

FACILITATING THEOLOGICAL REFLECTION:
INFLUENCES ON PASTORAL IDENTITY AND PASTORAL PRACTICE
OF LAY PASTORAL CAREGIVERS

A PROJECT REPORT AND THESIS SUBMITTED TO
THE FACULTY OF BRITE DIVINITY SCHOOL
TEXAS CHRISTIAN UNIVERSITY
IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF
DOCTOR OF MINISTRY
PASTORAL THEOLOGY AND PASTORAL COUNSELING

BY
ROBERT WILDAN THOMPSON

FORT WORTH, TEXAS

MAY 2011

As author of this paper, I grant permission to the Mary Couets Burnett Library, Texas Christian University, to provide a photocopy of the paper to any requesting institution or individual, with the understanding that it be for scholarly use only.

Robert W. Thompson
Signature

February 9, 2011
Date

Notice: **WARNING CONCERNING COPYRIGHT RESTRICTIONS:**

The copyright law of the United States (Title 17, United States Code) governs the making of photocopies or other reproductions of copyrighted material.

Under certain conditions specified in the law, libraries and archives are authorized to furnish a photocopy or other reproduction. One of these specified conditions is that the photocopy or reproduction is not to be used for any purpose other than private study, scholarship, or research. If a user makes a request for, or later uses, a photocopy or reproduction for purposes in excess of "fair use," that user may be liable for copyright infringement.

This institution reserves the right to refuse to accept a copying order if, in its judgment, fulfillment of the order would involve violation of copyright law.

BRITE DIVINITY SCHOOL
TEXAS CHRISTIAN UNIVERSITY
Fort Worth, Texas

February 9, 2011

To the Dean of the Brite Divinity School:

I am submitting herewith a project report and thesis written by Robert Wildan Thompson entitled “Facilitating Theological Reflection: Influences on Pastoral Identity and Pastoral Practice of Lay Pastoral Caregivers.”

I have examined the final copy of this paper for form and content and recommended that it be accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree Doctor of Ministry.

Joretta L. Marshall
Major Professor

We have read this professional paper
and recommend its acceptance:

Christie C. Neuger
Reader

Jeffrey Williams
Associate Dean for Academic Affairs

Accepted

Nancy J. Ramsay
Dean
Brite Divinity School

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABSTRACT	vii
CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION	1
A. The Project: Participants, My Role, and the Sessions	3
1. The Participants: Lay Pastoral Caregivers	3
2. My Role: Facilitating Theological Reflection	4
3. The Five Sessions and the Data	9
B. My Pastoral Theological Method	11
C. Key Definitions & Overview of the Written Project	19
CHAPTER TWO: THEOLOGICAL REFLECTION AND LAY PASTORAL CARE	25
A. Theological Reflection: Emergence and Challenges	26
B. Anglican Lay Ministry	32
C. Anglican Pastoral Care	43
D. Pastoral Care: Description & Project Participants	46
CHAPTER THREE: THEOLOGICAL REFLECTION AS FORMATION PROCESS	50
A. Theological Reflection: A Working Description and Model	51
B. Theological Reflection as a Form of Adult Learning	56
1. Implicit Theological Reflection: Experience as Vital	57
2. Explicit Theological Reflection: Social Learning & Constructivist Perspectives	64
C. Theological Reflection: From Frustration to Formation	71
CHAPTER FOUR: THEOLOGICAL REFLECTION AND PASTORAL IDENTITY	78
A. Who Am I? Identity and Pastoral Identity (Theory)	80
B. Who Am I? Participants Speak of Pastoral Identity (Experience)	82
1. Implicit Theological Reflection: Two Aspects of Pastoral Identity	83
a. Passionate and Committed to Pastoral Care	83

TABLE OF CONTENTS, continued

b. Prizing Relationships in Pastoral Care	86
2. Explicit Theological Reflection	90
a. Generalized Influences on Pastoral Care	90
b. Individualized Influences on Pastoral Care	92
CHAPTER FIVE: THEOLOGICAL REFLECTION AND CAREGIVING PRACTICES . . .	99
A. Pastoral Practice: Theory	100
B. Participants' Pastoral Care Practices	102
1. The Healing Function of Pastoral Care	103
2. The Sustaining Function of Pastoral Care	104
3. The Guiding Function of Pastoral Care	106
4. The Reconciling Function of Pastoral Care	108
C. Theological Reflection's Influence on Caregiving Practices	111
1. Prochaska's Model: Lens for Identifying Change	111
2. Changes According to Prochaska	113
CHAPTER SIX: CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS	118
A. A Summary and Review	118
B. Questions About Exploring Pastoral Formation	121
1. Questions About This Project	121
2. Missed Opportunities: Potential Disorienting Dilemmas	123
3. Questions About Other Projects and Settings	125
C. Questions About Leadership and Formation	127
D. Anticipated Contributions of This Project	131

ABSTRACT

Project Director: Joretta L. Marshall, Ph.D. This project explores how lay pastoral caregivers' experience in theological reflection might contribute to both their pastoral identities and their caregiving practices. The paper discusses the importance of theological reflection for pastoral formation and sketches an Anglican theology of lay ministry and lay pastoral care. The field of adult learning provides lenses for understanding pastoral formation. Implicit theological reflection on personal experiences occurred before the project began, influencing pastoral identity. Explicit theological reflection during the project evokes individualized influences on pastoral identity in some of the participants. Clebsch and Jaekle's four classic functions of pastoral care illuminate participants' pastoral practices. Theological reflection influences pastoral practice in terms of planning for changes. Projects like this one can be replicated or conducted differently and show value for clergy and laity in parishes and wider social contexts.

Keywords: lay pastoral care; theological reflection; facilitation; pastoral formation; pastoral identity; pastoral practice; Anglican theology of ministry.

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

Susan,¹ a lay caregiver at her local Episcopal Church and a participant in this project, speaks of the parish with passion in her voice and a sense of wonder and privilege for her involvement in lay pastoral care in this faith community. Her vocational experience has been primarily in the business world, which she believes did not provide her experiences that would prepare her for her participation in this project of theological reflection. Susan states “it was difficult for me to grasp” the process of theological reflection: “I’ve just never been trained like that.” For her, becoming comfortable with the process required “getting that practical approach out of the way” (doing something) and then moving to consider the theology that informs that practical approach. This shift in focus allowed her to “look at pastoral situations from a theological point of view.” She comments that learning this process “was really a stretch.”

