participant Church Activity

| Church Activity | Number of Participants |
|---|---|
| I attend church activities at least once a week | 60* |
| I spend less than one evening a week at church activities | 59* |
| I am at least somewhat active in church | 67* |
| Church activities (meetings, committee work, etc.) are a major source of satisfaction in my life | 58* |

*Chi-Square significant at the .001 level.

**Financial Giving:** All but one of the respondents (N = 72) indicated that they make regular, planned financial contributions to the church (see Table 6). Further analysis was conducted, however, to determine the amount and frequency of these contributions. Frequency of giving *in addition to* the general budget and Sunday School was originally asked with five potential answers, from never to once a week or more. However, responses varied widely, so results were re-coded as a 2-condition categorical variable showing that participants gave once a month or less, or more than once a month. Analysis shows that participants were significantly more likely to contribute this additional money once a month or less (N = 55) than more than once a month (N = 18), $\chi^2[1, N = 73] = 18.75$, $p > .001$ (see Table 6).

A chi-square also shows that the distribution of percentage of income given to the church differed significantly from expected, $\chi^2 [2, N = 71] = 44.48$, $p > .001$. Participants were significantly more likely to indicate giving 2-9% of their income (N = 50) to the church than 1% or less (N = 8) or 10% or more (N = 13) (see Table 6).

Table 6: Analysis of Participant Financial Giving

| Financial Giving | Number of Participants |
|---|---|
| I make regular, planned financial contributions to the church | 72* |
| I make additional contributions *once* a month or *less* | 55* |
| I contribute 2-9% of my income | 50* |

*Chi-Square significant at the .001 level.

## Financial Giving and Religious Social Capital

Financial giving and RSC were compared to determine if significant differences existed. The WRSCI is broken down into 4 sub-constructs, and reliability analysis was

run for each sub-construct[11]: trust (.84), bonding (.75), bridging (.81), and linking (.73). These sub-constructs outline separate important distinctions in overall social capital, but can also be used as a combined measurement of overall religious social capital. Only the financial giving items on the questionnaire were analyzed for correlations with RSC. These reliability numbers show that individual participants answered similarly on all questions grouped within each of the four constructs, making them reliable measures of the construct they are proposed to measure. The results of the current study validate previous estimates of reliability for the WRSCI.

Analysis was conducted to determine if there were differences in overall RSC according to the percentage of income dedicated to tithing. Here the entire RSC construct was analyzed, rather than individual components of that construct. Because percentage of income was measured on a 5-point scale, a one-way ANOVA was conducted. Analysis shows that there are significant differences in SC based on percentage of income given to the church, $F(2, 68) = 4.02$, $p < .05$[12]. A post-hoc Tukey[13] was run—as a means of determining to what these differences could be attributed—showing significant difference between those who gave less than 1% of their income (M = 3.71; SD = 0.93)[14] and those who tithed between 2% and 9% (M = 4.25; SD = 0.44). Respondents who gave less money to the church as a percentage of income, therefore, showed significantly lower overall RSC levels.

**Frequency of Giving**: After finding significant differences in overall RSC levels, it was important to determine if specific aspects of RSC contributed to more or less of this difference. Individual parts of the WRSCI were analyzed to determine how the frequency of financial contributions impacted RSC. Respondents were asked how often they made contributions to the church in addition to the general budget and Sunday School. Because results grouped around once a month or less, or more than once a month, an independent t-test was conducted (see Table 7).

Table 7: Results of independent t-tests of difference between financial giving frequency and RSC.

| Description | N | Mean | Std. Deviation | Std. Error Mean |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Frequency of giving and levels of trust in myself** | | | | |
| More frequent giving | 32 | 3.84 | 0.81 | .14 |
| Less frequent giving | 41 | 4.20 | 0.72 | .11 |

Post-hoc results are not shown in Table 7, but are reported in the text. Results show that respondents who reported more frequent giving (M = 4.20; SD = 0.72) showed significantly higher agreement with the phrase, "Being in the church builds up my sense of trust in myself," than those with less frequent giving (M = 3.84; SD = 0.81). This question of trust in myself was part of the *trust* sub-construct within the RSC scale. Thus, giving more frequently is positively correlated with trust; but, specifically, this

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[11] The reliability analysis shows how closely grouped together individuals are on specific questions said to be indicators of a specific concept, like trust. The higher this number, the more consistently individuals scored on this concept. This shows that the individual questions that make up this concept work well together as a measurement of the concept as a whole.

[12] In a one-way ANOVA result, the two numbers bracketed after *F* indicate degrees of freedom. The actual *F* measurement is then shown (4.02). The significance is still measured by *p*.

[13] A post-hoc Tukey is a statistical test conducted after the one-way ANOVA to determine where differences actually occurred.

[14] Mean (M) and standard deviation (SD).

increased frequency of giving is positively correlated with an individual's assessment of trust in him or herself. The same levels of significant differences were not found with frequency and other questions in the *Trust* part of the WRSCI.

**Percentage of Income Given**: Individual sub-constructs and measures of the WRSCI were analyzed to determine how the percentage of financial contributions and RSC were related (See Table 8).

Table 8: Results of one-way ANOVA tests of difference between financial giving percentage of income and RSC measures. Independent Variable: Percentage of Income contributed to church.

| Description | N | Mean | Std. Dev. | Std. Error Mean | 95% Confidence Interval | | Minimum | Maximum |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | | | Lower Bound | Upper Bound | | |
| **Overall levels of RSC** | | | | | | | | |
| 1% or less | 8 | 3.71 | 0.93 | .33 | 2.93 | 4.48 | 1.67 | 4.50 |
| 2% to 9% | 50 | 4.25 | 0.44 | .06 | 4.12 | 4.37 | 3.42 | 5.00 |
| 10% or more | 13 | 4.11 | 0.38 | .10 | 3.88 | 4.33 | 3.25 | 4.58 |
| **Trust in God** | | | | | | | | |
| 1% or less | 8 | 3.88 | 1.25 | .441 | 2.83 | 4.92 | 1 | 5 |
| 2% to 9% | 50 | 4.56 | 0.58 | .082 | 4.40 | 4.72 | 3 | 5 |
| 10% or more | 13 | 4.54 | 0.67 | .183 | 4.14 | 4.94 | 3 | 5 |
| **Closeness to congregation** | | | | | | | | |
| 1% or less | 8 | 3.63 | 1.30 | .46 | 2.54 | 4.71 | 1 | 5 |
| 2% to 9% | 50 | 4.36 | .66 | .09 | 4.17 | 4.55 | 3 | 5 |
| 10% or more | 13 | 4.38 | .51 | .14 | 4.08 | 4.69 | 4 | 5 |
| **Meeting new people** | | | | | | | | |
| 1% or less | 8 | 3.50 | .76 | .27 | 2.87 | 4.13 | 2 | 4 |
| 2% to 9% | 50 | 4.20 | .64 | .09 | 4.02 | 4.38 | 3 | 5 |
| 10% or more | 13 | 4.23 | .73 | .20 | 3.79 | 4.67 | 3 | 5 |
| **Contributing to community life** | | | | | | | | |
| 1% or less | 8 | 3.75 | 1.17 | .41 | 2.78 | 4.72 | 1 | 5 |
| 2% to 9% | 50 | 4.52 | .51 | .07 | 4.38 | 4.66 | 4 | 5 |
| 10% or more | 13 | 4.38 | .51 | .14 | 4.08 | 4.69 | 4 | 5 |
| **Friends with people I wouldn't have otherwise met** | | | | | | | | |
| 1% or less | 8 | 3.75 | 1.39 | .49 | 2.59 | 4.91 | 1 | 5 |
| 2% to 9% | 50 | 4.60 | .57 | .08 | 4.44 | 4.76 | 3 | 5 |
| 10% or more | 13 | 4.46 | .52 | .14 | 4.15 | 4.78 | 4 | 5 |

A one-way ANOVA was conducted to determine if those giving a smaller percentage of their income in tithes had higher or lower levels of SC. Results show that there were significant differences in agreement with the statement, "Being in the church builds up my sense of trust in God" among the levels of tithing, $F(2, 68) = 3.45$, $p < .05$. This question was part of the *trust* sub-construct of the WRSCI, but differed in that it related to trust outside of one's self and is not as directly related to notions of self-confidence.

To determine more precisely what contributed to this difference, a post-hoc Tukey was conducted, and analysis shows that those who gave 1% or less (M = 3.88; SD = 1.25) were significantly less likely to agree with this statement than those who gave 2% to 9% (M = 4.56; SD = 0.58). Thus, the percentage of income given to the church was significantly related with the specific measurement of trust that related to God. As the percentage increased, participants were more likely to show higher levels of this specific form of trust.

Results also show that there were significant differences in agreement with the statement, "I feel close to the church congregation" among the levels of tithing, $F$(2, 68) = 3.63, $p$ < .05. This was a measure of *bonding* SC. Further investigation utilizing a post-hoc Tukey shows that those who gave 1% or less (M = 3.63; SD = 1.31) were significantly less likely to agree with this statement than those who gave 2% to 9% (M = 4.36; SD = 0.66).

There were significant differences in agreement with the statement, "Being in the church helps me to meet new people," among the levels of giving, $F$(2, 68) = 3.98, $p$ < .05. This was a measure of *bridging* SC. Further investigation utilizing a post-hoc Tukey shows that those who gave 1% or less (M = 3.50; SD = 0.76) were significantly less likely to agree with this statement than those who gave 2% to 9% (M = 4.20; SD = 0.64).

The data indicated significant differences in agreement with another measure of bridging SC—"Being in the church helps me to contribute to community life"—among the levels of giving, $F$(2, 68) = 5.56, $p$ < .01. Further investigation utilizing a post-hoc Tukey shows that those who gave 1% or less (M = 3.75; SD = 1.17) were significantly less likely to agree with this statement than those who gave 2% to 9% (M = 4.52; SD = 0.51).

Furthermore, there were also noteworthy differences in agreement with the third measure of bridging SC—"I have become friends with people in the church I would otherwise not have met" among the levels of giving, $F$(2, 68) = 5.18, $p$ < .01. Further investigation utilizing a post-hoc Tukey shows that those who gave 1% or less (M = 3.75; SD = 1.34) were significantly less likely to agree with this statement than those who gave 2% to 9% (M = 4.60; SD = 0.57). Thus, the percentage of income given to the church was also significantly related to all 3 *bridging* sub-construct measures of SC.

## Discussion - Church Involvement

As noted in the results section, questions of church activity were included to provide a more detailed description of the sample. Measurement of this activity did provide some important findings, however, that go beyond mere description. Analysis showed that participants were more likely to spend less than one evening a week at church activities. However, most participants also described their level of activity in the church as active or highly active. One might question whether or not one evening a week at any organization is indicative of high activity. Thus, it could be that this indicates an overestimation of church activity by participants. However, a closer look at the question itself suggests that it is more likely that the measurement of nights spent doing church activities is not a good indicator of church involvement or activity levels. It could be that activities no longer occur at night, making this option inapplicable to even the most active churchgoer. It is clear that church involvement was an important source of satisfaction in the lives of participants, so it is logical to assume that—if night activities were readily available—more participants would indicate more nights spent at church. Indeed, if a churchgoer spent Sunday mornings and afternoons doing church

activities, they would still indicate only weekly attendance with no night activity. Thus, a different measurement is needed for levels of church activity.

## Financial Giving and Social Capital

The significant correlation of financial giving with SC suggests that financial giving has a unique and clear relationship to SC. Thus, the current study affirms the findings of previous researchers that financial giving and SC are related. This does not prove causation, but adds to the understanding of this complex relationship.

**Trust**: The only significant change in RSC that was related to increased *frequency* of giving was trust in one's self. As more-or-less a measure of self-confidence, trust in one's self seems logically less likely to contribute to the community bonds that SC is said to create. The current study confirms this. So, while an increased *percentage* of income given was significantly related to increased trust in God and bonding with others in the church, an increase in the *behavior* of giving was significantly related only to an increase in trust in one's self. This suggests that either a) a higher percentage of giving requires more trust in God and bonds with the church community, or b) increased trust in God and bonds with the church community enable or motivate an individual to give more. It is possible that this trust makes an individual more confident that the money given will be put to good use. This higher percentage of giving is also more economically beneficial for churches than frequent smaller giving.

These RSC measures of trust in God and bonding with the church community also relate to the definition of faith as one of trust and bonding with other Christians and identification with others and with God (Davis 1987; Showers et al. 2011). The sharing of religious values noted by Showers et al. (2011) cannot happen without the trust measured in the current study. Thus, it is possible that the creation of this trust among attendees in a church can increase levels of financial giving. The trust in God measured in the current study also has important implications given the finding from Barna Group that Millennials are attracted to churches that provide this personal connection with God that results in trust in God. This suggests that trust in God is a particularly powerful motivator for this age group.

The giving that results from—or is impacted by—trust only in one's self may allow for more consistent giving, but this is done at lower percentages. It is possible that this measurement of trust in one's self is more related to *appearances* of consistent giving, as individuals wants others—and themselves—to see that they are giving regardless of the level of this giving. This type of giving would not be as financially beneficial to the church, as it is at a lower percentage level. It would also not be as beneficial to community development, as it requires no trust or bridging with others in the church.

**Bridging**: It is also interesting that the percentage of income given to the church was significantly related to all 3 *bridging* sub-construct measures of RSC. To say that participants who give more to the church also feel that they contribute more to community life is to suggest that the church is assumed by these participants to have a community role. In other words, giving to the church *is* giving to the community, possibly through church programs. In addition, the finding that this giving was related to increased friendship suggests that these friendships may be an important aspect of increased financial contribution, such that increasing this friendship activity in the church will also increase financial giving. This may be the result of an increased perception of value in the church, or because of a desire to act in accordance with one's friends.

# Conclusion

The current research had a limited focus and sample, but provides important information on the relationship between church financial giving by individuals and RSC. It achieves the intended purpose of identifying possible motivations for financial giving. It also extends the understanding of SC by looking at a specific religious definition for observation and measurement, calls for a rethinking of measurements of church activity, and extends the understanding of the church financial giving by analyzing both frequency of giving and percentage of income.

Fostering an environment of trust in any organization can take time and may be marked by serious challenges. The current research shows that the type of trust fostered in churches is important. Rather than merely focusing on trust as a general concept, it is important to make note of the subtle distinctions between internal and external trust. Internally directed self-trust was not related to increased giving percentages in this study, making it essential for increased giving that the environment of trust in churches be purposefully oriented to relationships—with others and with God. Literature in this area tends to provide for general measures of trust, which cannot account for these important distinctions.

The research also shows that there was a similar positive relationship between percentage of giving and both trust in God and closeness to the congregation. This provides important insight into the possible relationship between these two measures of externally oriented trust. In the context of a church, it is reasonable to assume that trust in God and trust in others are related and impact each other. If an individual trusts in, and bonds with, others in the context of a religious environment where God is often discussed, these human bonds are likely to foster a religious connection to some degree that may increase trust in God. In addition, trust in God is likely to increase a shared religious identification among individuals, which increases trust in each other.

This study has other important implications for churches, as it suggests that some of the very ideals that distinguish churches from other organizations—trust in God and increased bonding with others—also have positive relationships with their economic stability. These ideals were measured as elements of social capital and connected to financial giving in the current study. The findings shed empirical light on community development and interdependency within churches, as they suggest that trust and bonding have a reciprocal relationship with the *amount* of giving rather than the mere appearance of giving.

The motivation to give outlined in the current study is especially important given the increased worry about the decline in church attendance—especially among younger people in America (Barna Group 2013). This decline has significant potential economic impacts for churches. By distinguishing between the frequency of giving and the percentage of giving, the findings of the current study suggest that trust in God and bonds with others are more relevant motivators for an increased percentage of giving than trust in one's self. The emphasis on others is an important distinguishing factor of churches, and this study shows that it is also an important factor in their economic stability.

Future research should broaden the sample and look at other means of measuring financial giving that are complex enough for valid representation. The current study focused only on the positive elements. Following the argument by Portes (1998), future research should look at possible negative impacts of social capital in churches that

might be correlated with things like isolation from the larger community. Further exploration of the question of causation for financial giving and SC will deepen understanding of the possible direction of such an effect, as well as its context-specific factors. It is also important to further develop the conceptualization of trust with SC measurements to determine if self-trust is a valid indicator of overall SC.

## Appendix A

Adapted Williams Religious Social Capital Index

**Trust**
Being in the church:
1. builds up my sense of trust in God
2. builds up my sense of trust in myself
3. builds up my sense of trust in other people

**Bonding**
4. Being in the church helps me to make friends
5. I feel close to the church clergy
6. I feel close to the church congregation

**Bridging**
7. Being in the church helps me to meet new people
8. Being in the church helps me to contribute to community life
9. I have become friends with people in the church I would otherwise not have met

**Linking**
10. Being in the church helps me to establish my place in the community
11. I have met important people through my involvement in the church
12. I have met different community leaders through my involvement in the church

*Note.* Adapted from "Measuring religious social capital: The scale properties of the Williams Religious Social Capital Index (WRSCI) among cathedral congregations," by Williams, E, 2008, *Journal of Beliefs & Values, 29*, pp. 327-332. Copyright 2008 by Taylor & Francis.

## Appendix B

Adapted Index of Attendance and Giving

1. If not prevented by unavoidable circumstances, I attend church: (More than once a week to Twice a year or less)
2. How would you rate your activity in your congregation? (Very active to Inactive)
3. How often have you taken Holy Communion (The Lord's Supper, The Eucharist) during the past year?
4. During the last year, how many Sundays per month on the average have you gone to a worship service? (Non to Three or more)
5. How often do you spend evenings at church meetings or in church work?
6. During the last year, how many Sundays per month on the average have you gone to a worship service? (None to Three or more)
7. How often do you spend evenings at church meetings or in church work?

8. Church activities (meetings, committee work, etc.) are a major source of satisfaction in my life
9. During the last year, how often have you made contributions to the church *in addition to* the general budget and Sunday School? (Regularly to Never)
10. I make financial contributions to the Church: (In regular, planned amounts to Seldom or never)
11. Last year, approximately what percent of your income was contributed to the church? (1% or less to 10% or more)
12. During the last year, what was the average *monthly* contribution of your family to your local congregation? (Under $5 to $50 or more)

*Note.* Adapted from "Measuring the religious variable: National replication," by King, M.B., & Hunt, R.A., 1975, *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion, 14*, 13. Copyright 1975 by JSTOR.
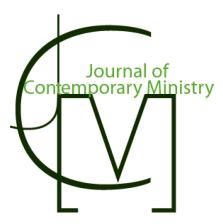
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# Creative Tensions Inherent within Contemporary Ministry

Dr Adrian Turner

DMin(MST); BMin(Tabor)

Contact: aturner@compassion.com.au

## Abstract

This paper will explore the creative tensions that inherently exist at the interface between the biblical revelation of a righteous and holy God and the lived reality of humanity created in his image, who are called to collaborate with God in his redemptive mission of personal, communal, and global reconciliation and transformation.

We will trace the creatively tensile nature of the kingdom of God as experienced on earth, particularly as portrayed in the Genesis account of creation, and see the necessity of these tensions for the growth and development of humanity in God's image. We will also explore the evidence of these elements in the incarnation and ministry of Jesus, Paul's use of the indicative-imperative dialectic, and the insights of some noted adult educators in relation to how we learn as adults.