Susan is pleased with her growing awareness of the potential of theological reflection for supporting lay pastoral care. “I think that it will help me in pastoral situations now, to pull myself back from the practical point of view and to think of it more in a theological approach.” She is clear that she is not giving up her previously-acquired skill: “it’s not that being from a practical approach is bad—it’s good; it can keep you grounded and help you make concrete decisions when you need to.” For her, theological reflection now offers her “a wonderful balance. . . . It’s really made me look at things very differently. It had quite an impact on me.”

Susan’s comments indicate she perceives that something personally helpful occurred during the course of this project. What might have happened to evoke her affirming words?

¹ I used fictitious names for participants in this report as part of the confidentiality agreement, which is included in the Informed Consent form that each participant signed. See Appendix for a sample of Informed Consent form.

How might facilitating theological reflection for lay pastoral caregivers contribute to the formation of both their pastoral identities and their thinking about caregiving practices? This inquiry is the research question guiding this project. Underlying this question are two hypotheses: one, that theological reflection contributes to pastoral formation, and, two, that pastoral formation influences one's sense of pastoral identity and one's set of caregiving skills. Thus, the objective of this project is to learn how the experiences of a small group of lay pastoral caregivers with theological reflection might influence their pastoral formation, as manifested in their sense of pastoral identity and their expression of caregiving skills.

This project roots itself in the belief that one of the fundamental tasks of ordained clergy is to help enhance the ministries of the laity. Ordained clergy certainly perform "first line" pastoral care, such as leading worship, giving sermons, planning and conducting outreach and mission projects, and offering guidance and comfort to persons in the various transitions and tragedies of life. Ordained clergy also, however, provide a kind of "second line" care, such as encouraging and assisting in the development of other pastoral caregivers. Practical theologians Graham, Walton, and Ward (2005) note in their text on theological reflection that educational developments in the West have resulted in an understanding of Christian ministry that simultaneously reduces the view of ministry as applying expertise while increasing the importance of ministry as "facilitating the vocation of all Christians" (p 5). This "second line" of care—this task of facilitating the vocation of all Christians—is the focus of this project. My goal is to explore one way in which ordained clergy might contribute to developing pastoral identity and enhancing pastoral practices among a congregation's lay pastoral caregivers through facilitating their skill in theological reflection.

The Project: Participants, My Role, and the Sessions

The Participants: Lay Pastoral Caregivers

The choice to focus on lay pastoral caregivers points to my belief that they function in significant ways within the local congregations they serve. Lay pastoral caregivers do not provide specialized therapy or counseling, and their pastoral care, compared to that of seminary-trained clergy, will be funded by less preparation in theology and ministry skills. In spite of this important difference, the ministry of lay pastoral caregivers is valuable to parishes, both functionally and theologically. Functionally, lay pastoral caregivers probably have access to congregational members in ways that ordained clergy or other similarly trained church staff do not have. Realistically, church members talk with each other regularly, and sometimes their conversations involve important challenges they encounter. In the support that church members provide each other, pastoral care often occurs.

Theologically, as I will develop later, lay pastoral caregivers are living out their call to ministry, a call they received at baptism. They are not simply observers of a weekly worship service; they are participants in that service and thus called to participate in the multiple ministries of any local faith community. Their caregiving is genuinely “pastoral,” a word that is often confused with or limited to ordained clergy. As Anglican theologian James Reed (2005) states, pastoral care “is much more than a profession of a select few” (p 42). Laity are called to “general and all-pervasive” forms of care, including religious education, spiritual direction, ethical discernment, the pursuit of justice, and care for persons in special need. Lay pastoral caregivers engage some of these forms of pastoral care. A focus on theological reflection reinforces the fact that lay caregivers are pastoral caregivers who bring a theological perspective

to their work. The intent of the project is to enrich the pastoral resources of lay pastoral caregivers through assisting them in reflecting theologically.

This chapter consists of four major sections that provide background and a framework for this report. First I discuss my role in the project, which is to facilitate theological reflection, not to teach specific content. This facilitator role is informed by ideas from practical theologians on the nature of Christian ministry (Graham, Walton, & Ward, 2005) and from an edited volume on theological teaching (Hess & Brookfield, 2008). Second, I provide a summary sketch of the goals and activities in each of the five sessions of the project with the nine lay pastoral caregivers. Third, I present my pastoral theological method, showing how my procedures for preparing and conducting this project address the five common elements that constitute all methods. Fourth, I provide definitions of key terms and an overview of the rest of the written project.

My Role: Facilitating Theological Reflection

I drew upon four sources (Graham, Walton, and Ward; Parker Palmer; Hess; and Skinner) to develop my understanding of my role as facilitator. To begin with, my role rooted itself in the broad statement on ministry by Graham et al. (2005), who write, “. . . Christian ministry comes to be understood as being less about the application of expertise and more about facilitating the vocation of all Christians through processes of understanding, analyzing, and reflecting” (p 5). This sentence can be viewed as almost revolutionary, describing a watershed in theories of ministry, a watershed dividing expertise and facilitation. It is particularly innovative for church traditions with a high view of ordination and sacraments, such as the Episcopal Church, in which I am ordained. That is, the Episcopal Church is one of the church traditions

that is highly clericalized, requiring ordination in order to conduct sacramental ministry, one major kind of “application of expertise,” as Graham et al. phrase it. I will discuss in some detail this distinction between expertise and facilitation in chapter two.

This emphasis on sacramental ministry, however, does not eliminate the value, or even the need of, many ministries performed by lay persons. In the recent context of rediscovering and revaluing lay ministry (since mid-twentieth century), ordained persons now face the renewed opportunity, as part of their ministries, to facilitate the vocation of all Christians. That is, the watershed nature of this distinction between expertise and facilitation does not need to create a dichotomy; it need not force a choice upon clergy to provide one or the other kind of ministry. Rather, the distinction points out the theologically-based opportunity (for some theologians, a theologically-based mandate) of clergy to help develop and sustain the ministries of lay persons.