This will be supported by one of the six transformational themes, that of Personal Bible Engagement, that emerged out of my own doctoral research with four local congregations in the Ringwood area of Melbourne, Australia. I will endeavour to show that the creative tensions inherent within the nature of both God's kingdom and human life in this world are essential for God's transformational purposes for his image bearers, and are part of the processes of collaborating with him in his mission of global reconciliation and transformation.

## Introduction

When Jesus began his preaching ministry, he made the astounding announcement that the kingdom of God had arrived – "The time has come!" God's 'good news' was that

his kingdom was now open and available to humanity through his Son, Jesus Christ; which he then proceeded to demonstrate throughout the rest of his earthly ministry:

> [14]"After John was put in prison, Jesus went into Galilee, proclaiming the good news of God. [15]The time has come! The kingdom of God is near! Repent and believe the good news!" (Mk. 1:14-15, NIV).

There is a radical element to this good news:

> The God of love and justice had entered our world in Jesus the Son
> and is once again engaging directly and personally
> **with** the human condition from **within** the human community!

There are questions that this announcement provokes:

o If Jesus was announcing the time of the kingdom's arrival, where had it been prior to the announcement?

And the corollary:

o Had there ever been a time when the kingdom of God was truly demonstrated on earth?

Undoubtedly, Israel foreshadowed the concepts God's kingdom on earth (Glasser 2003, pp. 91-92). But I suggest we must to go back to the Garden of Eden, prior to The Fall, to see the clearest evidences of what God's kingdom on earth actually looks like – the eternal kingdom that Jesus was announcing as God's 'good news' and is 'prepared for you since the creation of the world' (Mk. 1:14; Matt. 25:34; Dan. 7:13-14).

Genesis 1:26-28 states,

> [27] "So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them. [28]God blessed them and said to them, "Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it. Rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air and over every living creature that moves on the ground."

This passage gives us an amazing insight into the nature of God; what it means to be created in his image; and how he intends to relate to his image-bearers. In this article, I will consider just the two specific elements of God's 'image' and God's 'blessing'.

## 1.  The Dialogical and Dialectical Nature of the Kingdom of God

Throughout church history, there has been a variety of interpretations on what it means to be created in God's image. From early in the twentieth century to current times "a virtual consensus has been building ... among Old Testament scholars", in contrast to some systematic theologians' interpretations, regarding the "predominantly royal flavour of the text." This implies, first, that humanity is seen as a bodily representation of God's image on the earth. Second, that this concept is a reaction to contemporary Ancient Near Eastern creation myths which also conceptualised the idea of the image of God/gods; and third, that the concept of the image of God reveals the inherently relational nature of God and his creation (Middleton 2005, pp. 25-27).[1]

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[1] See also - Fretheim, T. E. (2005). *God and World in the Old Testament – A Relational Theology of Creation.* Nashville: Abingdon Press, pp. 13-22, 48-60; Brueggemann, W. (1982). *Genesis – Interpretation: A Bible Commentary for Teaching and Preaching.* Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, pp. 11-39; von Rad, G. (1963). *Genesis.* (rev. ed.) London: SCM Press, pp. 57-61;

Claus Westermann gives an excellent overview of this development of thought over time, but because of limitations of space and time, let me simply adopt his definition of the meaning of God's image within humanity as:

> Persons created to be God's counterparts on earth, to act as his vice-regal representatives with the capacity to freely correspond with God and each other, in the collaborative maintenance and development of his creation (1994, pp. 148-158).

We are also given a clear indication of how God intends to relate to his image-bearers when we consider the manner in which God blessed Adam and Eve. A blessing is an invocation spoken over the ones being blessed. The first recorded activity of God, having created Adam and Eve in his image, was to *speak* this blessing over them – this is the God who *speaks*! (Gen. 1:28).

There are several significant implications inherent in this amazing portrayal of personal, spoken address, which demonstrate elements of the invoked blessing:

i.  They could hear him                        – he is relational
ii. They could understand him                  – he is rational
iii. They could respond in obedience; or disobedience as it turned out later
                                               – he is reciprocal

Based on the information that has been gathered from Genesis 1:26-28, there are a number of things that I am suggesting can be said about the nature of God's kingdom demonstrated on earth prior to the debilitating incursion that sin brought on humanity:

*Firstly*, it is **a conversational kingdom** – God enjoys dialogue with his image-bearers – one need only look at the way God calls people; a fact that is borne out through both Old and New Testaments in God's personal interactions with his people (Noah, Gen. 6:8-22; Abram, Gen. 12:1-4; Jacob, Gen. 28:10-18; Moses, Ex. 3:1-22; etc.). Through conversational dialogue, God self-reveals his relational nature. Brueggemann provides an excellent insight, "Dialogue … is not merely a strategy, but it is a practice that is congruent with our deepest nature, made as we are in the image of a dialogic God" (2007, pp. 73-74).

*Secondly*, it is **a collaborative kingdom** – historically God calls through conversation, but the conversation inevitably involves an invitation to partner with him in the unfolding of his mission in the earth at that particular time. Collaboration with God requires participatory action on our part. Throughout Genesis God reveals both his relational nature and his participatory intent. In a New Testament application of this point, Paul states this clearly to the Corinthian church in his comments about himself and Apollos, and their ministry among them in 1Corinthians 3:5, 9: [2]

> [5]"What, after all, is Apollos? And what is Paul? Only servants, through whom you came to believe — as the Lord has assigned to each his task … [9] For we are God's fellow-workers …"

In short, the kind of kingdom that Jesus was announcing as 'God's good news' is a relational kingdom grounded in his love for his creation and, supremely, for his image-

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Eichrodt, W. (1967). *Theology of the Old Testament*, Vol. 2, London: SCM Press, pp. 120-131; Erickson, M. J. (1998). *Christian Theology*, 2nd ed. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, pp. 518-536.
[2] 1Cor. 3: 9, regarding the perceived ambiguity by some regarding what Paul meant by "God's fellow workers," Paul and Apollos were both fellow workers together *for* God and *with* God, since it was the same God who had called each. *Θεοῦ* is gen. masc. sing.

bearers, which functions collaboratively through dialogical conversation. Elements of this understanding are powerfully expressed in the First Article of the *Edinburgh 2010 Common Call*,

> … we are called to incarnate and proclaim the good news of salvation … in such a way that we are a living demonstration of the love, righteousness and justice that God intends for the whole world (Prevette, White, Ewell & Konz 2014, p. vii).

We have been created in his image in order to interact with him and each other as communicating and collaborative ambassadors of his kingdom on earth toward the fulfilment of his mission of global reconciliation and transformation.

## Understanding the Dialectical Tensions of Human Life

We have little trouble understanding the dynamics of dialogical interaction – reasoned discussion – even if we sometimes fail to comprehend the thoroughgoing implications of this gift inherent within the image of God in us. However, "dialectical tensions" is a more difficult concept to grasp. Etymologically they mean the same thing: 'to speak between two' (Webster 1977),[3] but they have come to have quite distinct emphases.

Bloesch gives us a helpful historical overview of dialectic's use from Socrates: the art of question and answer,[4] through Aristotle: a pattern of logical reasoning; Hegel: the dynamic process of universal reality through thesis, antithesis and synthesis; Kierkegaard: a method of holding together affirmations that are diametrically antithetical, and Barth: polar pairs held together in the response of faith, such as infinity and finitude, eternity and time, judgment and grace; and we can also add, divinity and humanity (1992, p. 76).

More explicitly, in the way that I intend applying it, *dialectic* describes the nature of dialogical communication between two persons, poles of thought, or functional roles, which although not necessarily opposite, are certainly different. These poles coexist in a creative tension that is mutually beneficial but requires intentional engagement by both parties in order to overcome their inherent differences, becoming increasingly inter-dependent and mutually enhanced in the process.

Some good examples of this are:

The marriage relationship between a husband and a wife, where two differing genders, roles, personalities, and preferences find complementary fulfilment in mutual and reciprocal interdependence – a creative tension if ever there was one;

The learning relationship between a teacher and a pupil, in which the teacher creates a learning environment and facilitates the discovery of knowledge within the learner through dialogue and directed exploration, evoking and allowing questions and answers that provoke engagement, producing "… critical co-investigators in dialogue with the teacher" (Freire 1996, p. 62), rather than simply downloading information;

The cognitively transformational relationship between action and reflection (Freire

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[3] 'dialect' and 'dialogue'.
[4] Aristotle, a student of Socrates' thinking via Plato, described Socrates as the originator of the 'dialectic argument' method of question and answer, becoming known as the Socratic Method; citing Reed & Prevost 1993, pp. 30-31.

1972, pp. 31, 54; Freire 1976, pp. 144-149). The genius of action-reflection is best described as the functioning of a feedback loop, much like a guided missile system. This 'feedback' clearly reveals the action-to-reflection-to-corrected-action that creates the dialectical tensions inherent within the continual dialogue between aspirational intentions, reflected on outcomes, and adjusted practices;

Finally: the revelatory relationship between the written word of God and the spoken voice of God. The word of God is almost always spoken before it is written and must be re-energised by the Holy Spirit in order for the letter to become the voice of God again to our spirits and minds (Deut. 5:4-22; Is. 8:1-5; Jer. 30:1-2; Hab. 2:1-3; Rev. 21:1-5).

The key to understanding dialectical relationships is seeing their inherent 'both-and' nature, rather than as a conflicted 'either-or' dualism.

## Adult Educational Insights

Adult educators, Jack Mezirow and Paulo Freire, affirm that from an educational perspective, the cultural context of language in learning is of supreme importance. One's social reality is shared, sustained, and continuously negotiated through the dialogical and dialectical processes of communication throughout one's lifetime, and it is through this social communication that the individual's *subjective self* is built up in a unique way, enabling meaning to be made out of the experiences of life (Mezirow 1991, pp. 1-3; Brueggemann 2007, p. 191).[5]

Our human capacities for language development and reflective reasoning, both fundamental to learning, are abilities inherent within the privilege of being God's image-bearers. Mezirow points out that at one level, "learning is a dialectical process of interpretation in which we interact with objects and events, guided by an old set of expectations," whereas at a higher level, "In transformative learning ... we interpret an old experience (or a new one) from a new set of expectations, thus giving a new meaning and perspective to the old experience (1991, p. 11).

This gives an educational insight into the radical perspective transformation that Paul experienced on the road to Damascus, requiring him to go away to Arabia for a time, to process the implications of this new meaning (Gal. 1:11-24).[6]

Adult learning, according to Freire, involves the necessity of inviting engagement, reflection, and action on social reality, thereby "problematising ... their existential situations" (Freire 1972, p. 37). "Only dialogue, which requires critical thinking, is also capable of generating critical thinking" (Freire 1996, pp. 73-74; Vella 2002, pp. 5, 9). Alan Roxburgh and Fred Romanuk explore this idea further:

> As questions emerge people need to dialogue with one another, go deeper into the issues, and explore the meaning of what they are learning through face-to-face interaction ... the back and forth of quality dialogue ... that goes over the same material, but each time the richness of the understanding deepens and broadens (2006, p. 93).

It is in the dialectical "... back and forth of quality dialogue ..." as Roxburgh and Romanuk put it, that these creative tensions operate, creating the dissonance required

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[5] Mezirow cites Bowers 1984, pp. 35-44.
[6] See Bruce, F. F. (1977). *Paul: Apostle of the Heart Set Free*. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans Publishing, pp. 80-81.

within the participants' thought processes to discover, critique, and clarify the underlying issues, and finally arrive at more constructive and effective understandings that lead to transformational changes.

This is precisely the approach used by the early church fathers in hammering out their solutions to the Trinitarian and Christological debates through "… the fruit of deep and prolonged reflection by the best and most respected theologians across the centuries …" (Giles 2002, p. 9).

Freire insists, "… education *is* communication and dialogue. It is not the transference of knowledge, but the encounter of subjects in dialogue in search of the significance of the object of knowing and thinking" (1976, pp. 137-138). This is achieved through the teaching/learning interaction, a dialectical process of "… dialogue between those who are participants in the process," which Peter Jarvis describes as an Incarnational approach in which teacher and learner interact in a reciprocal co-learning, and co-teaching process (Jarvis 1987, p. 272; Mayo 2004, p. 51).

These adult educational insights reflect the inherent and continuous creative tensions that exist within the 'now but not yet' nature of the kingdom of God, so well explored by Ladd in his book *The Presence of the Future* (1974, pp. 195-217).

## 2. The Journey of Humanity: From the Garden of Eden to the Garden of Gethsemane

The biblical account of creation foreshadows this same 'now but not yet' nature of the kingdom of God in that Adam and Eve, created in God's image, were sinless, but not perfect, in the sense that perfection implies completion. However, they were not yet 'complete' because they were expected to learn how to maintain the creation and grow through relationship with their creator God (Fretheim 2005, pp. 41, 52; Middleton 2005, pp. 294-295). This is reflected in the commission to 'fill the earth' – collaborative and communitarian exercises on their part; and 'subdue it' – in the sense of harnessing its resources in sustainable and God-honouring ways, requiring personal and social growth and development (Brueggemann 1982, pp. 32-33; Fretheim 2005, pp. 48-56; Middleton 2005, p. 295; Westermann 1994, pp. 228-229).

Now, we understand that the serenity of the Garden of Eden was shattered by the tragedy of humanity's sin of rebellion in listening and responding to another voice, resulting in The Fall, requiring Divine intervention on our behalf.

Since that fall, it is always at the interface between the 'conversation' and the 'collaboration' – the *hearing* and the *doing* – that we experience the reality of 'tension' in the Christian life. This is the necessary point where we now discover our need for growth in character, requiring an inner wrestle, a dialectical back and forth, between God's revealed, conversational will and our own desires (Matt. 7:21-27; Rom. 7:7-25; 2Cor. 4:4-18; Jam. 1:22-25).

This is the very reason Jesus had to come into our fallen world in his incarnation as the living Word of God, to proclaim and demonstrate his liberating truth – the arrival of the kingdom of God in himself (Mk. 1:14-15; Jn. 8:31-32; Heb. 1:1-2). Only Jesus could do this since only he could truly become both God and Man.

The dialectical tension inherent within this divine-human relationship is clearly portrayed in Jesus' experience in the Garden of Gethsemane, particularly when a

comparison is made of the connecting points between Matthew's account (Matt. 26:39-46) and Paul's insights (Phil. 2:5-9).

Matthew uniquely portrays the pathos and tension that was inherent within Jesus' decision-making process, where we only hear his side of the conversations that he has with his heavenly Father. What is revealed is a progression within Jesus' thought processes:

> v.39 "My Father, **if it is possible**, may this cup be taken from me yet not as I will, but as you will."
> v.42 "My Father, **if it is not possible** for this cup to be taken away unless I drink it, may your will be done."
> vv.44-46 "… prayed the third time … Then he … said to them, **"Rise, let us go!"**

Jesus is clearly wrestling within his own humanity on behalf of fallen humanity through three successive prayer conversations with his Father, in which there is a definite progression in his thinking – finally leading to a genuine decision that he came to of his own choosing.

Paul is able to give us some expanded insights in Philippians, as he theologically unpacks the broader processes behind the incarnation and crucifixion of Jesus, alluding to two quite separate and personal decisions that Jesus made.

Philippians 2:5-9 states,

> 5"Your attitude should be the same as that of Jesus Christ: 6Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be grasped, 7but **he made himself nothing**, taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness".

Historically, there has been conjecture as to whether Paul intends the Son's pre-existence in eternity past or Christ's divinity in his incarnate state as his meaning. Fee (1995, pp. 202-215) and Dunn (1989, pp. 113-128) give excellent overviews of opposing positions. On the premise that one must *be something* before one can personally decide to *be nothing*, the position I am taking is that this was a personal decision the Son made in eternity past, echoed in the revelation of the Lamb slain before creation and inferred in other references (1Pet. 1:19-20; Rev. 13:8; Heb. 10:5-7; Jn. 1:1-2, 14; 2Cor. 5:21; 8:9).

> 8"And being found in appearance as a man, **he humbled himself** and became obedient to death – even death on a cross!"

The second personal decision that Jesus makes is processed in the drama of the Garden of Gethsemane. The writer of Hebrews makes a clear reference to this agonising decision, culminating in the statement: *He learned obedience through the things he suffered* (Heb. 5:7-8). Having taken on human form, Jesus wrestled with his decision in light of the prospect of the multi-levelled trauma that the cross would mean for him but came into settled agreement with his Father's will – confirming his prior heavenly decision in eternity past. He learned the consequences of his obedience through his experience of death – and resurrection.

> 9Therefore God exalted him to the highest place …

The Garden of Gethsemane decision, therefore, presupposes another conversation that had already taken place in eternity past before the creation of the world. This is

now where we see the tension between Jesus' dual natures – the decision that was made in eternity past having to be validated on earth, in his humanity, in order for his sacrifice to be effective for humanity. This was a real-time decision and genuine struggle that Jesus, the God-Man, encounters – a creative dialectical tension on our behalf. This becomes paradigmatic for Christian life in the dialectical tension between 'being' and 'doing' – creatively relating 'who we are' with 'what we do', highlighting, and confirming the inherently dialectical nature of the kingdom of God.

## 3. Paul's Use of the Indicative – Imperative Dialectic

Paul's combination of *indicative* and *imperative* moods is a device he uses to explain his understanding of the Christian life being lived in a fallen world as a 'both-and' dialectic, rather than an 'either-or' dualism.

This needs to be understood to clearly follow his line of argumentation via the dialectical character of his thinking (Furnish 1968, p. 217; Ladd 1993, pp. 536-537, 563, 565, 568-569; Bultmann 1955, pp. 203-207, Vol. 2; Kümmel 1974, pp. 224-228). Paul considers believers 'in Christ' to have already passed into the eschatological new eon – each is "... a new creation in Christ" (2Cor. 5:17; 1993, p. 568; Fee 1994, p. 602); but, problematically, we are also still living in the old eon of the fallen creation; we are *both* new creations in Christ *and* still living in the old fallen creation (1968, pp. 215-216, 224-227). In Jesus' terminology we are '*in* the world' but not '*of* the world' (Jn. 17:11, 16).

For Paul, the realm of the *indicative* is the faith-conviction of the new reality and identity 'in Christ.' However, since we are also still living in the old eon, we are susceptible to temptations and sin, and therefore need to be "... on guard ... with the help of the Holy Spirit" (2Tim. 1:14), in order to continually "... live by the Spirit, and not gratify the desires of the sinful nature" (Gal. 5:6).

This is the realm of Paul's *imperatives* – the human responsibility of "... standing firm in the faith" (Gal. 5:1); "... staying filled with the Spirit" (Eph. 5:18); "... setting the heart on things above"; "... letting the peace of Christ rule in the heart"; and "... letting the word of Christ dwell in us richly" (Col. 3:1-2, 15-16); in order to "... be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus" (2Tim. 2:2); etcetera.