I conceived of and designed my role in this project in terms of this opportunity to facilitate the vocation of nine lay pastoral caregivers “through processes of understanding, analyzing, and reflecting” (Graham et al., 2005, p 5). My role was not content expert but rather process facilitator, as one trained in theological reflection. The expertise I was applying (to use Graham et al.’s phrase) was skill in facilitating the process of theological reflection for the participants. Certainly facilitation, when done well, requires a kind of expertise, but it is an expertise that is much more like collaboration than like shepherding.

Hess and Brookfield’s citation of Parker Palmer’s discussion of learning/teaching models (2008) illustrates the difference between facilitation and traditional views of applying expertise. Although Palmer discusses learning and teaching in the context of formal education, his distinction is highly important for my conceptualization of my role as facilitator in an informal

ecclesial context. In the first model, “the expert transfers information to amateurs who passively receive it” (p 52). The process carries the image of banking: deposits are made into passive containers/learners. Though this model offers simplicity—in its clear teacher/student roles, in its authority (with the teacher), its effectiveness measure (did students get the information?), and its avoidance of contradicting the teacher—Hess & Brookfield also contend that it seriously lacks a forum for relationality. It displays a myth: the objectivist myth of knowing. The teacher is the expert who transmits the objective knowledge to the amateurs.

By contrast, the second model in Palmer’s discussion provides for “multiple paths of interrelationship” (p 52). In this model, all participants are not amateurs but are “knowers” who ponder a subject together. In this sense, truth is not objective but a subject for the attention of the entire group, including the teacher. This approach does not relativize all learning but emphasizes the relationships among the knowers. This approach means that teaching and learning are not solitary but relational and communal; the process forms “a community of truth,” as Palmer calls it (p 52). Each person is a teacher just as each person is a learner; the dynamic is a community process. For this process to work, the teacher’s basic task is “to get out of the way sufficiently to allow learners to engage the central topic” (p 53).

Thus, I conceptualized my role in this project as inviting the participants to form “a community of truth” (Palmer’s language) in which I got out of the way sufficiently to allow them to reflect theologically. I did not say to them, “Here is something you need to know in order to be a good pastoral caregiver.” Saying that would have perpetuated the objectivist myth of knowing. Instead, I provided them with a model for doing theological reflection and also with brief readings to stimulate and focus their reflections. These provisions were part of my duties as a facilitator. As a group, they pondered the readings and their pastoral experiences with the

reflection model as a guide. The outcomes of their theological reflection, however, emerged from their own work and discussions.

Mary Hess's comment (2008) expresses my own outlook: ". . . I realize that no matter what I do, what is learned isn't up to me. The energy and the passion of curiosity, the fears and the threat of 'not knowing,' any catalyst for learning that emerges in a classroom—these are gifts of a power greater than I. . . ." (in Hess & Brookfield, p 50). Keeping Hess' use of the term, "catalyst," I believe two other basic catalysts emerged in the five sessions and thus functioned as "greater than I" gifts to the participants. One catalyst was the rich collection of experience each of them brought, both as persons of faith and as pastoral caregivers. The other catalyst was the atmosphere of community which the group developed and shared during each session.

Matthew Skinner's essay (2008) on building trust and trustworthiness in a classroom helped me clarify my role as a facilitator. Skinner describes three dimensions of gaining students' trust: professional trustworthiness, personal trustworthiness, and spiritual trustworthiness. Professional trustworthiness involves exhibiting competence with the subject matter, with moving the course "from one stage to the next," and so forth. I was responsible for teaching them a model for theological reflection and for leading a group process. Personal trustworthiness requires behavior that "invites and encourages" participants, that "tends to the interpersonal dynamics of learning" (p 101). This kind of behavior takes steps to avoid ridicule and intimidation and to minimize embarrassment. The goal is "a generative and humane learning environment" (p 102). One fosters spiritual trustworthiness through behavior that indicates the teacher's willingness to explore her/his faith and to help students explore "what their studies suggest about God" (p 103). Professional trustworthiness reflects a commitment to

the subject matter; personal trustworthiness demonstrates a commitment to the students; spiritual trustworthiness demonstrates a commitment to one's faith.

Again, even though Skinner writes in the context of a seminary classroom, his comments on teacher behavior instruct me in my role as a facilitator for lay persons in a parish setting. I can build trust through intentional behavior. To foster professional trust, I prepare and organize the materials and structure of each session and present the theological reflection model accurately and clearly. To foster personal trust, I tend to the interpersonal dynamics, invite and encourage participation, discourage/avoid intimidation and ridicule, and minimize embarrassment. To foster spiritual trust, I help the participants explore what their reflections suggest about God, and, because they are engaged in theological reflection, what their reflections suggest about other aspects of faith and about their pastoral identity and pastoral practice. I also exhibit appropriate transparency about my own awareness of faith, which could include my own doubt, curiosity, and questioning. Thus, Skinner's discussion of building trust in a seminary classroom provides me with specific guidelines that enhance my role as a facilitator of theological reflection for lay pastoral caregivers in a parish setting.

In sum, then, each of these four ideas contributed to my perception of myself as facilitator and the responsibilities inherent in facilitating the project. Graham et al. showed me that Christian ministry is fundamentally facilitation, Palmer showed me an egalitarian model for teaching and learning, Hess pointed me to classroom catalysts as gifts, and Skinner detailed for me professional, personal and spiritual trustworthiness. In the next section, I give a brief summary of the five sessions themselves.

The Five Sessions and the Data²

In order to accomplish the goal of the project, I invited lay members of a local Episcopal parish who provide pastoral care to participate. I sent out a recruitment letter to which nine of these lay caregivers responded, volunteering for the project. We met five successive evenings for 90 minutes at the parish facilities. At the first session, I provided them with a “Consent to Participate in Research” form, which explained the purpose of the research, their involvement in the study, its voluntary nature, their right to stop participating with no penalty, the potential risks and my efforts to minimize those, how I will protect their confidentiality, and the potential benefits of their participation. Each of them signed and dated an Informed Consent Form, which includes much of the information in the Consent to Participate in Research form; I signed and dated each participant’s form and provided a copy of it to each of them.

The five sessions were designed for facilitating theological reflection with the nine lay pastoral caregivers and for gathering data to explore the possible influences of that reflection on the participants. These goals—facilitating theological reflection and gathering data—drew me to conceptualize sessions that encouraged a maximum of involvement from the participants with minimal guidance from me. The structure of the sessions, therefore, provided for a preponderance of group discussions, both in small groups and full group. My desire to maximize the participants’ time for discussion drove me to function as time-efficiently as possible in my role as facilitator. Instead of completing reading assignments during the sessions, I handed out the reading at the end of the prior session and asked the participants to complete the reading during the coming week and bring it to the next session for discussion.