However, the *imperatives* of human responsibility can only be fulfilled in obedient, willing cooperation because the *indicatives* of the new identity and status 'in Christ' have already been secured by Christ through his incarnation, death, and resurrection, and are implemented by the transforming presence and power of the Holy Spirit within the collaborating believer. As Brunner comments, "The indicative of grace is never without the simultaneous imperative of discipleship" (1962, p. 297, Vol. III). Simon Chan draws on Thielicke and Calvin, recognising the need for the two concepts of grace as *both* divine unmerited favour *and* empowering gift (Chan 1998, pp. 79-83).

This brings us to a key element in Paul's approach- the fundamental importance of how we 'think'. Sandwiched neatly and necessarily between the *indicative* of our new identity in Christ – our *being*, and the *imperatives* of how we live – our *doing*, is the crucially pivotal element of our *thinking*.

Paul deals with this very practical issue in numbers of places, but none more clearly and uniquely than in Romans 12:2 which states, "... but be transformed by the renewing of your mind." An exegetical analysis of 'transformed': voice, tense and mood – *Metamorphousthe* - passive (a gift), present (a goal), imperative (a task) (Moulton 1978, p. 266; Cranfield 1985, pp. 296-297; Robertson 1931, pp. 402-403).

This can be schematically portrayed as:

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The Dialectical Process of Transformation within Contemporary Ministry

Renewing the Mind (Rom. 12:2)
⇦ ----*Faith-Task*---- ⇨
*Gift* ------------------------------⇨------------------------------*Goal*
Regeneration ⇦------ *Dialectical Relationship* -----⇨ Resurrection
Impregnated Word (Jam. 1:18, 21)          Fulfilled Word (Rom. 8:19-23)

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Therefore, the process of spiritual transformation that should be continually taking place in contemporary ministry is simultaneously a *gift*, a *goal*, and a *task*. The reception of the Word and the Holy Spirit in regeneration on the basis of Christ's atoning ministry is a powerfully transformative *gift* of God's grace which renews the inner person both *relationally* in the capacity of believers to communicate with God, and *perspectively* in how they see themselves in relation to both God and the world around them.

The *goal* is the replication of the image of Christ within believers, which will only be fully realised in the resurrection (Rom. 8:28-30; 1Cor. 15:49-54; 2Cor. 3:18).

The *task* element (albeit a faith-task), inherent within this gift of grace, is the need to live repentantly within the community through the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Not just as a once-only acknowledgement of sinfulness before God, asking his forgiveness, but a daily renewing of the mind, aligning the thoughts and desires of the heart to the will of God in the context of personal devotion to God among a missional community of faith that is a witness in our fallen world.

This can only be achieved through the power of the indwelling Holy Spirit, placing believers within a creative dialectical tension between the Divine will and the human will yielded to his, which, as we saw, was supremely demonstrated by Jesus at Gethsemane, as the result of the conversational and collaborative relationship between him and his Father.

Once again, this demonstrates the dialogical and dialectical nature of the relationship between our Trinitarian Creator-God and humanity created in his image in the context of contemporary ministry that seeks to nurture the replication and expression of *imago Dei* in our daily living as the norm for Christian discipleship – the continuous process of 'becoming' the image of God in Jesus' 'now but not yet' kingdom.

## 4. Practical Implications for Contemporary Ministry

The notion of 'contemporary ministry' must be more than just a pragmatic 'what-seems-to-be-working' approach, but a deep awareness of and commitment to the profound insight that Ray Anderson espoused on a number of occasions: "… all ministry is God's ministry" (1979, p. 7; 1997, p. 5; 2001, p. 62). Necessarily, this statement includes the larger understanding of seeing all ministry as the continuation of Jesus' mission outworked through his ministry of reconciliation, which is continually moving toward his mission of personal, collective, and global transformation in fulfilment of his ministry to the Father (Ac. 1:1-2; Rev. 21:5).

Lesslie Newbigin makes the deeply challenging claim that "… the only effective hermeneutic of the gospel is the life of the congregation which believes it" (1989, p. 234). With this understanding in mind, he goes on to pose the questions, "What kind of

ministerial leadership is required?" and, "What is the task of the ministry?" (pp. 235-241).

These are very challenging questions and are close to the nub of what my doctoral research attempted to uncover, as reflected in its title, *Developing the Ministry of Adult Spiritual Transformation – Andragogy*[7] *meets Theology.*

The connection between *spiritual formation* and *adult spiritual transformation* is to be understood as the dialectical relationship between *process* and *result*, the result being the ongoing transformation of attitudes and behaviours in Christ-likeness over time. Through participation in the Christian disciplines of *spiritual formation,* they become the "... means of grace ... in order to grow in the life of faith ... they become part of who we are" (Dykstra 2005, pp. 44-46), thereby, becoming part of the *evidence* of spiritual transformation.

This is a direct outworking of God's "... incarnating dynamic", his desire to extend himself in love through his divine image being *embodied* in human lives (Langmead 2004, pp. 20-21; 46-47). This is the crowning purpose of creation, and supremely revealed in Jesus' incarnation, and extended through "... Christ being formed ..." (Gal. 4:19) within believers as part of the *missio Dei,*[8] resulting in transformed lives (Bosch 1991, pp. 389-392; Boff 1985, pp. 2-4).

This can also be expressed as the dialectical relationship between the work of the church and its spiritual disciplines on and with a believer on the one hand, and the supernaturally transformational work of the Word and the Spirit within a believer on the other hand (Bloesch 1992, pp. 14-15, 202-203).[9] As Rosemary Haughton has put it so succinctly, "Without the long process of formation there could be no transformation, yet no amount of careful formation can transform" (1980, pp. 31-32) – it is a collaborative work of grace.

This brings us to my 'Holy Discontent.' We know we have the best message in the world – The Gospel of Jesus Christ. So why are we not seeing more transformation taking place in Christians' lives?

The methodology I settled on in an attempt to address this question was to research four local congregations in the Ringwood area, which were deliberately diverse in denomination, style, and function, but each strongly evangelical in core beliefs and mission. Using Grounded Theory and Narrative Research, I interviewed 25 people in all; at least six people from each congregation, including each senior leader. My purpose was to hear their journeys of faith and discover, if possible, the elements that had been transformational in the living out of their faith to that point.

For those interested in the processes involved in moving from raw interview information to the formulation of my six transformational themes, I first distilled 17 primary headings from what my interviewees were saying. These were then broken down into a further 44 substantive responses, from which emerged the six recurring themes of personal Bible engagement, small-group interaction, empowering leadership, missional expressions, conversational prayer, and Holy Spirit encounters.

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[7] 'Andragogy' means adult education, in distinction from 'pedagogy', which is strictly child education.
[8] *Missio Dei* is the Latin form of 'mission of God', or God's mission through Christ in the Spirit.
[9] Rom. 1:16-17; 12:1-2; 2Cor. 3:17-18; Gal. 4:17-20; Eph. 4:1-16; 1Thess. 1:1-10; 2:6-13; 4:1-12; 1Tim. 6:11-16; 2Tim. 2:14-26; 3:16-17; Tit. 3:3-7; Heb. 4:7-16; 5:11 – 6:3; 10:12-14; 2Pet. 1:3-11; 3:18.

For the sake of space in this article, we will limit ourselves to the findings of one emergent transformational theme, that of Personal Bible Engagement, to establish the inherent nature and necessity of creative dialectical tensions that provoke transformational change in any contemporary ministry setting around that theme.

## 5. The Emergent Transformational Theme of Personal Bible Engagement

One of the several things that caught my attention during the interview process was the number of times people mentioned the impact that reading the Bible had on them, in some cases, directly bringing them to faith in Christ, bearing out the Christian understanding that the "... word of God is alive and powerful" (Heb. 4:12).

As we have seen, there is an inherently dialectical process occurring when personal Bible engagement produces an encounter with the person of Jesus Christ through the words of the Bible, allowing his grace and passion to grip one's heart and mind as the Holy Spirit causes the words to come alive. This 'revelation' creates an inner tension, provoking a personal wrestling with the text's meaning, which is fundamentally necessary in order to challenge our preconceived and taken-for-granted assumptions about God, life, and ourselves and confront us with its implications and expected applications for our lives. A couple of examples from my interviewees help to make this plain.

One man, a committed atheist who had never read the Bible, was challenged by a minister not to criticise something he had no knowledge of. His scientific mind was struck by the pure logic of the challenge, and he began what became a near twelve-month process of challenge and change.  This is what he told me:

> I started reading the Bible. I started with Matthew and I read through to the end of the New Testament, and then I started at Genesis and I read through to the end of Malachi. I had just such a hunger to read God's Word.

An older woman, having been a 'nominal' churchgoer for many years, reported after having started to read the Bible for herself:

> And in reading that Bible, it was like my eyes were opened to what was in the Scriptures. I suddenly realised Jesus ... it was not a religion, it was a personal relationship, and that he had died for me.

One of the senior pastors made specific comments regarding the way reading the Bible transformed his understanding of the gospel, and biblical ministry:

> I began to read just the parables, and all of a sudden discovered that Jesus was talking about a kingdom Gospel ... we've actually only got half of the Gospel. We've had one that said more about what we've been *saved from* rather than what we've been *saved for*. So this Gospel of what we've been *saved for* ... that's actually the predominance of Jesus' message.

Another senior Pastor explained:

> I remember reading the story of the woman whose son died; the widow woman in Luke 7 ... it says that his heart broke for this widow woman. And I realised in reading this story that my heart had never really

broken for somebody else … and something broke; finally, something broke for me; and it was around caring enough.

One other participant spoke in terms of two forms of God's word – being instructed by reading the Bible as God's word, and receiving direction by hearing a word from God:

I read the Bible and it's the instruction book, and I've really got to use that: is this the right thing? And you've got the Spirit side of it when you're asking for a more individual personal thing, and you're asking for something and waiting for an answer; so I can see the value in both of those sides.

*Interviewer*: One's subjective and the other's objective?

Yes, you've got this hard copy thing and the other one's a bit more intangible and they work together.

In each of these examples, there is a process going on behind the simple reporting of what their experiences had been. For some it was an encounter with the truth that disturbed their preconceived ideas, requiring time to assess and assimilate into a new understanding that then led to new ways of behaviour. In the last case, it was the realisation that there needs to be a willingness to wait to hear what God is saying, often a time of tension.

It is this 'process', which brings about transformational change that adult educators have been interested in identifying and understanding. It is always a 'learning process' – "a dialectical process of interpretation" (Mezirow 1991, pp. 11, 163). Mezirow builds on the work of James Loder, a theologian, and psychiatrist, who maintains that all true learning creates a tension because we must move from what is known to a new understanding (1989, pp. 37, 115). This exemplifies the dialectical relationship inherent within a good teaching and learning interaction.

Garrison, Anderson, and Archer's chart[10] explains this as the dialectical interplay between the teacher, the social, and the cognitive presences in their '*Community of Inquiry*' methodology.

While not specifically interested in personal Bible engagement, adult educators are interested in genuine engagement with texts in general, with group dialogue around those texts, and a vested interest in the empowering leadership of good teaching. We see hints here of the interplay between some of the different emergent transformational themes of my research.



Mezirow sees communicative learning as "… sharing ideas through … the written word …" (1991, p. 75), or alternatively, a "… substantive set of resources …" (Vella 2001, p. 10) from which learners are able to respond through open questions. Where people bring their own life experiences and personal worldviews to the text, we must "… invite

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[10] Garrison, R. D., Anderson, T., & Archer, W. (2000). "Critical Inquiry in a Text-Based Environment: Computer Conferencing in Higher Education," *The Internet and Higher Education*, 2(2-3), pp. 87-105.

learners to examine it, question it, refute it if they have the means, and make it theirs through a real struggle" (2001, p. 44).

'Engagement with texts', which includes wrestling with the text's meaning, holds a fundamental place within good andragogical practice. It is only this dialogical and dialectical process that can create the required dissonance between where one's thinking *is* as opposed to where it *needs to be* in the light of biblical truth, which the Holy Spirit is able to energise into genuine ongoing spiritual transformation with appropriate willing collaboration.

## Conclusion

We have explored Jesus' stunning announcement that the kingdom of God had arrived in his Person, acknowledging that God's 'good news' had had its roots in the Garden of Eden, revealing the dialogical and dialectical nature of conversational communication embedded within the fabric of the kingdom of God. The creative tensions seen in Jesus' experience in the Garden of Gethsemane are consistent with what was seen in creation, and what are observed by Adult Educators as a necessary part of human growth and learning.

When these creative tensions are recognised and engaged with consistently in our contemporary ministry contexts, they become part of the process of Christian growth toward the replication of the image of Christ within us through his transforming life and power inherent within his Word and Spirit, as part of his redeeming and reconciling mission of global transformation to be fulfilled in the final resurrection of the faithful.

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# Two Decades of Leadership:
# Learning that I am Still Learning

Ps Rohan Dredge

MA(Ed)(USyd); Dip(Ed)(USyd); BA(Min)(Morling)

Contact: rohan@rohandredge.com

*Rohan Dredge has spent the last two decades in full-time ministry. He started his professional life as a high school teacher where he developed a deep care for young people, which in turn led to a role as a Youth Pastor in 1996, and eventually he transitioned into a Senior Associate role. In 2007, Rohan made the shift to balancing a combination of ministry and corporate work. Rohan has been the Senior Minister at Discovery Church (previously Careforce Church), since 2009, and has led the community through generational transition and cultural change. Rohan continues to balance ministry and his private practice in developing leadership and communication in Senior Executives. Rohan and Megan have been married for 19 years and have a daughter Zarriah and son Maddox.*

On March 1, 2016, I celebrated twenty years in full-time pastoral ministry. Certainly in comparison to many I look up to, and many I learn from, it is 'just the beginning,' and yet has comprised 80% of my working life. As a married man it is all I have ever known, and the one responsibility that I define as a 'calling' first, and a job second. In fact, if ministry ever becomes a job I have promised myself I will step aside, go, and do something else. A calling to me is defined by the inability to do anything else.

As March 1, 2016, drew nearer, it became more internally important to me to acknowledge the 20-year milestone. The only other things I have done for that length of time have been to be a son to my parents, and a friend to a handful of close mates. I have not been married that long, I have not parented that long, I have not even worked in one

place for that long. What I have done, is dedicated my life to the calling that God gave me in a high school teaching development day in August 1994.

At that meeting, it became apparent that I would be exiting school teaching, which I loved, and entering youth ministry, which I was called to. That began an adventure of leading, learning, loving and living as best as I could for the calling in my heart and the grace upon my life. Passionately, you bet. Imperfectly, guaranteed! Enduringly, I hope so.

Reflecting on two decades of leadership and ministry, I found it both a delight and challenge to identify what has most marked this period. The following eight keys emerged from that reflection as being the most significant in my ministry.

## 1.  The Delicate and Intimate Dance of "To and Through"

*Ministry is as much about what God wants to do to me, as it is what he wants to do through me.*

I am convinced more than ever that ministry is as much about what God wants to do in us as it is about what he intends to use us to accomplish. The key is knowing which experience is which.

I recollect when I was back attending services in a church where five weeks earlier, I had stepped out of my leadership role and was now in the beginning phase of developing a platform for the season ahead in corporate and ministry work. I had faithfully served that Church for just over eleven years, concluded my senior associate role, and was now seated in the fifth row with a hat on, having arrived five minutes before the service commenced.

On the way out, I could not help myself, and stopped at the main doors to greet my Pastors and various people who were there. I turned around and saw a woman I had not met before. Greeting her enthusiastically, I ask her how long she had been coming to our Church. "Three weeks," she said. I responded delightedly and she returned the favour, "How long have you been coming here?" Then my internal film was suddenly set to slow motion and I distinctly remember negotiating with myself, "Do I tell her who I was? Does she need to know what a big deal I am (was) here? Is it important to me that she knows who she is talking to?" After what felt like an eternity, I simply said: "A bit longer than that, and I think you have made a great decision to be here!"

On my way home, I had an encounter with God that set up the next phase of the ministry that I am currently part of, and that continues to be foundational to my ministry worldview. I sensed God gently and clearly say to me "See, I do not need you on staff here to build this Church, or to build her life. I do not <u>need</u> you to be doing ministry. I <u>grace</u> you. I set you apart for my will and my purpose and my timing in my season." In less than the 234 steps it took to walk home, the Lord had re-shaped my perspective of who HE was in my ministry and who I was in HIS story. It was a profound moment, to say the least.

I felt encouraged and rebuked at the same time. I felt like in an instant I was protected from a dangerous spirit of entitlement and given a fresh view of the way God wants to do ministry in me and ministry through me. Those two beautifully intertwine and are difficult to distinguish at times. I am learning to make sure I start first at his Word in prayer and humility of spirit before I do anything that might look like activity. I try to discern first if this is a work in me, rather than a work through me. Leadership out

of sonship, that is out of a growing and developing a sense of who I am as a child of God before I do anything for the Father, is becoming more of the priority and, I trust, will mark the next two decades and beyond.

## 2.  Moments of Time in the Passing of Time

*I have learned to treasure the profound moments, the personal encounters I have had and continue to have with God.*

Several times, I have sat down and plotted my encounters with God and the impact they have had on my life. What continues to jump out at me is that over three decades of faith, there are relatively few moments that have changed my life forever. There were three between ages fifteen and twenty. Two leading up to age twenty-five, followed by a period of silence. Not because I did not know how to hear the voice of God, but because I had a true north 'not to look to the left or the right for a decade,' so I remained faithful to that. Then the encounters started up again. One at age thirty-five, then again at thirty-six and thirty-eight, with this being the one that paved the way for the role I currently serve in. In thirty years of faith, I do not consider eight encounters like these as many. However, each one changed the trajectory of my life and remain to this day, a distinct point on my timeline that God has used to disciple, guide and lead me into his 'good pleasing and perfect will.' Layer this with getting married, buying our first home, travelling, moving states, having children, and all that tumbles out in the kaleidoscope of those experiences and you have the tapestry I enjoy right now, and what I am noticing is that the small things are becoming bigger.

I want to be closer to Jesus more than ever. I want to be a more faithful husband than I have ever been. I want to (privately) wear my 'best dad' badge. I want more sacred and less spectacular. I want deep changes, not just surface experiences. I want the Church to take her place in the world as a true friend to its community and be the 'salt and light' we were always created to be. I want the MOMENTS not to be missed in the PASSING. I want the moments to be recognized in the passing for what they are. Profound, personal, deep transformative encounters between people that God uses to disciple us and make us more able to bear 'fruit that will last.' I treasure those moments and pray I always will.

## 3.  The Two Sides of Your Grace Place

*The longer I lead the less I believe 'balanced' leaders exist. Nor should they.*

When Jody, one of the pastors on our team, got up to preach for the first time, I was struck by her ability to fill the room prophetically. She was able to effortlessly call out what God was going to do in that room. No pretension, no arrogance, no discernible lack of faith. After we debriefed her about her message, I inquired as to what extent she was aware of that. This was not only new information for her it was groundbreaking. Being given permission to preach out of that gift has been core to her development as a leader on the platform. My wife Megan has a platform authority in the areas of teaching, and faith, which creates a dynamic response in her hearers and sees people ministered to and transformed time after time after time. Why? Both Jody and Megan lead from their place of grace, where God has most gifted them to contribute. In my view, the more we do that, the better.

I am growing to believe that leaders are graced and gifted to do specific things. We are not graced and gifted to do everything. The longer I lead, the more I want to lead from my grace, what flows naturally and spiritually out of me in the context of ministry.

The longer I lead, the less I want to lead shaped by the expectations of a congregation, a board, the history of the Church or what is considered either effective or even popular at the time. I watched Jody lean into a prophetic grace that continues to shape her leadership today. I watch Matt, another team member, lead with his artistic, musical and storytelling grace. It is incredible. When we know our grace and affirm it in community, we are better positioned to expect THAT from one another and not project what we think a team member, a leader or a senior pastor 'should' be doing.

When we lead from our grace place, we give our best contribution to the community we lead. When we lead from history, expectation, a job description, or the influence of dominant individuals, I am increasingly convinced we are less likely to contribute our best.

My dominant gift is leadership. I bias everything through that gift. I think about the Church from a leadership perspective, from grassroots to grandiose vision. My best contribution is to be 'out of balance' as a leader and lead primarily from the grace God has given me to serve and contribute to the Church I lead. In being 'out of balance', I stop trying to be a well-rounded Pastor, I stop trying to fit a mould, I stop trying to live up to competing expectations. I simply 'lean into' what I am best at and build a team of people around me significantly better at other things than me. In that way, my being 'out of balance,' contributing in and through the grace God has given me, actually contributes the most and the best in ministry. I do not plan to be a balanced leader in the future, in fact, I suspect, I will get increasingly unbalanced.

## 4.    Theming Out Your Life

*When I know what my primary themes are, I can grow and contribute most effectively.*

The application of the previous point has been for me to discern what I consider my life themes and become disciplined about them. I have said for many years now that a theme is better than a goal because it gives a goal a place to live. Themes are the combination of my core responsibilities and my core contributions. This takes time, study, diligence, reflection humility, and courage. To declare them enables me to say 'yes' to some things and 'no' to many others. I have six primary themes in my life and to make them feel even more important, I have placed an adjective in front of each one to help me quickly and easily discern if what I am doing 'fits.' Theming out my life has made the responsibility and discipline of leadership easier. It has made decision making quicker. It has made discipleship richer. It has made personal growth easier and so much more pleasurable. These are my themes:

- o To be an irresistible Husband
- o To be a memory making and future creating Dad
- o To be a loyal Friend (Son)
- o To be an influential Leader
- o To be a transformational Communicator
- o To be a multiplying Mentor (Disciple Maker)

These fuel my daily activities. They shape my prayer life, my time, my energy, my resource allocation and pave the way for a life of alignment, delight, and blessing.

## 5.    When "Lean Not" Meets the Wall

*I know less now about leadership now than when I started, and it's better that way.*

For my first four years as a Senior Pastor, I knew what to do. Maybe it was

experience, confidence, or even arrogance! I knew my mandate was to lead our Church into a new season and spearhead a generational shift in the way we functioned and did ministry. That mandate has not changed all that much; however, the way I have experienced people working in and through it certainly has. Let me clarify this frame. I was desperate for God to speak, hungry for His Spirit to move and I spent significant time walking with God to listen and receive guidance. However, I was clear about the journey and what it might entail. It was not easy and it was not comfortable, but it was largely what needed to happen over time.

For the last season, it has been much more of a journey that I imagine the rest of ministry might be like, more of seeking the Lord with our elders and key team members. Much more collaboration with leaders to hear the voice of God, to be clear on the heart of our Church, and what 'God's agenda' is for us right now. More agile, less fixed.

In addition to that has been the personal journey that relates to my initial reflection of God wanting to do a work in me as much as he wants to do a work through me. I began to realize that I can only 'lean not on my own understanding' (Prov. 3:5) when I am out of understanding. I could only hear the whisper 'this is the way, walk ye in it' (Is. 30:21) when I needed to know the way, not when I knew the way. Leadership today is much more a process of listening to the Lord, checking in with trusted team members and making the best call we know how to at the time, with a humble willingness to change it if so directed.

To add to my 'lean not' that we as a Church navigated our way through, was Hagberg and Guelich's (2004) teaching around *The Critical Journey of Faith.* The six stages in the life of faith described therein hold some discipleship gold around the process of maturing in our faith journey. The transition point between stages four (*The Journey Inward*) and five (*The Journey Outward*) is called *The Wall.* I have discovered it is called the wall for good reason. It is where little feels easy, good, right, fun, effective, or even worth continuing. It is also called the wall because on the other side of it is an experience of humility, maturity, perspective and grace that simply does not happen without the wall season.

I spent two years at the wall, and the only redeeming feature was knowing that was in fact where I was. The rest was like sprinting through waist deep mud. The other side of the wall is a more joyful, peaceful, attractive place to be, even though with the same challenges, some even bigger. However, one emerges with a different set of tools to work through it, as a son, brother, disciple, and leader. Fear not the wall. It teaches us what we need for the rest of our lives. Embrace the wall it IS worth it.

## 6.  Being a Hero and a Villain on the Same Day

*Navigating the highs and lows of what people think and say has been harder to make sense of than I expected.*

At one point in my role as a Senior Minister, I remember turning to my wife after seeing a child from church celebrate a card and gift we had sent them for starting school. I said to Megan, "I'm not sure I will get used to what it feels like to be a hero to one person and a villain to another on the same day." At the very same time, there were people happy to defend my character in my absence and people who were  happy to denigrate it without so much as a thought about how that might damage our Church or the people they were  speaking with. It just seemed like such a paradox, as was the gap between those two experiences.

Remembering the 'lean not meets the wall' section has served me well, to stop expecting perfection from myself and become even more attentive to the motives of my heart. The guarantee I bring to the table is that I am an imperfect leader who is doing the best I know how to at the time.

As it turns out, personal criticism knocks me around significantly more than I ever expected. In transitioning and leading, I have come home and discussed with Megan if it was truly worth continuing. I have had days where I felt the pain of regret, the mistakes I have made in my leadership role, hoping there was a way I could make it all right. I have laid my head on the pillow stunned at the things people consider appropriate to say in my absence, or on social media. I struggle to understand why, when personal responsibility would suffice, people want to project their incorrect conclusions on to the leader without so much as a conversation. We have a guiding principle for our Church. That principle is, 'Talk TO and not ABOUT.'

That said, personal criticism is my Achilles heel. It keeps me awake at night. I talk to myself about it. I win arguments over it, talking to the bathroom mirror. The impact of it has led me to get spiritual and professional help to address it for the sake of my future, my family, and equally for the sake of my responsibilities in ministry.

## 7. Preferring Seasons Over Calendars

*Dates and times are far less important than what God is doing, and with whom.*

My leadership style wants to achieve things, make progress, and get things happening. The longer I lead, that drive begins to nest inside a much bigger sense of the humbling and privileged role I get to play in the bigger story the Father wants to do in me, though me, and in my generation, for my generation. The change is connected to the ever-increasing need to be dependent on my Father and less concerned with what I cannot control. The paradox might be that I am no less ambitious about serving God than I am about doing my best and seeing fruit for the kingdom. I believe the change is perspective. I will do my best in the season I am in and at all times trust my heavenly Father.

I am learning that a season is much more important than a calendar. What the activity of God is, and how to best respond, is much more important than the driving focus of a date and a time. Of course, dates are important in the sense that they give us a point to measure from. It is just that the season we are in, and the walk we are on, is EVEN MORE important. Discerning the season is a leadership imperative. When I know the season, I can consider the options for response in that season. A wrong response in a season can be catastrophic. Knowing the season and responding wisely, has become even more critical in my pastoral leadership. Knowing the season matters more than ever before.

Calendars have to do with tasks, even though they involve people, whilst seasons have people at the centre. I remember reading a quote that said, "None of us can become ourselves by ourselves," and seasons teach us who and how to serve, in what way, and for how long. Thinking seasons has meant a much greater pastoral emphasis and much greater boldness in leading people. It has allowed the beautiful mix of care for the broken and courage with the stagnant to be more of a hallmark of our leadership. It has meant I am kinder to myself, and to others. Seasons do not let me off the hook in doing my best. Seasons put doing my best in the context of my submission to the will of the Father.

## 8. A Question From Dad

*When God calls you, he also graces you. Live under that grace.*

An annual ritual for Megan and me is to take my parents out for a seafood dinner. We live in different parts of the country and see each other as regularly as possible. For us, this night is our check in time on all the important stuff of life.

At the most recent meal, Dad asked me a question I have not been asked in my role of several years as Senior Minister. He said, 'Rohie, how is your sense of call?" On one hand, it was a natural question. On the other hand, it was a bolt from the blue because I had not been asked that for several years and was immediately confronted with its depth and the seriousness of my answer. If my sense of call was waning, what did that mean? If my sense of call was changing, was I willing to confront that reality and serve my community through the implications? Was I even brave enough to ask the question of myself? My view on calling is that you stayed for as long as you are called and no longer. I equally believe that when you know you are called, you give it everything you have with no sideways energy.

We sat for a few seconds, though it felt much longer, before I responded, "More called that ever Dad and thanks for asking." Dad is the catalyst who helped me declare that in the midst of the triumphs, the challenges, the wins, the setbacks, the celebrations, and disappointments, God has clearly called me, and for that I am grateful and humbled.

To be able to give voice to the conviction I have about my future was an unexpected bonus of that meal. To hear myself declare, "I am called and graced to do this" affirmed the belief I have held to for the last several years and the belief that has held me. The truest conviction I have is that God has called me and, therefore, graced me to be his representative at this time, in this place.

Two decades into ministry, I am more passionate, more dedicated, and more convinced than ever that this is what God wants me to do. I expect each year to be a better friend and teacher than the previous one and hope to continue to learn and pass on the lesson of life, leadership, and ministry. As the year unfolds, I intend to be more focused on my most effective contribution to my local Church and wider Kingdom possibilities.

I want to be as much a learner as I am a leader. I want to lead under grace and with grace more effectively. I want to make sure my lack of formation does not lead to a loss of fruitfulness, for others or me. I want to live called, in every season as best as I can.

Ministry is the hardest and the most beautiful thing I have ever done in my life. For as long as I am called, and for as long as I live under His grace, I will give my whole heart to it. This is my prayer for all God's people.

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# 'Care' Fullness

## Ps Mike Keating

MA(Min)(HBC); BA(Theol)(Murdoch)

Contact: mkeating@harvest.edu.au

## Introduction

Possible solutions to the problem of ministry 'fall-out' are being offered from various directions, most of them helpful, to my ears at least. But if you add to 'fall-out' – 'burn-out', and bear in mind the students having trouble finding pastorates – who 'miss-out'; not forgetting the older ministers clinging on because of not being able to move – 'pushed-out'; and the smaller number of ministers who stay while wishing they could leave – 'want-out'; to say nothing of the rest of us wondering how long before we are 'clapped-out', you are reminded the standard advice of area superintendents to prospective candidates for ministry – 'stay out, if you can' (Beasley-Murray 1995, p. 5).

Rowland Croucher reported in his article "Why Clergy are leaving the Ministry" in *Ministry Today* that there are 10,000 ex-pastors in Australia and that 75% of them left depressed, disenchanted, or damaged. To compound the matter, almost half of these exiles no longer attend church (1994, p. 41).

Peluso writes,

> Clergy, on the whole, do not care well for themselves. At least anecdotal evidence suggests this. If one listens to clergy at their lectionary groups, denominational gatherings, and local ministerial association lunches, one will hear an array of topics, most of them negative: the excessive hours they work; the vacation days they did not take; the exercise schedule they neglected; the reading and reflection that administration squeezed from their schedule; the emergencies that preempted family time; and the emotional needs that went unattended. When one gets more intimate with them and learns about the emptiness of many of their spiritual lives, the picture grows even dimmer (1998, p. 227).

Ministry should come with a health warning that it can be very hazardous to your

spiritual, emotional, and physical well-being. This essay will investigate the significant emotional, physical, and spiritual hazards of modern ministry, and how ministers might holistically calibrate their lives in order to maintain performance and personal wholeness over the 'long distance.' Subsequently, these observations will be personalised in critical self-reflection and strategies to engage and enhance the public and the private aspirational aspects of ministry.

## Know Thy 'Self'

One of the Delphic inscriptions engraved in the forecourt of the famous ancient temple had the words "Know Thyself" (Ferguson 2003, p. 215). It was originally thought to be a warning against hubris, except Socrates invested it with some metaphysics, and some 2,500 years later, it still forms one of the core questions of the modern philosophy.

Who or what is the 'self'? Aristotle, expanding on Socrates, suggested, "Knowing yourself is the beginning of Wisdom" (Stavropoulos 2008, p. 47). If this is true, then defining and delineating the 'self' is vital to understanding the peculiar burden of 'human' life across its gory and glorious spectrum; from the womb to the tomb, from the killing fields to the Sistine chapel.

Only humans are self-aware. More than that, only *humans are aware that they are aware*. There are basically three world-views purporting to give insight into the inner 'human' space. It could be called many things - mind, consciousness, atman, soul, spirit, id, ego, ego-self, or just plain 'self'. There is, however, much conjecture as to what constitutes this 'I am' sensation.

## Pantheistic

While this is by necessity the briefest sketch, pantheism advocates that all reality is either singular or non-existent. The sum of reality is identical to the divine and the divine is non-personal. Life is defined by the effort to escape the current corrupted illusion through either devotion, magic, or meditation. Karmic management defines morality. The person is either accumulating or diminishing of 'debt' owed to previous incarnations. Historic pantheism is very focused upon the end of the 'self'. The Western 'modern' reincarnation of Pantheism is quazi-scientific with a focus on loving and caring for Mother Nature to whom we are all related.

Here, the 'self' does not exist as a separate reality. Like a raindrop, it is temporarily separated in time from its true nature as 'water' and the rain drop will finally pass through its life cycle to find itself lost in the ocean of 'ultimate being'. The rain that falls from the sky is conned by its positional separation from the earth, is then gathered into the sacred river of life to drift out into the ocean and if not set free from the illusion of Maya, condemned to recycle through the entire process again and again.

The Soul is imagined first, then the particularity of objects,
External and internal, as one knows so one remembers.
As a rope, not perceived distinctly in dark, is erroneously imagined,
As snake, as a streak of water, so is the Soul (Atman) erroneously imagined.
As when the rope is distinctly perceived, and the erroneous imagination withdrawn,
Only the rope remains, without a second, so when distinctly perceived, the Atman.
When he as Pranas (living beings), as all the diverse objects appears to us,
Then it is all mere Maya, with which the Brahman (Supreme Soul) deceives himself.

(Deussen 2010, p. 618)

In pantheism, the self is a persistent and stubborn illusion, and often negatively construed as the result of negative karma, the curse of existence and that to be human is to suffer. Ultimate reality is not material. It is an illusion. There is no 'self'.

## Materialistic

The materialistic view asserts there is no 'self' beyond a biological 'left-over' resulting from the evolutionary process that has given rise to the naked apes that we call human. The 'self' is compared to the accidental and incidental squeaking of the axle that turns the wheel of the cart. 'Consciousness' is a remarkable but non-essential 'by-product' of the selfish gene replicator that gave rise to humans, a view much popularised by Richard Dawkins. Evolutionary biologists go as far to say that the 'self' was a tragic misstep in the climbing the evolutionary chain.

Evolutionary biologist, Pierre Lecomte du Nouy, for example, comments on the unchanged pre-Cambrian worms that are substantially the same as those found today having 'achieved remarkable and superior adaptation' (1945, p. 89). One of the worms was a misfit and had to keep on evolving to survive. He concludes that 'this worm, less perfect as a worm, may have been our ancestor" (p. 89). Evolutionary psychologist Stephen Pinker states the case of the materialist, "The supposedly immaterial soul, we now know, can be bisected with a knife, altered by chemicals, started or stopped by electricity, and extinguished by a sharp blow or insufficient oxygen" (2003, p. 209).

In the materialist's worldview, ultimate reality is matter. The 'self' is a conundrum. Its phobias are residual after-effects of reptilian, paleomammalian and neomammalian developments. Our fear of vertigo, claustrophobia, and agoraphobia harkens back to our time when humans left the trees and ventured out into the grasslands as hairless, upright apes (Reanney 1991, p. 3).

The 'self' may undergo existential crisis but has no intrinsic reality. Frederick Nietzche puts these words of solace in the mouth of the prophet Zarathustra to the dying man and sums up the nihilism of the materialist's viewpoint. "On my honour, friend" answered Zarathustra, "all you have spoken about does not exist: there is no Devil and no Hell. Your soul will be dead even before your body: therefore, fear nothing anymore!" (1885, p. 6). The 'self' is an annoying illusion according to the materialist. Famous existentialist, Jean-Paul Sartre wrote in *Being and Nothingness* (1943, p. 4.2.III), "Man is a useless passion."

However, I reject both the pantheistic and materialistic notions of the 'self'. Based on reason and ontological merit, this essay presupposes that the nature of the 'self' is that the human being is the result of a special creative act by a transcendental spiritual personal unity and that humans reflect the nature of that creator. Ultimate reality is immaterial; or what we might more often call 'Spirit'. In effect, I believe that the best understanding of the 'self' is derived from a careful and systematic understanding of Scripture.

## Biblical

Anderson (1995) writes as a Christian, a psychologist, and as a theologian. It is worth giving space here to outline his model in order to develop a biblical understanding of the 'self'. He, first of all, makes an important observation that modern assumptions about the nature of the 'self' are culturally bound and generally unfaithful to the teaching of the Bible.

Some forms of theology, from Augustine to Calvin, have not helped form a healthy biblical view of the 'self'. Furthermore, there has been some loss of clarity concerning the idea of human consciousness as a consequence of the modern 'Enlightenment' project.

The biblical information about the 'self' is sparse. In the New Testament, the term 'self' is most often thought of in the negative sense of denial (Matt. 16:24; Mk. 8:34; Lk. 9:23). There are also those passages that refer to the 'old self' (Rom. 6:6; 7:6) which must be 'put off' and replaced with the 'new self' which is created in God's image (Eph. 4:24; Col. 3:10).

The 'golden rule' points to the value of 'self' particularly in the context of relationships as it commands that believers are to love others as they love their 'selves' (Matt. 22:39).

The "Legend of Tarzan" makes the observation that identity is shaped by its context. A child raised by apes will behave like an ape. When it comes to people, it has been observed that a person becomes a person through other people (Boyle 2011, p. xiv). Anderson (2010, p. 19-21) unpacks the Genesis creation story to show how Adam's sense of 'self' came about by the creation of his 'other', Eve. It was God's assessment that it "was not good for man to be alone" (Gen. 2:18).

> Only when God created woman by differentiating and completing the man do we find the first expression of self-conscious personhood in the Creation account. "This, at last, is bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; this one shall be called woman, for out of the man, this one was taken" (Anderson 1995, p. 21).

Anderson (1995) goes on to interpret the biblical data to show that the life of the 'self' is experienced within the body. Life, mentally, emotionally and spiritually, is an embodied one. It cannot be compartmentalized. The identity of the biblical 'self' is worked out in the context of an 'embodied' open interactive engagement with God and others.