² The Appendix includes copies of the recruitment letter, the consent to participate in research form, the informed consent document, the assessment tools, a description of the five sessions, and the handouts used in all sessions.

The goals for each session display my focus on group discussion. The first session had four goals: one, to create a climate in which trust, respect, and curiosity can emerge as interpersonal foundations for the five sessions; two, to administer and collect the two pre-sessions' data-gathering tools; three, to introduce the process of theological reflection; and four, to prepare the participants for the next session by giving them a short reading as homework. The goals and formats for sessions two, three, and four were similar to one another. The goals were: one, to respond to participants' feedback to clarify facilitator guidance and to enhance group processes (at the start of sessions three and four only); two, to reflect theologically through a reading and a case study; and three, to give out an assignment for the next week. In a similar pattern, the basic format for sessions two through four was the same: the group responded to the assigned reading and then reflected theologically on a case study. The fifth and final sessions had five goals: one, to reflect theologically on a case study; two, to explore pastoral care practices; three, to consolidate their learning experiences from the entire project; four, to complete and turn in survey and questionnaire for data-gathering; five, to provide for a sense of closure and affirmation for their pastoral caregiving.

In order to determine possible influences of the theological reflection on the participants, I gathered qualitative and quantitative responses to a series of questions. The qualitative data was gathered through responses to a set of open-ended questions answered in writing at the beginning of the project and answered orally through a one-on-one interview with me after the conclusion of the five sessions. One open-ended question was added in the interview, a question asking explicitly how the experience of the five sessions might have influenced the participants' sense of pastoral identity and acts of care. Other qualitative data was gathered in written responses to three other brief handouts. The quantitative data was gathered through a one-page

survey consisting of Likert-scaled statements filled out by each participant both at the beginning and the conclusion of the five sessions. I audio-recorded and transcribed the one-to-one interviews. This gathering of data enabled me to pay attention to elements important to my larger, pastoral theological method.

My Pastoral Theological Method

Marshall (2004) asserts that all methods in pastoral theology, care, and counseling involve attention to five common elements: one, the explicit or implicit role of theology; two, the relationship with fields and disciplines outside of religion and theology; three, the awareness of the impact of communities and context; four, the integration of theory and praxis; and, five, the role of experience in constructing theological claims. I now briefly describe how my method for this project attends to each of these five elements.

The Role of Theology

Theology plays a major role in this project in at least three ways. First, theology is explicit in this project, because the major action in the project is theological reflection. The model used to guide the participants' reflection is drawn from Abigail Johnson (2003) and includes an "Analyzing" movement, in which theology, along with other "frameworks" (such as sociology, history, and psychology) is used to explore a particular moment that's raising issues or questions (p 75). The model is supported and enhanced by a series of theological questions that help focus one's reflection. This series asks questions to identify pastoral themes that could be considered fairly standard themes for assessing any person's spiritual/religious condition (pp 80-81).

Second, because the focus of this project is overtly theological, I chose a topic for theological reflection that includes an overtly theological aspect. The topic is forgiveness, which in the last two decades has received growing attention academically and culturally.

Conversations about forgiveness occur in several arenas of current Western culture—the personal and interpersonal, the national and international, churches and other religious bodies.

In my personal arena, forgiveness often emerges as an interest and a possibility in several contexts: faith communities, family relationships, work and office settings, substance abuse treatment, and long-term health care challenges. This prevalence of public discourse about forgiveness from many sources commended the topic to me.

Thus, forgiveness is addressed theologically. This theological focus is important, because Western culture tends to understand forgiveness processes from a predominantly psychological stance, which leads to a focus on the pragmatic and personal therapeutic benefits of forgiveness. The participants' theological reflection is fueled by reading forgiveness material (for sessions two, three, and four) that is overtly theological. The ministry of pastoral caregiving is partially funded by theology, both in terms of the theology of the faith community, which recruits, trains, and supports caregivers, and in terms of the individual theology—implicit and explicit--of the caregiver herself.

Third, I believe that theology functions both explicitly and implicitly with the participants as they reflect theologically in the context of considering care practices. As I will claim in chapter three, the participants seemed to use theology implicitly more than explicitly; I perceived that many of their comments contained theological assumptions, such as beliefs about God, humankind, care, etc. These beliefs were embedded in their comments. With my

encouragement and guidance, they were able to recognize many of these assumptions and begin to express them clearly as the theological underpinnings for related ideas and for care practices.

Disciplines Outside Theology

My method includes disciplines outside of theology by drawing on theories of adult learning. These theories provided me with ways to perceive and thus to understand the dynamics of the participants' experiences as a group; they were lenses for viewing adults in learning contexts. As lenses, they functioned in two ways. First, they informed the development of my project, and second, the theories helped me learn from the participants' interactions; that is, the theories served as ways to see what was and was not happening with the participants as individuals and as a group. As I will detail in chapter three, the theories allowed to perceive important themes, particularly the vital importance of personal experience as a major crucible for theological reflection.

Specifically, I embraced concepts from three major learning theories' attempts to understand the dynamics of adult learning. Each of the three theories contributed an important aspect to my expectations about adult learning experiences. From constructivist learning theory, I drew upon the idea that persons make their own meanings from their experiences, in contrast to being taught a discrete set of facts and/or knowledge. From social learning theory, I drew upon the idea that persons observe others and learn from them, in contrast to learning only from the instructor, facilitator, or from media (books, video, etc.). From humanistic learning theory, I drew upon the idea that experiences of learning, especially for adults, function as contexts for making meaning about some perceived aspect of their life, and that such meaning-making can enhance a person's potential.

My use of disciplines outside of theology extends also to specific classroom techniques that guided some of the group's interactions. Some of the various pedagogical methods described in the Hess and Brookfield text informed my developing of two handouts for the participants. From the book's treatment of discussion guidelines (three types of comments, three acts of good listening, and Palmer's "community of truth") I prepared a handout for the group. Then I adapted Brookfield's Critical Incident Questionnaire and used it twice, in order to gather participant feedback to confirm and/or improve my facilitation of the sessions. The Appendix includes samples of these handouts.