## 'Self' Development

This essay will adopt the worldview posited by Anderson (1995), in that the 'self' is real, personal, relational, rational, emotional, experiential and spiritual. It is an inner conscious 'alloy' of awareness and it cannot be dissected into its parts without crippling its function. According to Anderson (1995), humans are firstly physical (of the dust), then mental/spiritual (breath of God), and defined by their relationship with God and others (communion with God and Eve) (Anderson 2010, p. 11). The inner sense of 'I am' is real, immaterial, but inseparable from the embodied existence. It requires understanding, self-awareness, and appropriate care for long-term effective ministry and living.
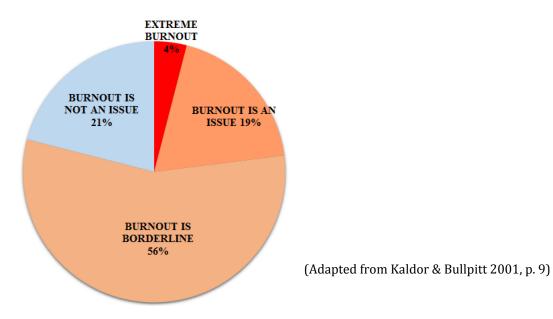
## 'Self' Harm

The factors that impinge upon the proper care of the ministerial 'self' and what can be done to counteract unhealthy behaviours and motivate healthy behaviours will now be surveyed.

If Abraham Maslow is correct with his 'hierarchy of needs,' then care of the 'self' begins with the basics of life, protection, shelter, and security. Without these needs being in adequate supply, the thought of care for the inner 'aspirational' aspect of life is

perhaps unrealistic. While not ignoring the fact that clergy do minister in places around the world under the most severe and adverse circumstances, this paper will assume the more 'western' context of ministry where many of these basics commodities are in good supply.

Australia is privileged to have access to reliable data on the health of ministers through the research conducted under the auspices of the National Church Life Survey (NCLS). The results of their 1996 survey of some 4,400 respondents from 25 denominations of the Australian church was published in *Burnout in Church Leaders* in 2001 (Kaldor & Bullpitt 2001, p. 7). Utilizing the Alban Institute's test for measuring stress and burnout, the data reports only 21% of Australian ministers believe that they have no problems with either stress or burnout. Conversely, 79% have at least some dilemma with the issue. More concerning, 23% are either plainly or extremely 'burnout' according to their own assessment (p. 9). The overarching analysis reveals that stress and burnout are not specific to one denomination, and more likely associated with issues of personal factors, congregational viability, and leadership support systems (p. 10).

NCLS Stess and Burnout – Risk Levels



(Adapted from Kaldor & Bullpitt 2001, p. 9)

Similar eclectic data is provided by Wheeler (2012, pp. 41-42) in his book *A View from the Parsonage* using research from the United States.

- o 13% of active pastors are divorced.
- o 23% have been fired or pressured to resign at least once in their careers.
- o 25% do not know where to turn when they have a family or personal conflict or issue.
- o 25% of pastors' wives see their husband's work schedule as a source of conflict.
- o 33% felt burned out within their first five years of ministry.
- o 33% say that being in ministry is an outright hazard to their family.
- o 40% of pastors and 47% of spouses are suffering from burnout, frantic schedules, and/or unrealistic expectations.
- o 45% of pastors' wives say the greatest danger to them and their family is physical, emotional, mental, and spiritual burnout.

- Though I can find no specific statistics (I am sure they are out there), the pastorate is seeing a significant rise in the number of female pastors.
- 45% of pastors say that they have experienced depression or burnout to the extent that they needed to take a leave of absence from ministry.
- 50% feel unable to meet the needs of the job.
- 52% of pastors say they and their spouses believe that being in pastoral ministry is hazardous to their family's well-being and health.
- 56% of pastors' wives say that they have no close friends.
- 57% would leave the pastorate if they had somewhere else to go or some other vocation they could do.
- 70% don't have any close friends.
- 75% report severe stress causing anguish, worry, bewilderment, anger, depression, fear, and alienation.
- 80% of pastors say they have insufficient time with their spouse.
- 80% believe that pastoral ministry affects their families negatively.
- 90% feel unqualified or poorly prepared for ministry.
- 90% work more than 50 hours a week.
- 94% feel under pressure to have a perfect family.
- 1,500 pastors leave their ministries each month due to burnout, conflict, or moral failure.
- Doctors, lawyers, and clergy have the most problems with drug abuse, alcoholism, and suicide.

NCLS summarized its research on stress and burnout with ministers with the following eleven critical factors (Kaldor & Bullpitt 2001, pp. 129-130).

1. The importance of developing a well-rounded life.
2. Leaders need to treat their family with great care.
3. Ministers need to put effort into building strong and resilient relationships.
4. Leaders need to look after their health.
5. Leaders need to make space to grow spiritually.
6. Leaders need to put a priority on developing a corporate vision for the future.
7. Ministers need to focus on building a sense of community who are growing in their relationship with God.
8. Ministers should be alert to the greater risks and pressure in smaller churches.
9. Leaders need to have a style of leadership that inspires and empowers others.
10. Leaders need to clearly understand their role priorities and expectations and work through any issues.
11. Ministers need to develop a range of coping strategies to deal with the issues they may face in the workplace.

We can clearly understand why ministry can be hazardous to your health and wellbeing. Now, I would like to direct the reader to the different quadrants of caring for the 'self'.

## Physical Self

Here we see the proverbial "chicken versus the egg" predicament. Stress and burnout can lead to very adverse physical health and yet poor physical health can likewise lead to increased levels of stress and burnout (2001, p. 25).

The NCLS data shows that a majority of ministers report their health as fair, poor or very poor and this is at a higher rate than for both the population in general and the

'white-collar' professions specifically (2001, p. 25). This data is useful but relies solely on the survey recipient's personal assessment.

Such 'self-reporting' studies show that clergy have higher than normal rates of obesity, arthritis, depression, heart problems, high blood pressure, diabetes and stress than the norm. However, it is surprisingly difficult to find hard data measuring actual health differentials of ministers compared to standardised scores.

Rae Jean Proeschold-Bell and Sara LeGrand observe that "the health of clergy has been under-studied, with the exception of a small but growing literature on clergy stress and a handful of studies on clergy mortality rates" (2012, pp. 734–742).

In their comprehensive study, only one example could be found by them showing that the prevalence rates for clergy were clinically higher by 10.3% for obesity, 4.3% for high blood pressure, 4.1% for asthma, 3.3% for diabetes, and 2.5% for arthritis than the standard population (2012, p. 736).

The study also identified the unusual phenomenon that has been noted in previous research, where ministers on one hand report higher levels of poor health than their 'white collar' counterparts, but lower levels of impairment in their performance because of health reasons (2012, pp. 739-40).

Archibald Hart (1995) has provided useful work showing the relationship between excessive stress and physical health problems (along with other issues) stating,

> Nothing I have to say in this book is as important and far reaching as about how adrenaline and stress disease are connected. This topic is especially important because it shows how adrenaline affects the cardiovascular system (1995, p. 91).

While it is admitted by Hart, almost reluctantly, that some stress may actually be positive, he draws a strong link between poor adrenaline management and a whole raft of deleterious health outcomes (1995, pp. 9-10, 26-27).

The body's response to real or imagined threats produces the chemical that produces the 'fight, fright, or flight' response (1995, p. 7). The failure to manage adrenaline can result in a condition known as "hypo adrenal anaemia" where the body's adrenal system 'eventually crashes and forces the victim into a state of prolonged and severe fatigue' (p. 87). This is a part of the reason many ministers experience increased moodiness, fatigue, guilt, and restlessness while trying to slow down (p. 86). They are going through the withdrawal symptoms associated with an addiction to adrenalin.

The NCLS data observes that 'an obvious issue is diet' (Kaldor & Bullpitt 2001, p. 26). There is no research supporting this beyond the anecdotal, but it is a reasonable assumption that the poor dietary patterns of busy westerners are likely to be prevalent among ministers. It would be expected that those ministers reporting poor health would also struggle with an over-consumption of fast foods, stimulants such as coffee/tea and soft drinks, alcohol and smoking while at this same time living quite sedentary lives devoid of regular exercise (p. 26).

## Emotional Self

The emotional life of the minister is a significant factor affecting longevity and health. The NCLS data is germane. On the plus side, the most significant positive factor mitigating stress and burnout is the minister's general sense of wellbeing (Kaldor & Bullpitt 2001, p. 54). Where the minister has developed a balanced lifestyle and is

generally satisfied with life, then that is the best preventive medicine for stress and burnout. Furthermore, it would seem that a sense of accomplishment is also a determinative factor to the emotional well-being of the minister (p. 71)

On the debit side of the ledger, the high-risk 'emotional' factors' identified by the NCLS research include confusion over roles and expectations, loneliness, poor family relationships, and a shortage of friends. Other studies showed 90% of ministers felt constantly fatigued, 77% had unhappy marriages, 75% felt unqualified and impotent with their role, 72% read the Bible only for sermons, 71% battle depression on weekly or even daily basis and 74% do not have any form of regular personal spiritual life or devotions (Krejcir 2007).

In a more formal sense, Pegram (2015, p. 212) has provided strong evidence to show that there is a direct link between 'emotional intelligence' and stress and burnout. Emotional intelligence training can assist the minister to better negotiate the 'risk' factors in their given personality/support/context matrix (pp. 214-215).

Emotional Intelligence enhances variables that affect directly on health. A person with better emotional intelligence has the capacity to:

- o Limit exposure to stressful events
- o Exert greater resilience
- o Build richer personal health and emotional resources
- o Exude more positive emotionality and less negative emotionality
- o Adopt wider social support networks
- o Develop adaptive coping mechanisms
- o Better self-regulate in maintaining healthy behaviors (Pegram 2015, p. 74)

Sadly, one of the most glaring manifestations of failure to manage stress is sexual misconduct among ministers. The incidence of sexual misconduct does vary from study to study ranging from 10 to 33 percent. Whatever the actual level, it is without excuse. Whetham makes the correlative observation that the "sexual misconduct literature reflects the burnout literature in that it identifies loneliness and a fear of intimacy as primary factors" (2000, p. 48). Ormerod suggests that,

> while in the public perception church ministers will have higher ethical standards than people in secular professions, such is not necessarily the case. In fact, given that there are fewer mechanisms for professional accountability for those in ministry, that they have no clear code of professional ethics, and that their training in counseling skills and its complexities is minimal, it would come as no surprise if ministers were to have a worse record than secular professionals (1995, p. 6).

Clearly, the emotional world of the minister is critical to their capacity to self-care.

## Spiritual Self

Whetham, relying upon work by Croucher and NCLS, estimates that almost one-half of ministers will leave their calling, mostly in the first five years, and about 40% of these will not attend church again (2000, p. 28).

The link between diminished personal devotions and stress is clearly established. Studies show that as few as 26% of ministers report a healthy devotional life (Krejcir 2007). The NCLS data backs up these observations and adds that a deep sense of calling, and an ongoing experience of God's presence, effectively alleviates the pressures of

ministry (Kaldor & Bullpitt 2001, pp. 37-39). The Church has been very aware of the reality of ministers experiencing a 'crisis of faith' for its entire history. Pope Gregory the Great wrote a treatise in the eleventh century *The Book of the Pastoral Rule* and in the second chapter, he emphasizes the importance of personally practicing what has been learned publicly. Saint John of the Cross spoke of the 'Dark Night of Soul' as a peculiar maturing experience where the minister has a crisis of faith but today's statistics show that many get lost in the night (John of the Cross 1959).

Discouragement could be described as an emotional reaction. However, it can just as well be labeled a 'spiritual' malaise; particularly if the condition becomes a settled disposition.

Functional externalism becomes another risk. The minister learns 'the ropes' and focuses on the pragmatic issue of survival while doing enough to stay in the job. This clinical professionalism is another risk to the internal life. It is not a new phenomenon. Jesus warned about those religious of his day who were outwardly pious but inwardly unhealthy (Matt. 7:14-21; chap. 23).

In short, the NCLS data provides a very useful summary of the factors influencing ministers' health over three spheres: the leaders themselves, their congregations and the execution of their roles. Some factors are not directly in the control of the minister, but others are. The minister can profit from some targeted self-care. Some of the risk factors are absolutely related to the individual minister's skill, temperament, and training. There are, however, risk factors that are more connected with the specific church setting such as entrenched attitudes, limited resources, and resistance to change. Then the role itself brings its own risk factors, the chief being identified as ambiguity over the role and expectations.

## Future 'Self' Care

Socrates once said, "... the unexamined life is not worth living" (1966, p. 38a). The direction of this paper now turns from the abstract to the concrete, from the theoretical to the practical and from the corporate to the personal.

This article is directed towards intentional self-care. How does the minister take responsibility for their personal health and sustainability in ministry? Each minister would need to develop a plan that meets his or her unique 'soul' print, circumstances, and challenges. The biblical 'self' is a specific, unrepeatable, valuable entity that requires a tailor-made 'self-care plan'. It is with some humility that I offer my own program, however, it is my hope that the reader will profit from some of my observations and discoveries and be able to apply such thinking and initiative into their own lives.

## Physical 'Self' Care

The NLCS data indicates that older ministers with many years of experience tend not to struggle to the same degree with factors that lead to stress and burnout. However, they are at risk of a premature end to their ministry because of poor health issues (Kaldor & Bullpitt 2001, pp. 21, 25). Diabetes is a huge issue in the general population. My anecdotal experience is that many of my contemporaries are struggling with this 'secret' sugar disease.

At 58 years of age, I enjoy reasonable health given the hours worked and responsibilities carried. However, I skip meals; eat at random times, usually quite late at night, often with a glass of wine. This diet is supplemented with fast food on an *ad hoc*

basis. High levels of caffeine and poor levels of physical exercise accompany my food intake.

I have chronic hip, knee, and back pain associated with osteoarthritis and an old sporting injury. My physician reports that my sugar levels are okay, but I have quite high blood pressure. I am required to reduce my weight by 10 kilograms and now have quite high levels of hypertension (180/90 mmHg).

I need to find one hour a day for energetic exercise, either rising earlier for a fast walk in the Serpentine National Park or taking a lunch break around some form of exercise. Some of my appointments are now based upon a 5km walk around a lake. Over a longer term, I may take up riding a bicycle.

## Emotional 'Self' Care

This is an area where I have struggled a lot. Given a history of depression, and some very difficult if not constant life challenges, which includes a wife with Parkinson's disease and a family member's lifestyle choice, has made it difficult to find the right emotional zone for safe and nurturing relationships.

Having left home as a teenager, and experienced a life of a homelessness, associated petty crime, alcohol abuse, sexual permissiveness and exploitation, my conversion to Christ was as unexpected as Saul meeting Jesus on his way to Damascus. My experience was profoundly grounding and defining. In some indefinable way (maybe even in an unhealthy way), I gave up my 'self' life at that time. This provides a keel to my boat so that no matter the weather, foul or fine, my life belongs to Christ. Boyle writes, "Success and failure, ultimately, have little to do with living the gospel. Jesus just stood with the outcasts until they were welcomed or until he was crucified – whichever came first" (2011, p. 172).

Over time, I have had to learn that this is not the same as being a martyr. Total denial of the inner 'human' is not biblical, nor ultimately sustainable. "Man's chief end is to glorify God and to enjoy him forever" (Westminster Catechism 1861). I am truly persuaded that in a world of trouble, Jesus came to give us life to its full (Jn. 10:10; 16:33).

Tim Hansel's little book *When I Relax I Feel Guilty - Discover the Wonder and Joy of Really Living* (1979) is a great resource. Hansel was a pastor who got caught up in the 'ministry-activity' trap but changed his career to that of a wilderness guide. He now leads people to find deeper experiences with their 'selves', others, and God, particularly through enjoying creation and learning the art and skill of play. For me, where guilt was a constant motivator, this has been a very valuable tool.

Alan Jones makes the important point that the word 'sacrifice' in the Bible does not have the 'modern' negative associations of loss but rather speaks more of spiritual communion, joy, forgiveness, life released, and celebration (1999, pp. 138-139).

Anderson (2010) speaks about the "Responsible Self – the Wisdom of the Heart" as a part of the biblical approach to healthy self-development. Emotions are not to be ignored but embraced as an inner sign of the health of the individual's interior. On an informal level, Anderson is declaring the ancient biblical wisdom that exhorted the believer to "Keep your heart with all diligence, for out of it spring the issues of life" (Prov. 4:23 NKJ).

Over the years, I have also visited a Clinical Psychologist from time to time. This has been useful, to have a confidential 'outsider' with a different skill set to explore my inner world. The psychologist has a doctorate focused on volunteer behavior in the non-for-profit sector, was a former career missionary and possesses theological training and experience as an ordained minister. This means she is well equipped to understand the bizarre world of the minister.

Sadly, and surprisingly, in years that are more recent, I have lost all of my spiritual mentors. Most of my 'fathers' have not finished well and so their credibility with me has been badly damaged. I am striving to find one or two ministers in what Robert Clinton calls the 'afterglow' season of their ministry life (2012, p. 30) to help show me the way.

## Spiritual 'Self' Care

When I am disciplined in this sphere, I am surprisingly strong and resilient. Richard Foster's *Celebration of Discipline* (1984) provides a great template of the ancient disciplines of the universal and historical Church and I find that they are all beneficial when practiced.

- o *Meditation* (something which I do practice with regularity)
- o *Prayer* (more communion than petition)
- o *Fasting* (seasonal but very grounding)
- o *Study* (informal and formal)
- o *Simplicity* (regular de-cluttering – especially electronic communications)
- o *Solitude* (love this when I can get it)
- o *Submission* (great attitude checker – choosing love and not power)
- o *Service* (I will often do the unseen 'help' for those in need)
- o *Confession* (I practice appropriate transparency)
- o *Worship* (I love God - really)
- o *Guidance* (I'm exploring this more)
- o *Celebration* (I do need to adjust mood and affect here)

I have been greatly assisted by the reflections on Christian leadership by Henri Nouwen. He speaks from the perspective of a former professor of psychology, a Catholic priest, and as a contemplative mystic. Using Jesus' response to the three tests offered by Satan in the wilderness, Nouwen suggests that there are three temptations to modern ministry, of being relevant, popular, and powerful. He urges that the appropriate response is contemplative prayer, life in community, and being led to love, rather than lead by power (1999).

I consider it very beneficial to define 'success' in biblical terms and Nouwen's work is one pathway towards 'goal-orientated' behavior that is radically centered on Christ and His person. This provides me with the ability not to easily succumb to denominational, personal, or worldly scoreboards, and to more easily succeed at spiritually defined goals. It is much easier to live for the applause of One.

While it is always a challenge to carve the time out in the diary, I attempt to practice many of these disciplines by 'tithing' my time to spiritual retreat. Thus, every month, I try to undertake three days of retreat at a Benedictine Monastery located at New Norcia. The *Officium Divinum* has a rhythm and ritual to it that I personally find very refreshing compared to the normal hustle and bustle of ministry life.

Research from the NCLS data strongly indicates that spirituality is a key factor in reducing the effects of stress and burnout (Kaldor & Bullpitt 2001, pp. 34-38). It is also

evident that actual form seems not as critical as its actual practice (p. 16). Pentecostals who are active in their spirituality tend to do better than those using more traditional or orthodox expressions (pp. 17, 111). This also harmonises with Dr. Cettolin's research into the spirituality of Assembly of God ministers, which reports their private practice of spirituality is strong and meaningful (2006, pp. 80-81). For me, I can verify these dynamics in my own life and when I am consistent with these spiritual practices, I tend to find the rest of my life is in balance.