Communities & Context

My method displays awareness of the impact of communities by claiming that an important part of a person's motivation to provide pastoral care emerges from that person's identity with a faith community. This community impacts each caregiver in at least two ways. One way is the pervasive context/ethos of care and support—taking care of each other--that inheres to religious communities, funded by their theologies of grace and love. In this context/ethos, pastoral caregiving, much of it informal, is common practice, offered in multiple ways through a brief conversation after Sunday worship, a phone call, mailing a card of encouragement, sharing coffee and/or a meal, helping with a frustrating task, and so forth. A second way the community impacts each caregiver is formalized: calling, training, encouraging, and resourcing persons who agree and/or choose to provide pastoral care. In this context/ethos, caregivers are not "Lone Rangers" who launch out on their own but are persons who are supervised and supported by their faith community and clergy.

My method also attends to matters of context. The setting for this project unfortunately does not involve diversity in ethnicity, sexual orientation, and socio-economic status. None of these important realities was present, either explicitly or implicitly, in the discussions or in the participants themselves. In such a setting, context can be assumed; participants can unconsciously prefer and expect “everyone to be like me.” This lack of diversity often inadvertently fosters an attitude of preferred homogeneity that does not easily accept difference. In spite of this broad limitation, I did perceive two matters of context.

One matter of context for the caregivers to recognize is the population they serve: home-bound persons, either in private residences or in nursing care facilities. Because of their physical limitations, provoked by age and/or illness/injury, these persons experience limited access to the spiritual and/or religious resources which they formerly enjoyed and in which they participated for years before age and infirmity limited them. At a time when issues of elder care and elder abuse stir up outcry and call for justice, this lay ministry is predicated on the commitment that this faith community does not neglect its “handicapped” membership. Each of these caregivers visits a number of such members on a regular basis, providing at least a small form of continuity of contact with their home parish.

The other matter of context for these pastoral caregivers is the expectation to offer Communion to the persons they visit. This offer emerges from the influential liturgical reform in Catholic and Anglican churches after the Second World War. A major feature of this reform for Anglican churches was the return to celebrating Holy Communion each week. As a result, an essential part of the lay pastoral ministry for this Episcopal parish is the offering of Communion to each person receiving care. This weekly practice is not one that is shared by some other church denominations, which means that persons receiving visits from lay ministers in those

denominations do not expect to be offered Communion each week. My own experience, as someone joining the Episcopal Church recently after decades of affiliation in a different denomination, exemplifies this lack of expectation. By contrast, these lay pastoral caregivers, as members of this Episcopal faith community, are trained and expected to offer Communion and to be prepared to administer it to those who accept.

Integration of Theory & Praxis³

This project illustrates the importance of integrating theory and praxis or “practice,” the word I find helpful in this context. Marshall’s concern for “overcoming the split between theory and practice” (2004, p 142) guided the development and implementation of this project. Practice and theory mutually relate to and inform each other. Providing pastoral care is an action or actions (praxis), but it is action that emerges out of one’s conscious and unconscious ponderings and related cognitive processes, which identify ideas, beliefs, and values (theory) that fund one’s practices.

Pastoral counselor Sandra Brown’s essay (2005) on the functions of theory in pastoral care and counseling offers one way of understanding how theory and praxis interrelate. Brown states that caregivers employ their theory in four functions which operate simultaneously. The third and fourth functions—praxis and comprehensive understanding-- are especially helpful in illuminating this integration. In the praxis function (which I would call “practice”), the caregiver decides how to respond (practice) to the care seeker on the basis on her/his “theological, psychological, and systemic understanding [theory] of human need and deliverance” (p 1273).

³ I understand “praxis” in this context to connote meanings commonly attributed to “practice.” Marshall writes of the importance of “overcoming the spilt between practice and theory” (2004, p 142). Though “praxis” and “practice” are sometimes used interchangeably, “praxis” is also used to denote the conversation between practice and theory. That is, “praxis” involves reflecting on both practice and theory.

Furthermore, the fourth function, comprehensive understanding, synthesizes the other three functions into “a meaningful whole,” a theology (theory) that both informs one’s caregiving (practice) and is impacted by that caregiving. Thus, theory and practice are recursively integrated.

This project was conducted neither as a predominantly theoretical exercise nor as a non-critical reaction to perceived needs. Neither theory nor practice dominated. As noted above, the project seeks to exemplify “overcoming the split between practice and theory” (Marshall, 2004, p 142). The process of theological reflection in this project explicitly engaged the participants in integrating theory and practice, as they analyzed situations from their own perspectives and theology/interpretation (however consciously and unconsciously) and as they developed and/or chose care practices, both in studying case scenarios and in providing actual care.

The integration of theory and praxis in this project can also be noticed in terms of the focus of their theological reflection. The main goal was to discover how a change in one’s practices of caregiving (praxis), and vice versa. Participants explored their theological views of forgiveness, which is theory (theology), but this exploration occurred in the context of pastoral care, which is an enacted process, a practice. Thus, participants explored theory/theology and practice circularly, in terms of their mutual influences on each other. How did their theological views of forgiveness (theory) influence their actual behavior as a caregiver (practice), and how did their experiences of addressing a forgiveness process (practice) influence their reflections on what forgiveness might mean theologically (theory)? The data-gathering tools were designed to help identify possible effects of this dynamic mutual conversation between practices and theologies (theories) of forgiveness.

Experience in Theological Claims

Adult learning theories tend to agree that the experiences of adults are essential to their learning process. Developmentally, persons need discrete education and training when they are young, but as they age, their basic fund of knowledge and skills increases, allowing them to function effectively in the “adult world.” The importance of their experiences, then, increases, as their basic fund of knowledge and skills reaches adequate levels. This educational shift away from teaching/training to experience is a process, a gradual development.

From the perspective of social location, the participants in this project do not come from under-represented populations, with the exception of gender: five of the nine were female. All had Caucasian ethnic heritage, none had international heritage, and all have heterosexual partnerships or divorces. Thus, this group’s propensity to “think outside the box” in terms of Christian traditions was limited by their social location. Nonetheless, as I highlight in the assessment section of this project, the experiences of these participants contributed greatly to their theological reflections and thus to the pastoral identity and pastoral practices. Over and over, as I will discuss in detail later, they refer to their own experiences as essential to shaping their caregiving ministries.

My own experiences of pastoral leadership in various contexts during the past 30 years, in three local parish settings and two federal institutional settings, have provided me with plenty of “fodder” for reflecting on the various meanings of pastoral ministry. For this project, ongoing reflection about my experiences has fomented ideas and questions about lay ministry, about how adults learn, and about the nature and practice(s) of pastoral care.

The role of experience in constructing theological claims involves more than noticing my own pastoral experiences; it also involves hearing the many voices of diversity and particularity. I need to exercise a hermeneutic of suspicion about my own social location. As a middle-class heterosexual married male of Northern European heritage, I am not part of an under-represented group; I live squarely within the dominant power structure. Because of this social location, I must pay close and continuous attention to the voices of under-represented groups, not assuming that anything about my experience will and does replicate itself with under-represented others. I must guard against complacency and reflect critically, widening my awareness through the vital perspectives of the many others from historically oppressed and silenced populations.

This articulation of my pastoral theological method provides a backdrop for the rest of the written project. The next section presents definitions of key terms and the organization of the written project.

Key Definitions and Overview of the Written Project

This written report derives its basic structure from the research question, which is: How does facilitating theological reflection for lay pastoral caregivers contribute to the formation of both their pastoral identities and their caregiving practices? This research question includes six key terms, for which I now provide working definitions. These definitions are not intended to be authoritative or comprehensive; rather, they are the understandings of these terms as they are used in this project.

Facilitation is an activity similar to teaching and could be considered teaching by some. Teaching is understood historically as an activity that imparts, explains, communicates, clarifies,

and demonstrates. Its basic process is transmitting of information and sometimes skill. In contrast, facilitation is an activity that enable, helps, assists, makes possible, and smooths the progress of something. Its basic process is enabling others to learn and/or do something. In newer pedagogical contexts, the line between teaching and facilitation can be blurred.

Theological reflection is a process of pondering the meanings of situations, experiences, and/or ideas in light of one's faith tradition and sociocultural contexts. It is a process rather than a product and occurs continuously as persons reflect both subconsciously and implicitly as well as consciously and explicitly.

Pastoral care is a faith community's multi-faceted actions that "nurture individuals, families, and the community as a whole through normal developmental process and unforeseen crises" (Townsend, 2004, p 111). In the broadest sense, pastoral care can include common faith community activities such as worship, teaching, administration, preaching, and programming. In the context of this project, pastoral care refers to specific acts of care that offer healing, sustenance, guidance, and reconciliation to ill and/or confined persons during the normal developmental process of aging as well as during crises.

Formation is an ongoing process that influences pastoral identity and practice. It involves two foci, one personal and the other interpersonal. The personal one is maintaining and nurturing spiritual awareness, which occurs as one's sense of the divine and faith develop. The interpersonal one is developing relational qualities essential to pastoral work, qualities that express appreciation for peoples of all cultures, races, religions, and ideologies.⁴

⁴ See Hess and Brookfield, p 4. The authors cite a Carnegie Foundation study of seminary classrooms, which reports that "almost no one . . . is truly satisfied with formation language." But the conversation is nonetheless important to continue.

Pastoral identity is a sense of one's pastoral self that emerges from a continuous (formative) process of meaning-making. This process occurs recursively between one's "stabilizing internal core" and one's "external relationships" (Marshall, 1994, p 15); that is, between one's self and one's relationships.

Pastoral practice refers to performing acts of pastoral care. These acts are informed, whether implicitly or explicitly, by one's theological and theoretical understandings, as well as by one's "existential commitment" to offer care.⁵ Practice is related to but distinct from praxis, which involves the practice of ministry but does so critically, noting and assessing the power dynamics in oneself and in others; that is, praxis involves a conversation between theory and practice. The above working definitions cover the six key terms from my research question.

Each chapter of this written project responds to a successive portion of the research question. Chapter two introduces the history and potential of theological reflection and provides texts for lay pastoral caregiving. It surveys the recent emergence of theological reflection as an explicit activity, resulting from church-related trends addressing ministry, liberative theologies, and ministry tasks, as well as a trend in educational theory toward experiential learning. Theological reflection is an ancient activity, though it has often occurred implicitly; recently its explicit practice has grown and challenges many of its practitioners. The chapter then moves to introducing lay pastoral caregivers, a specialized kind of lay minister and the specific focus of this project. First, the chapter offers a sketch of the broader notion of lay ministry in the Anglican tradition, which suffered much neglect in past centuries but recently enjoys a renewed status. From there, the focus narrowed to Anglican pastoral care, providing support from theology, pragmatics, and history. The chapter ends by describing pastoral care and focusing in

⁵ RJ Hunter, "Praxis/Practice (Terminology)," *Dictionary of Pastoral Care & Counseling*, p 937.

on the specific participants of this project in their particular context. The chapter supports my claim that theological reflection performs an essential function in the pastoral formation of persons doing various ministries, of which lay pastoral caregiving is one kind.

Chapter three discusses theological reflection as a process of formation, using ideas from the field of adult learning as lenses for understanding the process. It begins by offering a working description of theological reflection and outlines the model for theological reflection used in the project. Using a model helps participants stay explicit and organized in the reflective task. The chapter then explores the field of adult learning as a source for understanding the participant's experience with theological reflection. In the broadest sense, the field of adult learning focuses on the person's own experiences as the "stuff" of their learning. As we will see, participant comments corroborate this dynamic: they witness to the importance of their own experiences in their formation before the project began, where theological reflection functioned implicitly.

From the broad field of adult learning, I selected three theoretical orientations that provided specific lenses on the participants' experiences. Using the lenses allowed me to perceive effects of both implicit theological reflection and explicit theological reflection. The effects of implicit theological reflection were displayed in the "disorienting dilemma" stories recounted by two of the participants, and the humanist outlook helped describe the growth experienced by two participants, which occurred before the project began. The effects of explicit theological reflection were displayed in many participant comments during the project and the oral interviews. Social learning theory helped me recognize the interactive context of the participants' experience with each other, while constructivist learning theory helped me identify the personal meaning-making in which each participant was involved. Using these two theories

led me to conclude that theological reflection contributed to these caregivers' formation by inviting them to construct individualized meanings within the social context/experience of the project. These perceptions about the effects of implicit and explicit theological reflection support the importance of adult pastoral theological reflection as a formation experience for lay pastoral caregivers.