## Holistic Model of 'Self' Care

Over the years, I have learned the art of 'ruthlessly' managing my inner world. I have attempted to create margins in my life that permit balanced living, and while this endeavour has more often been marked by failure to stay on the right page, there is a constant commitment to reset and live a holistic life.

Gary Harbaugh's book *The Pastor as a Person* (1985) provides a helpful model for holistic living as a minister who recognises both the divine call and their human frailty. A real fundamental is that life must be lived as a whole and we should avoid the compartmentalising of lives and this must include all forms of spiritual reductionism. Harbaugh (1985) argues for a model that reflects all the context and contours of a balanced life. No minister is an island but is a conglomeration of physical, emotional, and spiritual needs. Intentional choices that allow the different quadrants to receive appropriate care will provide for the development of a successful self-care plan. He provides a framework where the social, physical, emotional, and mental aspects of life require intentional choices about our feeling, relating, exercising, and thinking in order to achieve a balanced 'whole' life as a minister.

Balanced living is godly living. Jesus left us the example of living with total submission to God's call but with the ability to take time off for respite and refreshing (Mk. 6:31), and to simply take time out with friends to hang out (Jn. 21:5).

A number of years ago I also profited from developing my own mission statement based upon the work of Laurie Beth Jones *The Path – Creating Your Mission Statement for Work and Life* (1998). This brings clarity to my most important values and motivators. It helps me to say that little difficult word 'no' more often and at the appropriate times, because it states *I live to inspire and encourage people in my sphere of influence to live abundant lives.*

Much of this ruthless 'self-care' distils down to the art of proactive 'time management'. This means for me personally limiting my exposure with people. Given many years of reflection on this key personal survival skill, I developed a model based somewhat upon the notion of Sabbath. Jesus made it clear that Sabbath was created for the benefit of humans and not for God (Mk. 2:27). Thus, on multiple levels, Sunday is not the Sabbath for the minister. It is noteworthy that the penalty for Sabbath breaking was death – maybe not stoning these days, but damaging unbalanced stressful lives.

As a template for balanced living, I try to live out a 'Me, We and Thee' approach to allocating my time. One part of seven should



Learning the Art of Balanced Living

Me

We

Thee

be focused on me (self-nurture). A second part in seven, on the broader social setting (family/friends), and a third part in seven, on the significant 'other' in my life. This still allows a significant amount of time for the ministry.

## Summary – A Note to 'Self'

This paper has examined the metaphysical, psychological and theological notions of the 'self' and concluded that a biblical model where the self is immaterial and integral to the complex of human life in the body is preferred, providing not only the rationale for, but also the way to the appropriately care for the 'self'. This enabled the paper then to address the issue of stress and burnout as a major dilemma facing ministers.

Research has shown that ministry burnout is a pervasive and serious problem. Not only do large numbers of ministers leave the ministry due to burnout, but also many still in ministry are suffering the effects of burnout. This has a financial cost, which may be measured in such terms of productivity, sick leave, unnecessary ministry transitions and 'wasted' training costs. It also has a large human cost. When a minister is going through burnout, not only is there great anguish for the sufferer, there may also be significant damage to others in the minister's relational networks (Pegram 2015, p. 210).

As an older minister with some thirty years of ordained experience in the workplace, I have already learned some positive disciplines and probably some bad habits as well. Pinker suggests, "at every moment, we choose, consciously or unconsciously, between the good things now and the better things later" (2003, p. 394).

I now will commit to some unpleasant disciplines of self-care, particularly in relation to diet and exercise, with the expectation of better things later. I am also spurred by the statistics to continue to practice some of my current modes of self-care; especially in the area of spiritual retreats. Jesus did leave us sound advice regarding stress and burnout.

"Are you tired? Worn out? Burned out on religion? Come to me. Get away with me and you'll recover your life. I'll show you how to take a real rest. Walk with me and work with me - watch how I do it. Learn the unforced rhythms of grace. I won't lay anything heavy or ill-fitting on you. Keep company with me and you'll learn to live freely and lightly" (Matt. 11:28-30, MSG).

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# Theses/Dissertation Listing

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This section contains bibliographic details of selected theses relating to contemporary ministry awarded in 2015

## Australia, New Zealand & Pacific

**Duke, Zachariah P.**

*A critical analysis of a theology of disability in the Australian Catholic Church: a qualitative study into contemporary inclusionary practices.* Ph.D. – University of Newcastle, 2015

**Pegram, Nigel D.**

*Emotional intelligence and the prevention of ministry burnout.* D.Min. – Tabor College, 2015

**Peter, Johann M.**

*The design and evaluation of an e-learning program for Church leaders in a multicultural context.* Ph.D. – Australian Catholic University, 2015

**Stuckey, Gary A.**

*Finding your inner monk: development, presentation and assessment of the effectiveness of a program introducing the practices of monastic spirituality.* D.Min. – Adelaide College of Ministry, 2015

**Surman, Anthony H.**

*Ministry, order and ordination: continuity and change in ordained ministry in the Anglican Church in Aotearoa, New Zealand and Polynesia.* Ph.D. – University of Auckland, 2015

## United Kingdom & Europe

**Anderson, Carver L.**

*Towards a practical theology for effective responses to Black Young Men associated with*

*crime for Black Majority Churches.* Ph.D. – University of Birmingham, 2015

**Daramola, Ibidun B.**

*Exploration of pastoral counselling in Africa: generic qualitative research: a study of pastoral counselling in Africa with Nigeria as a case study.* Ph.D. – University of Aberdeen, 2015

**Tueno, Guerin J.**

*Built on the Word: the theology and use of the Bible in the Australian Anglican Fresh Expressions of Church.* D.Th.M. – Durham University, 2015

# North & South America

**Bisquera, Glenn M.**

*Gathered at the foot of the cross: a model of an ongoing spiritual formation process for passionists*. D.Min. – Catholic Theological Union, 2015

**Bruce, Quinlan.**

*Ten aspects of healing and empowerment: a response on the essentials of healing ministry*. D.Min. – Ashland Theological Seminary, 2015

**Caldwell, Kristen N.**

*Discovering the primary hindrances women face in fulfilling their call to ministry*. D.Min. – Ashland Theological Seminary, 2015

**Dureus, Edsel.**

*Equipping short-term mission team-leaders for effective mission trips*. D.Min. – Dallas Theological Seminary, 2015

**Eustace, Tanya M.**

*Experiencing God together: a practical theology for ministry with children*. Ph.D. – Garrett-Evangelical Theological Seminary, 2015

**Forshey, Susan L.**

*Prayer in theological education for ministry: toward a contemplative practical theological pedagogy*. Ph.D. – Boston University, 2015

**Gomez, Yajaira A. M.**

*Developing best practices for itinerant ministry through interviews with experienced itinerant ministers using self-evaluation in a cross-cultural context*. D.Min. – Tyndale University College and Seminary, 2015

**Keller, Benjamin M.**

*Called to care: training Christian caregivers for ministry alongside those with life-limiting illness*. D.Min. – Denver Seminary, 2015

**Obidiegwu, Celestine O.**

*Preaching as a healing act: a model for priests, ministers, and chaplains at nursing homes and assisted-living facilities*. D.Min. – Aquinas Institute of Theology, 2015

**Polley, Kenneth V.**

*Avoiding division within a church: a proactive approach for identifying sources of conflict and creating a healthy ministry environment.* D.Min. – Bethel Seminary (Saint Paul, Minn), 2015

**Querfeld, Craig S.**

*Church planting team leadership: balancing the demands of the church planting task and team care.* D.Min. – Columbia International University, 2015

**Simpson, Don Carlos, Jr.**

*Prophet, priest, or pastor: reflecting on the call to ordained ministry.* D.Min. – Pittsburgh Theological Seminary, 2015

**Vandergrift, Jean H.**

*The dance of a changing church: a practical theology of congregational transformation.* Ph.D. – Boston University, 2015

**Wright, Brian P.**

*Chaplain, pastor, leader: a biographical study of leadership transitions in the life of Chaplain (Colonel) James E. Wright.* D.Min. – Bethel Seminary (Saint Paul, Minn), 2015

**Yang, Po Hsiung**

*A training in healing and deliverance ministry.* D.Min. – Logos Evangelical Seminary, 2015

# Asia

**Lim Eng Hui A.**

*Messengers of religion: mediums and media in Singapore's popular religious practices.* Ph.D. – National University of Singapore, 2015

# Africa

**Apostolides, Anastasia.**

*Kids seeking alternative identity and spirituality through the lived theology glimpsed in the Harry Potter series.* Ph.D. – University of Pretoria, 2015

**Human, Heidi.**

*A narrative practical theology perspective on the spirituality of female adult survivors of childhood sexual abuse.* Ph.D. – University of Pretoria, 2015

**Johnson, Wesley I.**

*Evangelicals encountering Muslims: a pre-evangelistic approach to the Qu'ran.* D.Th.(Missiology) – University of South Africa, 2015

**Palmer, George H.**

*Stoep funerals: a challenge to pastoral care.* Ph.D. – University of Pretoria, 2015

# Book Reviews

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**Brown, C. B. (2015). *Guiding Gideon: Awakening to Life and Faith*. Eugene, OR: Cascade Books.**

Reviewed by Ps Andrew Groza

You do not need to look too far into the Christian tradition to encounter the role that spiritual guides have played in the lives of wandering pilgrims, particularly those seeking formation into the image and likeness of Christ. Christopher Basil Brown's new book *Guiding Gideon* is an encouragement to embrace such a role. In an individualised culture such as Australia, the concept that fellow members of God's family can act as prayerful guides and companions on the journey of spiritual formation may seem a little odd, but Brown would argue otherwise – as would centuries of Christian history. Brown contends that God has an image in mind of what we can become, and has deposited that inside us all. The spiritual guide's richest privilege and gravest responsibility is to walk alongside their brothers and sisters in Christ, discern what the Spirit may be doing, and help prompt them to cooperate with the Spirit – oftentimes, this means facing areas of deepest pain. The outcome, however, is a rich relationship in which the person being guided is restored and formed into the person God desires them to be, and in which the guide also experiences growth and restoration. "In preparing to step through the doorway of Gideon's anguish and journey with him along a path of death and resurrection, I would need to drink this living water and press into this powerful and abundant love, for I, too, am being redeemed and restored to the fullness of the Creator's imagining" (p. xviii).

Brown uses a novel method for communicating this if you can excuse the pun. He creates a fictional account of a successful 34-year-old man named Gideon, who is a composite of Brown's clients, and a fictional spiritual guide named Julian. The narrative follows a consistent pattern. The two characters meet for a one-on-one session in which Julian prayerfully and carefully directs Gideon to address the issues that are most pressing and in which God has obviously been at work in the weeks between sessions. Following this is a chapter where Julian prayerfully reflects on the session and allows the Spirit to draw him further along his own journey. The pattern then repeats. The reader is privileged to be an observer in Gideon's awakening as he is transformed from a young man struggling with distress, depression, and deep wounds into a man whose

aching soul is no longer driving him to achieve but is alive to God and others around him.

The construction of the narrative, however, makes it difficult to remain fully engaged. I will give two examples. The first is that although Brown's prose is pleasant to read, it often uses terminology that may be difficult for the uninitiated to follow, with phrases such as "... open the doorway into his darkened interior wide enough for both of us to enter" (p. xv), and "the Creator's formative imagination" (p. xvii). Readers from outside a more contemplative tradition therefore, may find it difficult to clearly comprehend what Brown is seeking to communicate. The second is that Julian often reflects back to Gideon what Gideon has just said, and though this adds to the realism of the narrative, making the reader feel like they are watching a real-life counselling session, it eventually gets wearying to read the sentence twice.

A further difficulty with the book is that in almost every session between the pair, Gideon seems to experience supernatural encounters, something that tends to distance it from reality. Ordinary human experience does not seem to accord with what seems to be a common occurrence between these two individuals. It appears that the Spirit constantly leads Gideon's imagination and Julian's wise guiding, and the outcome is some form of positive restoration, despite the very real anguish that Gideon sometimes faces. This also leads to most sessions ending with a sense of resolution, which again, I find difficult to reconcile with my experience as a pastor.

This book would be of benefit to anyone who is interested in the spiritual guiding process, giving an ideal (perhaps an idealized?) vision of what that could look like. Pastors and counsellors who are concerned about participating in the work of the Spirit would also do well to read this book. I began reading this book with the hope to learn something for my own inner journey (especially since Gideon and I share the same age), and it accomplished that. There were moments in Gideon's sessions where he confronted sacred wounds and I felt the Spirit's gentle probing of my heart, confirming that I may need to address something similar. Furthermore, it taught me to be more attentive to the Spirit's working, to the events of life, and to my thoughts and feelings. I was reassured that the Spirit is always at work, and my desire to have eyes to see and to cooperate was renewed. As a result, *Guiding Gideon* also stirred my faith. Despite all my failings and doubts, God the great guide is restoring me to the person that he sees, the deeper me, and enveloping me in the "cloak of Trinitarian love" (p. 65). May that process, never end.

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**Cartledge, M. J. (2015).** *The Mediation of the Spirit: Interventions in Practical Theology.* **Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans.**

Reviewed by Dr Jon Newton

Practical theology studies church and ministry, often using a social scientific perspective. However, sometimes evangelical, charismatic and Pentecostal Christians can feel like important points are missing, particularly in the areas of Evangelical theology and Charismatic pneumatology. Mark Cartledge, who is now Professor of Practical Theology at Regent University School of Divinity in the USA, having been an academic and Anglican priest in the UK for many years, is one of the leading voices speaking into practical theology from a Charismatic perspective. This is also the strategy of his most recent book.

Cartledge argues that the discourse of practical theology has suffered from a lack of serious engagement with Scripture and insufficient focus on several theological perspectives (specifically the Trinity, soteriology, systematic theology and pneumatology). As a result, it has tended to be dominated by largely sociological and other social scientific ways of thinking, liberal perspectives, and forms of liberation theology. These are not invalid of course, but practical theology needs a series of "interventions" to redress the balance and enrich the study of churches and ministry from a wider horizon.

Cartledge begins his monograph with a discussion of existing Pentecostal and Charismatic approaches to practical theology, with the focus on topics such as formation, worship, and ministry. He explores how P/C (Pentecostal-Charismatic) approaches have been influenced by, and interacted with, liberation theology and empirical theology, territory he has explored in earlier books, and opens up the topic of experience (Chapter 1). He then discusses six common approaches to the use of the Bible in practical theology, concluding that the Bible has largely been marginalized in this discourse, before proposing a practical-theological reading of Scripture. This is followed by a discussion of the place of experience in practical theology, which shows that religious experience has been similarly marginalized; leading to the suggestion that P/C pneumatology offers new possibilities in this area (Chapter 2).

Cartledge's main argument then begins by unpacking a relatively new concept, the "mediation of the Holy Spirit." Cartledge urges that "this concept is informed by Pentecostal experience and associated empowerment, is shaped by specific theological foci, and is expressed in ecclesial practices, especially sacramental practices broadly conceived" (Chapter 3 p. 87). He explores how this concept is worked out in the Acts of the Apostles; specifically, how the work of the Spirit is mediated, in and through the church, and how this relates to some key theological themes. This discussion provides a platform for "an agenda for interventions in practical theology" (Chapter 4 p. 1130).

The remaining chapters build on this discussion by applying the idea of the mediation of the Spirit to make two specific "interventions" in the discourse of practical theology. In the first of these, an existing study of a Christian congregation is faulted for its inadequate pneumatology and lack of engagement with Scripture, and from this, Cartledge suggests that a P/C perspective would add greater insight to such studies (Chapter 5). The second "intervention" seeks to bring soteriology to the fore as an example of the inadequate theological content in common practical theologies. After surveying four kinds of soteriology in previous practical theological works, Cartledge brings a P/C theologian, Amos Yong, into the conversation. He then attempts to draw on his concept of the Spirit's mediation to provide a new take on soteriology in practical theology, particularly in relation to the recipients, the nature and the process of salvation (Chapter 6).

Cartledge concludes his discussion with a summary of what he thinks he has achieved in trying to bring practical and Pentecostal theology into a new dialogue. He contends, "P/C theology brings together the use of Scripture with experience and pneumatology" (p. 165), and that his discussion of this undergirds "a Pentecostal manifesto for practical theology as a distinct discipline" (p. 166). He then proceeds to unpack this manifesto with ten conclusions about how practical theology can benefit from greater attention to the themes of his book and generally from opening its discourse to more voices outside the liberal academy.

The strength of this book lies in its argument for a more Pentecostal or Charismatic approach to practical theology as a perspective that has something important to offer the study of Christian churches and ministries. Cartledge's proposals have the potential to bring greater depth and strength to the study of practical theology by making it both more practical (in the sense of spiritual experience and praxis) and more theological (in the sense of going to Scripture as a source and bringing theological themes like soteriology into the analysis of practical theological topics).

On the other hand, I found the argument lacked a consistent focus. The book often reads like a series of loosely connected essays rather than a focused argument and some of the ideas, like "mediation of the Spirit", lacked concrete shape and empirical clarity to this reader.

Nonetheless, there is a lot to value in this contribution to the discourse of practical theology and I suspect that many of the individual discussions in it will inform and inspire further thinking and debate for years to come.

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**Gibbs. E. (2013).** *The Rebirth of the Church: Applying Paul's Vision for Ministry in Our Post-Christian World.* **Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic.**

Reviewed by Ps Grant Buchanan

The opening line of Gibbs' book sets a provocative and challenging foundation for much of his discussion,

> In most places in the Western world, churches are declining in membership and social influence. As they find themselves increasingly marginalized and unable to count on the support of the communities they are meant to serve, they are finding that long-established approaches to ministry … no longer have the broad appeal that they had for previous generations (p. ix).

The primary agenda of the book is put forward soon afterwards namely, "…what will [a missional ecclesiology] look like in post-Christendom Western settings?" (p. ix). Through engagement with Paul's letters (although Gibbs admits he is not a Pauline scholar), in light of changing political and cultural challenges faced by the church today, Gibbs considers what adjustments we need to make to address these changes and the resulting decline of influence, in order for the church to be relevant and influential into the future.

The issues laid out in the introduction sets up the argument that the core problem is institutionalism. Gibbs employs terms such as post-Christendom, missional and specifically Christendom to discuss the institutionalisation of the church that developed post-Constantine. This is represented by an attractional rather than a missional/sending mode of engagement, dedicated "sacred buildings/places of worship … more static and institutional in form" professional clergy, and the "institutionalization of grace in the form of sacraments …" (p. 4). This institutionalisation of the church shifted its focus from orthopraxy to orthodoxy. This shift enabled Christendom to resist external cultural and political movements over the past 1500 years that could have changed, if not eradicated, the face of Christianity. Unfortunately, this same resiliency has also negatively affected the church's ability to adapt to recent social shifts brought on by capitalism, individualism, secularization, and pluralism, all prevalent within Western society today. This resistance to change has meant that, since the 1960's, the

church has been "pushed to the margins" of society and "radically changed both the nature of … ministry and … mission …" (p. 8).