Chapters four and five respond to the question, How did theological reflection possibly contribute to the caregivers' pastoral identities and their caregiving practices? Chapter four reports on pastoral identity, based on my perceptions of participants' comments. Their comments seem to indicate "before" and "after" features to their pastoral identities. That is, some of their statements point to two aspects of their pastoral identities which were formed at the time the project began. These two aspects are: one, their passion and commitment for pastoral care, and, two, their prizing of relationships in pastoral care. Some of the other comments, from four of the participants, discuss specific influences on their identities as a result of the project, which I note in detail. Thus, the participants' formation before the project seemed somewhat uniform—the passion and commitment and their prizing of relationships—whereas their formation stimulated by theological reflection during the project seemed customized to each person's particular values and self-perceptions at the time.

Chapter five reports on caregiving practices, using two lenses for viewing the participants' many comments. The first lens is the four classic functions of pastoral care from Clebsch and Jaekle—healing, sustaining, guiding, and reconciling. This lens provided a way of recognizing and discussing the various kinds of pastoral care the participants reported providing. The second lens is the psychologist Prochaska's five-stage model of change, which asserts that change involves much more than a specific action. Through the lens of this model, change did

not occur with the participants as specific behaviors; rather, change occurred in terms of the participants contemplating and planning for specific behavior changes.

Chapter six discusses conclusions and implications of the project. It begins with an overview of chapters two through five, highlighting main features and findings from the five sessions. Then it presents several questions the project has evoked in me, questions first about how I conducted this project as well as questions about the potential for similar projects and questions concerning formation and leadership in faith communities. I conclude the chapter by examining my four anticipated contributions to this project, the delineation of which follows in the next paragraph.

I anticipate that this project could contribute to pastoral ministry in at least four ways. First, the project could demonstrate that lay pastoral caregivers can enhance both their pastoral identities and their pastoral caregiving practices. Second, I'd like the project to show that clergy are a natural resource for developing lay leadership through theological reflection, not only reflection on forgiveness but also on any number of other topics. Third, the project implies that caregiving among members of a local faith community can be enhanced through theological reflection, as caregivers' pastoral identity and practices improve. Fourth, the project could have implications for faith communities beyond the local level, as districts, synods, regions, and dioceses explore the potential of theological reflection for their leadership. I will discuss each of these four anticipated contributions in chapter six, the concluding chapter.

CHAPTER TWO: THEOLOGICAL REFLECTION & LAY PASTORAL CARE

Joseph, one of the participants in this project, provides various forms of pastoral care for his local parish. He recalls a major family challenge from his childhood that influenced him in his journey toward lay pastoral caregiving.

Joseph was impressed with his father's response to his polio, contracted at age 36. Initially he was consumed with anger: "My father, I guess, left alone could have been a very bitter or angry man . . . and he was angry. . . ." Eventually, though, he transformed his outlook on his disease into acceptance. Joseph remembers, "It took a period of years for him to get back where he needed to be, and he certainly was there at the time of his death: 'I don't fear death.' This memory seems strong for Joseph: "I've always thought of him saying that. I hope that when that time comes for me, I'll be able to say the same thing."

The family's parish priest also impressed Joseph by visiting his paralyzed father at home each week: "They brought communion to his house for many many years, 'til they finally built a ramp at the church, so he could get in and out." The priest's personalized ministry to his father has had a long-lasting effect on Joseph: "The fact that my dad was ministered to so much as an invalid—this makes me want to try to participate more and pay back, for lack of a better word."

I believe that Joseph's ponderings about his father and their priest function as a form of implicit theological reflection. This reflection influenced him in his eventual decision to serve as a lay pastoral caregiver. In a way, this chapter is an extended commentary on Joseph's ponderings about his father and his priest—how those ponderings influenced him and continue to influence him in his own caregiving.

Theological reflection is central to pastoral formation. That is, theological reflection is a necessary and continuous activity in the formation—the personal development--of persons who provide various kinds of ministries. Whether a person is laity or clergy, formally educated or not, the need is the same: formation is critical to ministry, and theological reflection provides one process for formation. The kind of reflective activity stimulated by theological reflection contributes significantly to this pastoral formation. This dynamic makes theological reflection “a powerful resource for ministers” (Killen & deBeer, 1994, p 111).

This chapter discusses the history and potential of theological reflection and provides contexts for lay pastoral caregiving. First, the chapter offers a sketch of the recent growth of theological reflection. It then provides a context for theological reflection in this project by discussing the history of lay ministry in the Anglican tradition, which suffered much neglect in past centuries but recently enjoys a renewed status. From there, the focus narrowed to Anglican pastoral care, providing support from theology, pragmatics, and history. The chapter ends by describing pastoral care and focusing in on the specific participants of this project in their particular context. The chapter supports my claim that theological reflection performs an essential function in the pastoral formation of persons doing various ministries, of which lay pastoral caregiving is one kind.

Theological Reflection: Emergence and Challenges

Recent Emergence

In the past 20 years or so, the importance of theological reflection has increased significantly. This increase results from major shifts in the nature and function of pastoral theology and then, by extension, of Christian ministry. Graham, Walton, and Ward state (2005)

that pastoral theology is increasingly being seen as more than an “applied theology.” Its need to generate the “stuff” of theology, and its recognition for doing so, has grown in influence and recognition. This shift signals a major change in the identity of pastoral theology and its tasks, thus affecting also the nature and status of theological reflection. Whereas pastoral theology has historically been viewed as an “applied” field, “supplying practical training for the ordained ministry”, the recent shift (based on epistemology) gives pastoral theology in general a new focus “as critical reflection on faithful practice in a variety of settings” (p 2).

Graham et al.(2005) identify at least four major trends contributing to this shift in pastoral theology’s role. One of them is the mid-20th century’s “reappraisal of the status and role of the laity” (p 3). The idea of the priesthood of all believers found new roots among both Roman Catholics and many Protestant groups. This view of priesthood evoked a change in understanding the nature of ministry, which moved away from the clerical (and authoritarian) model to include all believers, whose baptism is seen as their own “ordination” to ministry. Theological education then broadened, too, to “foster theological literacy among the whole people of God” (p 3). This trend provides the legitimacy for the lay participants in this project to foster their own theological education in support of their ministries.