In the world of post-Christendom, churches are hamstrung by the "theological and social consequences of a reductionist gospel, with a concern for "personal piety and life after death." Individualizing the message of the gospel led to a privatized form of religion, a division of time between sacred and secular, with a subsequent adoption of "marketplace" norms (p. 11). The place of the church within dysfunctionally fragmented societies is a further challenge. In most Western communities, the trust in institutions is eroding and dissatisfaction with leaders in every sphere, including the church, is now a social reality. Drawing on Phillip Blond's analysis of the situation in Britain, Gibbs highlights how the fragmentation of society has also led to a fragmentation of self, where relationship bonds are also eroding "so our very humanity comes under threat" (p. 16).

These social realities pose the challenge of how "to recreate a geographical sense of community in a twenty-first-century world" (p. 19). Furthermore, there is a growing pluralism and relativism evident within non-Christian cultures and society. How will the church respond? Gibbs suggests that we must re-imagine Western churches in post-Christian contexts through the lens of a missional ecclesiology. This approach requires creativity and a realigning of the processes of Church ministry and mission that consider the shifting nature of society – shifts that are not linear or always logical – while, at the same time, seeking for ways to engage the message and model of Jesus incarnationally and transformatively (p. 26).

Gibbs then presents a reconstruction of the first-century context of Paul and the early church. He discusses the nature of Greco-Roman society in order to highlight the setting for Paul's mission. Cities (including the particular cities where Paul established churches), neighbourhoods, houses, families, individuals, social status, and social structures are included in this discussion. Paul's communities were, like the church today, marginalized groups within their particular social context, which had to contend with political and religious values and societal norms that challenged Christianity. After arguing that Paul's strategy was to engage the social realities and specific needs within each centre, where these did not contradict Christian values, Gibbs suggests that this same paradigm of engagement should inform a missional community today (pp. 52-54). Each of these Pauline settings provides us with insight as to how we might address the various external and internal concerns confronting us as we look to establish a missional community within our various local contexts. Gibbs suggests that effective missional communities start with existing relationships (familial and friendship networks), allow for the gospel to challenge divergent norms, utilize the vibrancy of new converts, face the challenges of growing ethnic diversities within local communities, and have a vision for, and understanding of, cities as centres for sending out (p. 88).

Much of what follows from this point represent perhaps quite standard things to consider when planting new churches and caring for these churches. Ultimately, the call of a missional leadership is to create "life-long apprentices of Jesus" (p. 111, 168). The last three chapters are taken up with outlining 'The Apostolic Message' (basically a short course in systematic theology); 'Relationships within the Church and with the World' (confronting individualism with *koinonia* and love); and a concluding chapter bridging ministry and mission, both then and now. Gibbs concludes with six defining

characteristics of faithful congregations seen in Paul's writing: relational, reproducible, incarnational, faithful, resourceful, hopeful, – all applicable to churches today.

Overall, I was mildly disappointed with this book – especially as I have thoroughly enjoyed Gibbs' previous works. He draws from a wide range of established missional thinkers, presents his themes clearly and exegetes Paul's letters with accuracy and insight. His historical overview and engagement with the first-century context provided valuable insight into the social, religious, and political similarities of the two horizons – then and now. However, much of what he presents has been explored and presented in various forms over the past decade, and the latter portion of the book could easily fit any recent standard ecclesiology text. That being said, this is a worthwhile read for anyone looking to either establish a new church community, or consider ways to lead and develop an existing church community within a changing social context, to be connected, relevant and influential in that context.

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**Haddad, A. P. (2015).** *Arise to Lead: 5 Fundamentals to Becoming an Effective Leader.* **Houston, TX: High Bridge Books.**

Reviewed by Dr Jon Newton

We have all seen the plethora of books on leadership from various Christian authors, some practitioners, and some researchers of leadership in a Christian context. Is there anything more to be said? This book is different, not because of its autobiographical basis (nothing new in that) but because it starts with failure. That failure, unusually, is located in a research laboratory, not a church: this author is a former scientist, though now filling a significant role at Harvest Bible College in Melbourne, lecturing on leadership at postgraduate level, and coaching others in leadership.

So this book provides hope that failure in leadership is not final (see p. 159, but this is the message of the whole book). Haddad tells readers how he reconstructed himself as a young leader, seeking advice and mentoring, reading widely, taking specialized training and even researching for a doctorate in leadership. With humility, he embarked on a great learning journey. This book is structured around the main points he learned and the strengths he had lacked in the beginning:

1. Awakening your potential to lead (*authenticity*)
2. Resourcing your learning (*agility*)
3. Integrating your life and actions (*accountability*)
4. Socially relating to others (*approachability*)
5. Executing your leadership potential (*abilities*)

Under these five themes, he discusses important leadership qualities such as values, curiosity, courage and consistency.

Haddad urges that leaders are not born so much as made; that is, even mediocre leaders can succeed if they really *want* to be leaders. However, he also unveils some of the symptoms of leadership that is in trouble, such as a lack of respect (pp. 12, 174-175). One of the most engaging sections of the book for me was the two chapters on change and challenge (Chapters 10 & 11). Here the author uses the stories of two executives who faced similar threatening changes through company restructuring, but responded in contrasting fashion, to explore the dangers and opportunities for growth

that come with change that you did not necessarily desire or plan for. The lesson is that you cannot control events or even get a favourable outcome in many cases, but you do not have to be destroyed by that; you can instead grow as a leader.

Many of the points made in this book are based on surveys of participants in Haddad's workshops, for example, the Good, the Bad and the Ugly leadership characteristics (pp. 13-14). Some points draw on the research of others, such as Avolio's research on "types of events [that] shaped the leadership of CEOs in six Asian cities" (p. 241). There are many useful insights derived from experience, research, and reading. Some of these are counterintuitive, such as "unethical and immoral leaders get away with selfish behaviors as long as they give attention to their followers' basic needs and reward their performance" (p. 41).

Most chapters open with a typical story that invites the reader into the topic under consideration. There is then an analysis of the topic, often illustrated by further stories (frequently from the author's own life), including solid advice to the reader (usually in the form of "dot points"). The chapter then closes with several reflection questions.

One of the best features of this book was its analysis of the character aspects of leadership. These qualities are well known but not many books unpack them as well as Haddad does. For example, when discussing commitment, he offers these points for "growing your commitment quotient": promise little and deliver more; be committed to something with lasting value and purpose, something that is linked to your passion; be committed to a wise and supportive accountability team; be committed to people even when it is not convenient or easy; be committed to relationships even through difficult times; and be committed to something that is for the benefit of the many although it may be beyond your personal endurance level (pp. 73-76). Biblical principles and sayings are used in some of these discussions but the book is not overtly Christian or religious.

The book reads more like a series of seminars than a sustained argument. There are memorable sayings and alliterative headings, which ultimately grated on this reader, even though the advice was sound. At times, it was hard to come away with a strong focus from so many "dot points." So perhaps the best way to use this book is as a workbook for a course on leadership. That said, this book has great value for the actual or potential leader in all walks of life.

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Hall, E., Bowman, R., & Macher, J. S. (2014). *The More With Less Church: Maximize Your Money, Space, Time, and People to Multiply Ministry Impact.* **Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Publishing.**

Reviewed by Ps Jeremy Weetman
Kindle edition

The ministry that the authors are a part of, Living Stones Associates, is a church consultancy business that has been advising churches for over thirty years. Their book is a valuable tool for all churches on how to leverage existing resources for maximum effectiveness and gives creative ideas for church health and growth interspersed with testimonies and real-life applications. As the authors note in the introduction, "[t]his book explores the principles and strategies that have guided … churches to do more ministry with limited resources, even during financially challenging times" (loc. 267).

The book is divided into four clear subject areas of ministry, staffing, buildings, and finances. Within each section, the chapters are clearly defined to allow the reader to focus on areas of specific interest. The chapter titles are intentionally provocative, at times seeming to challenge conventional wisdom and practice, but are really suggesting a re-organisation or re-structure to clarify and simplify methods and values.

The first two major sections, on ministry and staffing, arguably could be one larger section since they overlap in subject matter and assume a church with a predominantly paid staff. This does not devalue the information but requires contextualisation. This is a common necessity in reading the book given the cultural context for the ministry experience and application is that of North America. Of particular value is chapter nine, "To Make Big Changes, Start with Baby Steps," as it gives very practical insights and suggestions into how best to begin making some of the changes advocated in the book. At first, I wondered if this would not be better as the first chapter, but in hindsight, it is better placed at the end of the first section when the benefits that the suggested changes make possible are realised and embraced. As the authors explain, you have to, 'change values before you change structures' (loc. 1072), which they assert is the key to initiating change without crashing.

Since such a large part of leading a church revolves around change management, this chapter alone is worth the price of the book. In addition, I found Part 3: "More-with-less-buildings" an excellent section since it deals with issues that are vital to church ministry and yet are often neglected in church leadership materials. One of the authors, Ray Bowman, is an architect and contributes his own story as well as important insights into this section. The multi-functional use of church buildings is common, but the authors expand these uses with consideration of creative re-purposing of buildings and facilities to best serve the needs and vision of the faith community. They give consideration to the best way to add a new service, as well as determining *when* it is necessary, and how multi-site fits into the picture.

The final section deals with finances and the importance of carefully determining what is possible within the budgets available. The authors are clear on the value of debt-free ministry, and the need to make changes that are affordable. Since responsible financial management is recognised as foundational to effective church ministry there are already plenty of secular and church-related resources available to assist in the principles and implementation of such management, and so there is little in this section that is new. However its contribution to the overall concepts provided in the book is important and within the context of 'more-with-less' helps to situate the information in a manner that builds on the earlier ideas.

If there is one aspect of the book that could be improved, it is that it assumes a certain expression of church and ministry structure. Although the authors have worked with many churches across North America, that diversity is not well represented, or perhaps their consultancy only appeals to a conservative, conventional church expression. Despite that caveat, the principles outlined in the book are applicable to most ministries once the requisite contextualisation has been performed.

I recommend *The More-With-Less-Church* as a book that will both provide answers to some of the problems that face church leadership and stimulate creative ideas for future development.

**Hunter, J. D. (2010).** *To Change the World: The Irony, Tragedy, and Possibility of Christianity in the Late Modern World*. **New York, NY: Oxford University Press.**

Reviewed by Dr Jon Newton
Kindle edition

The title of this book is rather ironic since the author more or less concludes that Christians can't really change the world in the way we often aspire to. Attempts by Christians to change the world by political or cultural agitation that aims at some form of Christian domination or reclamation of the culture are doomed to failure. However, Hunter does not argue for a kind of neo-Anabaptist separatism either. Rather he calls for a "faithful presence" by which Christians can "change the world" in a more modest and localized way by simply living out the Christian ethic and influencing others towards God's shalom by grace-filled behaviour.

The conclusion is modest but the argument along the way is profoundly stimulating. Hunter begins by arguing against the commonly held view of those engaged in "culture wars" that by establishing a Christian worldview and influencing individual thought, believers can change the course of history, reclaim western culture, turn back the tide of secularism or otherwise establish some kind of fresh Christian hegemony in the post-Christian west. Hunter contends convincingly that this kind of agenda is rooted in a false concept of culture and overstates the power of individual believers who are overwhelmingly not part of the cultural elite that drives the current western culture in its current postmodernist direction. Even if we experienced massive revival in our society, even if half the population became "born again" Christians, even if large numbers of Christians were elected to high office, the effect would be short-lived and superficial since the "principalities and powers" would remain substantially unaffected.

Hunter then surveys selected periods of history when Christians did substantially influence the direction of culture (such as the Reformation) and offers a more "hard-nosed" analysis of Christian success rooted in the power of elite forces and not just the power of truth. For example, Luther was successful in resisting the powers of Catholicism in his day because of new technology (the printing press) and his alliance with the German princes against the Hapsburgs, an alliance that to some extent compromised his theology. Hunter is sympathetic but realistic. The Reformation had unwanted and unanticipated "side effects" that actually weakened Christian society.

The next stage of Hunter's argument engages with the concept of power and the way that politics operates. He analyses and criticizes the three leading forms of Christian engagement (or disengagement) with modern culture in the USA; at least some of the argument applies to any western country, including Australia. According to Hunter, Christians have approached the broader culture in one of three main ways:

1. Resistance (the Christian Right), focusing on re-establishing a righteous social order.
2. Accommodation (the Christian Left), focusing on egalitarianism and social justice.
3. Separatism or disengagement (the Neo-Anabaptists), focusing on a pure church that displays an alternative social order.

Hunter finds each of these approaches deficient and infected (positively or negatively) by Constantinianism that is, by embracing or resisting the idea that Christians should dominate society. They are also fatally flawed in their resentment

towards the "powers that be" and their subsequent lack of grace towards those that disagree with their viewpoint. Too often, all three approaches (especially the first two) end up justifying the means (politics) by the ends (a Christianized society or a pure church). Moreover, all three are not able to resolve the issues thrown up by "difference" (that is, pluralism) and "dissolution" (that it, postmodernism, or that aspect of it that challenges the ability of language to represent reality successfully).

This leads Hunter to propose his idea of "faithful presence." I won't do this justice in a few lines, but basically, he wants us to disavow any idea of establishing a Christian society this side of the eschaton and instead concentrate on doing good and changing the world by the use of our influence in the spheres of life we find ourselves in. By this, he means making the world a better place for everyone rather than making everyone into Christians. He interprets the "Great Commission" more in terms of introducing faith, hope and love into a fallen world than in terms of converting people to Christianity. The examples he gives towards the end of the book are small scale: a checkout woman who shows love and grace to customers and becomes a light to many, a business that treats its customers and employees justly as persons made in God's image, etc.

I am not sure I "buy" the whole argument but I found it very challenging and stimulating. The realism of Hunter's analysis is refreshing. I found myself often thinking about how Christians have not always used political and cultural power well: the English Commonwealth and Calvin's Geneva spring to mind. On the other hand, now that we have lost power, now that most people in (say) Australia no longer call themselves (nominal) Christians, I'm not sure things are better. Hunter basically challenges us to accept that western society was never really Christian and never will be. I want to say, "Yes, but …"

However, this discussion must be had. If the church embraces Hunter's thinking, the influence of the church may even exceed his expectations. This is where his argument challenges me as a pastor. Am I spending my "social capital" wisely? Am I wasting my energies, and those of my flock, in encouraging campaigns for social justice or against social evils, rather than positively demonstrating the kingdom of God by our faithful obedience to Christ in our individual locations and our context as a local church? Much to think about here.

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**Male, D. (2013).** *Pioneering Leadership: Disturbing the Status Quo?* **Grove Leadership Booklet S14. Ridley Hall, Cambridge: Grove Books.**

Reviewed by Dr Darren Cronshaw

With churches on the decline in much of the Western world and theological education often focused on pastoral aspects of leadership, there is a huge need for recruiting, training and resourcing pioneering leadership. We need new models of church and also fresh approaches to leadership development, especially of pioneers who can respond to the Spirit's initiative in a context and help create something that opens up new horizons for the church (drawing on Male's definition, p. 14).

Dave Male planted the Net Church in Huddersfield, an early Anglican fresh expression of church. He currently resources pioneers – lay and ordained – from the Centre for Pioneering Leadership in Cambridge. His 28-page resource booklet in the

Grove Leadership series introduces biblical, strategic and training and support implications for any church, college or system that wants to give priority to this area.

The term 'pioneer' has some unfortunate colonial implications of lone explorers who may have lacked cultural respect, or today might be suggestive of pragmatic extroverts or mavericks. However, Male reframes the term in helpful directions.

Firstly, there are strong biblical roots in reference to Jesus on whose power our pioneering rests (e.g., Heb. 2:10; 12:2). His example is to innovatively cross all sorts of boundaries to be good news to people (e.g., Mk. 1:40-45; 2:13-17; 5:25-43). Yet he also urges reconnecting with a deeper understanding of tradition (e.g., Mk. 2:23-27; 3:1-16). One strength of the booklet is its fresh invitation to re-engage and indwell our biblical story. Male quotes Henri Matisse's observation, "[t]o look at something as though we had never seen it before requires great courage." Pioneering leadership does not simply invent new and novel approaches and ignore tradition but seeks to get to the heart of Christian tradition. We need to be like experts who improvise in music or art, and thus need to understand foundations of musical or artistic forms in order to play with new and vivid alternatives. Male refers to learning "classical" forms first, but my musical friend Beth Barnett suggests that is not the best word, since lots of great jazz musicians don't know 'classical' at all, but deeply know the foundations of musical forms, and that helps remind us we don't have to "conform first, then earn the right to extemporize" but that there are even lots of different ways to learn the foundations, other than 'classically'. But this underlines Male's argument to invite people to re-engage their tradition and rediscover the heart of our history, not to default to a status quo position but to use that as a base for a radical and changed future (pp. 8-9, 15, 20).

Secondly, the writer makes the point that not everyone is a pioneering leader, but there are likely more in our churches than we presently recognise, and there are different sorts of pioneers. With George Lings, he suggests it is helpful to classify ourselves and those we train and support in four different categories, the first two of which we can especially encourage to pioneer, and the second two we can encourage to support others who pioneer:

- o Pioneer-starters, great at starting new things and then moving on.
- o Pioneer-sustainers, who can start a group from scratch and nurture it to maturity.
- o Sustainer-pioneers, who are more nurturing pastoral types but want to champion parallel pioneering initiatives.
- o Sustainer-developers whose primary gifting is nurture but who can still grow in helping a church with a mission.

The Church (and individual congregations) needs leaders who are at different points on this spectrum. But those who are pioneering, Male explains, tend to love starting things, being on the edge, taking risks, fostering community, looking outward, and asking questions. They also know when to stay or go, when to bring order or chaos, and how to think up creative alternatives. Those who recognise and train leaders will do well to use Male's lists as evaluative/diagnostic grids.

Male biblically grounds the pioneering leader's role in the function of Apostles, Prophets, and/or Evangelists (drawing on Ephesians 4), but also in the risk-taking and groundbreaking work of entrepreneurs. The booklet also explores how to value, empower and invest in pioneering leadership, and discusses key issues of managing expectations, measuring success (beyond just counting attendance), implementing

succession planning and sustainability, managing isolation, stimulating teamwork, making tough decisions and avoiding domestication.

This last point is a central learning point for aspiring pioneers, and those training and supporting them. As Male pleads, we do not want to bury pioneers in organisational burdens or pastorally focused Position Descriptions, nor domesticate them with a tame college and church environment and set of experiences:

> It is important to consider how we keep pioneering leaders dangerous! Our church systems tend to domesticate such leaders, wanting them to fit in and not to rock the boat. But I believe our present critical time requires more, not fewer, dangerous leaders who are prepared to work in different and exciting ways. … not get sucked into the vortex of meetings, rotas, committees and boards (p. 22).

*Pioneering Leadership: Disturbing the Status Quo?* is a concise but important briefing paper for pioneering leaders and those who want to produce more of them in healthy yet still dangerous directions. It draws mainly on the UK context but has potential to spark creative rethinking in other mission contexts, not least of which the mission of the church in other Western contexts.

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**McGonigal, K. (2013).** *The willpower instinct: how self-control works, why it matters, and what you can do to get more of it.* **New York, NY: Penguin.**

Reviewed by Dr Nigel Pegram

This is one of those rare books, which combine quality research with a practical and engaging writing style. McGonigal has written this book arising out of her experience both as an academic at Stanford University and through teaching average people how to improve their own willpower through her course "The Science of Willpower".

The book follows the ten-week format of the course, and like the course, each chapter contains both relevant theory and practical ideas and exercises, which help the reader, apply the information and skills discussed. You can read this book for the valuable information contained therein; however, the best use of the book is to use it as a tool to develop skills. The author recommends reading a chapter per week and using the time in between to test and practice the skills discussed drawing on the helpful exercises contained within, and at the end of, each chapter.

The book progresses in a clear and logical fashion, beginning by clarifying what willpower is and then moving on to cover some of the puzzling and paradoxical expressions of human behaviour which can be observed in ourselves and others. Some of the topics she discusses include why people who champion moral causes frequently fall afoul of the very wrongs they decry (Chapter 4, "License to Sin"), and why we so easily mistake wanting for happiness and its links with addictive behaviours (Chapter 5, "The Brain's Big Lie").

Because the book has such a logical progression, the greatest benefit will be gained by a progressive reading of the whole. Many chapters build on the principles and information discussed earlier. It will be less beneficial to those who simply want to dive in and make a quick grab for relevant information.

Some may object to her passing remarks about evolutionary biology. Regardless of one's position on that topic, the principles and practices contained inside are based on solid research. For those who wish to delve deeper into the areas discussed, McGonigal provides a very useful set of notes on each chapter, the majority of which refers to primary research. One could profitably use the book as a helpful introduction, before pursuing wider reading in specific areas of interest.

More than anything this book is a practical discussion of a topic important to ministers and members of churches. It will clarify some of the reasons why people behave the way they do and provide ways in which helpful behaviours and attitudes can be enhanced and unhelpful ones discarded so each may live more fulfilling and more productive lives.

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**McKnight, J., & Block, P. (2012).** *The Abundant Community: Awakening the Power of Families and Neighborhoods.* **San Francisco, CA: Berrett-Koehler Publishers.**

Review by Dr Darren Cronshaw

What kind of world do we want to leave for our grandchildren? What kind of neighbourhoods do we want to foster for our children to grow up in? These sorts of questions encourage us to dream and act for a better world. A temptation, however, is to leave planning for better communities to others – such as government, institutions or "community development experts." *The Abundant Community* puts the responsibility for engaged citizenship back into the hands of ordinary people.

The writers bring decades of community development and organizational leadership experience to their writing. John McKnight is a community organizer and recognised as the leading architect of Assets Based Community Development, which he wrote about in *Building Communities from the Inside Out.* Peter Block is an early expert in organization development who now focuses on fostering local civic engagement. They describe their working and writing partnership together as seeking to explore how communities can be "villages" that band together to raise their children.

The clearest and most refreshing word of the book was "enough". It showed me new ways of understanding and using the word. Firstly, applied to goods and services, "enough" invites satisfaction and contentment with what we have (rather than having to buy more). The book offers an excellent historical critique of the development and promotion of consumer society. Basically, early in the 20th century, American industry shifted from meeting basic needs to creating new "needs", and the burgeoning advertising sphere has been marketing "dissatisfaction" ever since in order to sell the latest products and experiences.

Secondly, and core to the underlying principles of community development, "enough" urges confidence that we have sufficient resources in our families and neighbourhoods to create a better world (rather than having to rely on outside experts or institutions). Rather than something to be obtained by purchasing more things or paying for services from professionals, McKnight and Block argue that the "good life" is obtainable as we collaborate for abundant communities. A local initiative from our families and neighbourhoods is the best way, they argue, to foster neighbourhood necessities which they discuss as community health, neighbourhood safety, environmental conservation, resilient economy, local food production, care for the

vulnerable, and "village" life to raise our children. With stories and principles, they develop how "when we join together with our neighbours, we are the architects of the future that we want to love within" (p. xiv).

Furthermore, I especially appreciated two concepts from the book relevant for my ministry. Firstly, the authors unpack lessons from early pioneers. Unfortunately, in a postcolonial context, the word reminds us of injustice and mistreatment towards indigenous people. McKnight and Block focus on positive lessons, though – about how pioneers created a community for themselves and fostered village life with the gifts and resources they had. Pioneers associated and banded together for the common good, yet also showed hospitality to newcomers – welcoming their knowledge and capacities. This is a story worth reflecting on for "pioneers" fostering community development and social entrepreneurship in postmodern (and postcolonial) times. Foundationally, pioneering or any community development involves the giving of gifts, fostering association and showing compassion with hospitality. Our neighbourhoods desperately need more of this kind of leadership – or to change to other metaphors – this kind of jazz music or potluck style community.

Secondly, McKnight and Block get practical in outlining what it takes to bring people together and foster their gift giving, association and hospitality. Key elements include time, silence and storytelling. I especially appreciated their affirmation of the power of stories:

> Inviting stories are the single biggest community-building thing that we can do, especially when the stories we tell are stories of our capacities, what worked out. Since stories tell us what is important, speaking of our capacities establishes them as the foundation upon which we can build a future. The stories about our gifts, about how our kindness, our generosity, our trust, our forgiveness define us and give our life meaning – this is where an authentic sense of identity comes from, not from what we buy (p. 96).

This reminded me of the central importance of inviting people – in local church gatherings and training courses – to share and reflect on one another's stories as citizens.

*The Abundant Community* offers a high view of the potential of grassroots activism, community, and neighbours. It stresses important principles of citizenship rather than consumerism, and empowerment of neighbours rather than institutional reliance. It is an excellent primer for anyone interested in bringing people together to collaborate for the greater good, and so deserves a values place on reading lists for community development or Christian ministry students and practitioners.

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**Ralph, K. (2015).** *Your Final Choice: Hastening your death when terminally ill - eight questions to ask yourself.* **Australia: Morning Star Publishing.**

Reviewed by Ps Astrid Staley

As a Christian educator committed to equipping pastoral caregivers and the Christian community at large in how to recognize, successfully intervene, and prevent those who have lost hope and are overcome by life's challenges from taking their life, I found this book by Kenneth Ralph goes against every aim in suicide prevention. The author acknowledges this and draws a sharp distinction between the suicidal person

and a person who has arrived at the end of their life's journey, suffering a terminal illness, accompanied by intolerable pain. In contrast with a person who has died by suicide, but who had been seemingly healthy, he sees no similarity with a person who is given the 'power of choice' to end their life (euthanistic suicide) "by a 'good' death when already dying from a 'bad' one," choosing one death to avoid a worse one (p. 11). At the outset, he wisely recommends that anyone struggling with 'morbid melancholy' or a sense of 'hopelessness' due to personal circumstance to avoid wading through the book's content. This recommendation I would also endorse given its saturated discussion on death and dying.

The author's operating principle is that a person facing a terminal illness should be empowered to choose for themselves both the 'timing' and 'manner' of their death. This view is somewhat dissonant to his original stance that such a choice is 'morally evil,' one likely to resonate with many Christians. After many hours spent with people experiencing 'un-relievable suffering', his experiences called into question his initial approach to this difficult issue. Additionally, discovering other voices within the Christian community who believed that such a choice was to the dying person "reasonable, liberating and altruistic" (p. 12) helped solidify this position.

In producing this 'pastoral/ethical' publication, Ralph poses eight questions for the reader now experiencing a terminal illness, or perhaps for the reader who might one day face the same, to contemplate. He does not seek to suggest what choice is best for the individual per se – he believes what is 'right' for one may not be for another – yet he clearly wishes to sway the reader towards greater acceptance of the right of those who are terminally ill to end their life on their own terms. Stories of people who made the choice of when and how to die are weaved throughout, including recognizable public figures like Freud, Katherine Hepburn, and Jackie Kennedy. Statistics from a 1996 poll affirming support of voluntary euthanasia from within mainstream denominations further serve to bolster this aim. Despite the lack of more current statistics, the outcome of the poll is insightful.

A level of theological wrestling in the mind of the reader is assured as one is catapulted headfirst into the sphere of morality, confronted with polarizing terms such as 'assisted suicide,' 'medically assisted suicide,' 'voluntary euthanasia,' and options such as refusal of treatment, advance health care directives, refusal of fluids, and making private arrangements with a doctor.

The author explores various theological beliefs about humans and their relationship to God. Perspectives that will undoubtedly underpin decisions to endure suffering until the last breath, or to hasten death, are whether God is the 'giver of life' and alone has the prerogative to end life, or whether humans are 'free responsible partners' possessing the utter right to 'self-determination,' or indeed whether life is a 'gift' or on 'loan' from God. In presenting these, theological perspectives that do not put 'self' in the driver's seat of life's choices are interspersed with accounts of those who turned from such a view and discussion of possible flaws of such beliefs; all in keeping with the mantra, "my body, my death, my choice" (p. 41).

Another vital question the author invites the reader to consider is what loss of human qualities because of terminal illness would cause them to consider death as a preferred option. The discussion centers on 'intrinsic' versus 'extrinsic' value. Life viewed as having intrinsic value has value, not because of its usefulness to society, but because it is just that – life. On the other hand, the extrinsic value is predicated upon its

usefulness to self and others. One is more resistant to hastening death, whereas the other is more open to it.

A minor criticism might be offered as to the depiction of the violent means chosen by a person who died by suicide as a way of contrasting 'violent' suicides and "non-violent, self-respecting suicides which contain the component of self-preservation" (p. 73). The language is unnecessarily graphic, and its inclusion unhelpful, seemingly included for its shock value. The point the author is trying to make is achieved, and more appropriately, by merely highlighting the place where the person ended their life and the effect this would have on the loved one who discovers their body. Suicide Prevention Australia discourages graphic details in the re-telling of suicide deaths. Additionally, the author refers to a person who has died by suicide as having 'committed' suicide. This terminology does not reflect the current focused measures by educators in suicide prevention to eliminate language that historically has been stigmatizing when discussing suicide. Perhaps future revisions might address these concerns.

Undoubtedly, people facing death and suffering a terminal illness have silently pondered the many questions the author has posed. An integral part of ministry as pastoral caregivers is sitting with people who are bearing up under extreme suffering with death as a sure prognosis. Providing a safe environment for someone in such a situation to wrestle through some of the theological and moral challenges associated with hastening death are vital. A minister's familiarity with the options and implications of each will certainly assist in opening the way for candid discussions.

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**Searcy, N. (2013).** *The Renegade Pastor.* **Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books.**

Reviewed by Ps Jeremy Weetman

There inevitably comes a time in every pastor's life when they ask themselves the question, "Why am I doing this?" The question is usually posed at times of great stress or difficulty in their ministry, their personal life, their health, or one of those Monday mornings when Sunday was not so great. Nelson Searcy's book provides a challenge to rise above these difficulties and the spiral into mediocrity by becoming 'renegade pastors' and choosing meaning over mediocrity.

This is a very helpful and practical book built on Searcy's experience in ministry and as a church consultant. Each of the chapters suggests a commitment that should be made to maintain healthy boundaries and successfully fulfil God's call on your life and that of your church. He includes testimonies and personal stories that add life to the book and situates his strategies very clearly in ministry life. The book will be of benefit to many in church life and ministry.

However, there is little in the book that is original and has not been said many times before in other church leadership material, or business management and leadership resources. The information is good, just not new. Searcy also connects what he suggests to his other books, website and network, which may be a good or bad thing depending on your point of view.

There are three particularly helpful strategies within the book. The third chapter contains a section on conflict resolution, an important topic, and one that must be handled well in ministry. Searcy's approach is, like the rest of the book, practical, clear

and simple. He advocates acting early, planning your approach, and not making assumptions but rather 'assess[ing] the attitude' (p. 73). He follows this with the advice to find a 'lightning rod', a friend, or group of friends who can serve as a sounding board and help to ground criticism and negative energy. Although noting that the lightning rod should be objective, Searcy does not explicitly state this is to provide insight into whether the criticism might have some validity, but the need for an objective, supportive person or group where a pastor can unload is critical.

The third strategy of note is the practice of Sabbath. From a personal reflection on his own lack in this area, he develops his argument in favour of Sabbath not only for personal emotional and relational health but also for the future benefit of ministry. Searcy presents four elements that make up Sabbath: rest, reflection, recreation, and 'proflection' – thinking about the future (pp. 99-100). Though he addresses the resistance to Sabbath in the common argument of, "I don't have time for Sabbath" to a certain degree, perhaps he could have given some consideration to the concept of 'busyness' as a badge of honour in the cultural context of our Western lifestyles.

In summary, though *The Renegade Pastor* largely reiterates ideas and practices already common in ministry and business, it is nevertheless a valuable resource for all levels of church leadership seeking to improve their ministry capacity, and in particular new ministers beginning their vocational life.

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**Simpson, R. with Brent Lyons-Lee. (2016).** *St Aidan's Way of Mission: Celtic Insights for a Post-Christian World*. **Abingdon: Bible Reading Fellowship.**

Reviewed by Dr Darren Cronshaw

Aidan is an inspiring saint whose Irish mission to the English is an instructive model for mission in the post-Christendom Western world today, suggest Ray Simpson with Brent Lyons-Lee.

Ray Simpson is the founding Guardian and chief liturgist of the International New Monastic Community of Aidan and Hilda and author of over thirty books on spirituality and mission. Brent Lyon-Lee is Mission Catalyst for Community Engagement with the Baptist Union of Victoria and a social justice activist. This is his third book he has co-written with Ray Simpson connecting Celtic insights with spirituality that can be at home in Australia.

The story began when Aidan was posted to the Iona monastery. When a previous mission effort to Northumbria failed, Aidan was sent from Iona to Northumbria in 635. He learned English, built trust with King Oswald and his court, and walked around the region seeking to incarnate the gospel and create indigenous "colonies of heaven."

I loved the invitation of the book to reflect on Aidan's example of the Christian life as a pilgrimage, not a possession. Irish pilgrims or *peregrine* allowed God's Spirit to blow them where it wished and let mission take as long as it needed. As reflected in vows of the Community of Aidan and Hilda, it is about setting sail and letting the "Wild Goose" or untameable Spirit of God lead into wild or windy places, and then make them places of welcome and wonder. To find your calling, Simpson often says, "Let your feet follow your heart until you find your place of resurrection" (p. 29). The place of resurrection is about not only where you will literally die, but also where you can experience shalom and harmony between yourself and your place and neighbours (and

so where you may as well stay until you die). It is where "fruit comes as a gift because we are the right person in the right place at the right time. Creativity flows. Connections take place. Synchronicity occurs. Jesus is revealed" (p. 29). That is sufficient vision to invite us to let go of what we hold (and what holds us) and step out on a Spirit-led journey, and keep walking till we find a place where the bells ring for us.

The second inspiring lesson I got from this book is that, rather than viewing the church as institutional and attractional, do-it-yourself or even focused on mission only, Aidan's vision of church was as "God-shaped hub communities that have a heart for God, others and society" (p. 87). Starting in Lindisfarne, Aidan planted a network of monastic communities that included schools, libraries and guest quarters, and space for productive farming as well as celebratory feasting. Simpson suggests today's global village still needs churches as "villages of God":

- A 24-hour society calls for seven-days-a-week faith communities.
- A café society calls for churches that are eating-places.
- A travelling society calls for churches that provide accommodation.
- A stressed society calls for churches that nurture retreats and meditation.
- A multi-choice society calls for churches that have a choice of styles and facilities.
- A fragmented society calls for holistic models and whole-life discipling.
- An eco-threatened society calls for more locally sustainable communities that have roots in the soil (p. 74).

This is a model of church functioning in ways that are responsive to one's adopted city and seeking to foster shalom.

Aidan also celebrated the image and gifts of God in women as well as men. Aidan prioritised practices and rhythms, and I appreciated the writer's urging to identify practices worth commending to people in my community. Moreover, Aidan had a grounded vision of an earthy faith that cares for Creation. The book is practical about how to do this, but also beautifully weaves together Celtic and Australian indigenous stories.

Finally, Simpson and Lyons-Lee stressed the importance that Aidan taught of having soul friends who help us cultivate balanced and prayerful living and a lifelong love for learning wisdom. Aidan's spirituality and teaching were not focused only on book learning but also on cultivating a deep devotion, as this prayer urged:

Divine Mentor,
Teach us the habits of holy learning,
To know your ways
To explore your world
To learn from experience
To understand people
To manage time and talents
To draw on wellsprings of wisdom
Until we become a people of saints and scholars (p. 47).

The Church in the West does not need another one-size-fits-all off-the-shelf program. However, we do need stories of saints who have walked journeys of courageous faith and adventurous mission – not to imitate closely but to suggest principles and ways of engaging our neighbourhoods in fresh and humble ways. *St*

*Aidan's Way of Mission* is a delightful read, weaving together the story of this inspiring saint and implications for contemporary ministry.

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**Stewart, J. W. (2015).** *Envisioning the Congregation, Practicing the Gospel.* **Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans.**

<div align="right">Reviewed by Dr Jon Newton</div>

This new book describes itself as "a guide for pastors and lay leaders." It is addressed particularly to leaders of "mainline" Protestant churches in the USA, the section of the Christian church most in decline in terms of numerical size and influence. Stewart wants to map out a pathway to growth and impact for such churches. Much of what he says is arguably relevant to countries like Australia as well.

After explaining his strategy in the book, Stewart begins with an analysis of the problem. Why is Protestant Christianity in decline? The answer is that it is out of "sync" with the values of contemporary American (even western) culture, or rather that the prevailing culture has successfully hijacked the church. "Here is the main plot: intrusive, potent cultural values of contemporary America have skewed Christianity's classical beliefs and deconstructed the Church's wisest and proven faith-forming practices." (p. 11). In what may be the best chapter in the book, Stewart identifies six "socio-cultural assumptions" that undermine the faith, namely, the quest for *homogeneity*, the commitment to *individualism*, the seduction of *consumerism*, the reality of religious *pluralism*, the thirst for *spirituality*, and the dominance of *deism* (pp. 13-14).

After examining the essential features of the Christian gospel (Chapter 3), Stewart spends the rest of the book defining and arguing for the adoption of core Christian practices such as fellowship, hospitality, discipleship, witness, serving and worship. The idea seems to be that the church must recover its vision of being the church as in the New Testament (with special attention to the post-Pentecostal passage Acts 2:40-47). Only then can it hope to recover its life, its power, and its effectiveness in an increasingly hostile culture. Each chapter offers a survey of New Testament teaching on the practice under examination and analyses the essential features of that practice as it relates to today's situation, matching each to one of the problem areas identified in Chapter 2. It looks for contemporary examples of this practice being outworked in these essentials in American Protestant churches, offering these as models for others to follow. There are many resources identified for readers to follow up, making this a good resource book.

In a sense, there is nothing radically new in this book. Stewart also does not offer any new facts or research, choosing rather to build on the research of others, which he does rather well, bringing the research of Christian denominations, groups like Barna Research and sociologists like Robert Wuthnow and others to the table in a digestible form. Much of the discussion is too wide-ranging to challenge the reader with radical insights. Some of the suggestions are bordering on trivial, such as the discussion on the use of social media (pp. 87–88). However, the argument of the book has power in its consistent emphasis on the church recovering its authentic self.

Here and there, there are jewels of insights that kept me reading, such as the testimonies of key Christian thinkers over the centuries (such as Jürgen Moltmann) in Chapter 3. For leaders of the kinds of churches Stewart is targeting, and for many other churches as well, this book would be a wise investment.

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- A working title
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