A second major trend in the recent emergence of theological reflection which Graham et al. identify is the various liberation theologies, which focus on human experience and oppressed populations. These theologies both politicized the churches to address social injustice and democratized theology to include “the underside of history’ whose voices and perspectives were formerly neglected” (p 3). Inspired by Paulo Freire’s educational model, theology becomes inductive and engages theory with practice. This trend provides a specific invitation for the lay

participants in my project—and for myself, as well—to hear from the neglected populations in the care facilities they visit.

A third major trend Graham et al. identify is the move away from teaching ministry skills toward methods, influenced and represented by Donald Schon's work on professional identity, that shape "reflective practitioners." Critiquing professions as eroding public trust through their abuse of power and inadequate knowledge, Schon called on professionals to "be proactive learners and risk-takers," replacing rationality and precision with the new expertise that "is reflexive, problem-based, intuitive and synthetic" (p 4). This trend invites me to shed the skill-laden role of traditional clergy and practice this new expertise of facilitation.

The fourth trend in the recent emergence of theological reflection is educational theory, exemplified by David Kolb's model of experiential learning. Kolb starts not with theory but with experience then reflects on those experiences, making education a four-stage process: experience, reflection, conceptualization, and experimentation. This model forms a cyclical process of action, reflection, and revised action. This trend invites me to focus not on theory but on the participants' experience as the basic source of theological reflection.

To sum up, these four major trends have stimulated a shift in the role of theology, away from its traditional function of generating abstractions toward a new focus "as critical reflection on faithful practice in a variety of settings" (Graham, et al. (2005), p 2). This shift means, the authors continue, that Christian ministry can now be viewed as less of an "application of expertise" and more as "facilitating the vocation of all Christians" through theological reflection (p 5). That is, clergy not only preach, teach, baptize, lead worship, and offer pastoral care; they also provide various opportunities for their laity to reflect theologically as part of their own

ministry formation and practice. Clergy help facilitate the vocation of all the Christians of their faith communities.

Theological Reflection: Ancient, Implicit, and Challenging

In spite of the growing literature about theological reflection in the past 20 years, it is not necessarily a new method or development within the study and practice of ministry. Graham et al. (2005) contend, in fact, that theological reflection “is not a novel or exceptional activity” but has been functioning “since the very beginning” (p 1). They assemble a wide array of examples, spanning many centuries, to support this contention. For each example, the authors seek to demonstrate the dynamic process of theological reflection that occurs.

Part of the growth of theological reflection in recent years might be due to an increasing awareness that it has been occurring all along; that is, the increase in literature indicates the increase in making explicit what has heretofore been implicit. For example, pastoral theologian John Patton (1995) writes, “Consultation within a community of faith can make that implicit connection [between a “meaning-full” event and a person’s faith] explicit” (p 21). The simple act of deriving meaning from an event, in fact, simultaneously connects that event to one’s faith, Patton asserts, in spite of the implicit nature of that connection. As CPE supervisor Abigail Johnson (2003) contends, one of the outcomes of theological reflection is an increased “ability to hear implicit theology in events and conversations” (p 71). I will note later that the participants in this project expressed surprise but also pleasure when they recognized that they were already “theologizing,” already thinking theologically about life, even though they were not aware of doing so. Our discussions helped them recognize their theological reflection, to move it from implicit to explicit.

The presence of implicit theological reflection, however, does not mean that the process of theological reflection is easy and desirable for all persons. Theological reflection has its challenges. A British survey, for instance, revealed that many persons preparing for ordination report feeling alienated and mystified by the process. Nearly 20 years earlier, in a text on practical theology, Mudge and Poling (1987) asserted that theological reflection programs “were often ill-resourced and poorly-designed” (in Graham et al., p 6). British ordinands in a 2003 study indicated that such paucity still exists, rooted in the myth that theological reflection is a natural process (Graham et al., p 6).

Patton writes (1995) that laity often think that theological reflection is time-consuming and the job of clergy, whereas clergy often think that it’s not important, too difficult, and the job of theologians. Some experts (CPE supervisors) claim that it’s too easy and that the meaning of events is obvious (pp 12-13). Similarly, Johnson reports that seminary students doing field education experience similar confusion and resistance. Her work with seminary students doing field education convinces her that theological students, though studying theology academically, nonetheless experience great difficulty in reflecting on life and ministry theologically. Some students want certainty so are afraid of the process. Others see it mainly as a course requirement. Some students find it stimulating but also difficult to maintain the discipline it requires (Johnson, 2003, p 71). Thus, the value of theological reflection is a challenge to “sell” to persons in most major roles among faith communities: clergy, laity, theology students, and supervisors.

Graham et al. (2005) contend that there are three main problems with the current state of theological reflection (p 7). One problem is that those who engage in theological reflection are uncertain about how to use the Bible and Christian traditions. Another problem is that theological reflection often does a better job at social analyses than at theological analyses,

because ministry is often divorced from theological disciplines. A third problem is an attitude: theological reflection concedes to trendy student-centered theories instead of connecting to classic ways of theologizing.

These problems should be seen not as a death sentence for theological reflection--identifying and understanding these problems allows one to address these specific issues, creating a process which can only strengthen theological reflection's credibility and usefulness. Thus, in spite of these challenges, the potential of theological reflection for lay pastoral caregivers and its usefulness, when conducted well, in pastoral formation make it overwhelmingly worth the efforts.

Theological reflection is not a product but a process that explores links between human problems and divine horizons. It invites both laity and clergy to ask how theory relates to practice: "relating the resources of faith to the issues of life" (Graham et al. 2005, p 6). The participants in this project worked explicitly at relating the resources of faith to the issues of life. By pondering and discussing the various case studies, they faced issues of life—human problems--that are realistic and common. By analyzing and interpreting these issues with the help of a model of theological reflection, they related resources of faith—divine horizons--to those issues. They engaged explicitly in a process of theological reflection.

To sum up, then, the importance of theological reflection has increased significantly in the last score of years, as a result of shifts in the nature and function of pastoral theology and of Christian ministry. In the past, pastoral theology (along with practical theology) was viewed as an applied field, supplying practical training for the ordained ministry. Today, however, pastoral theology focuses on "critical reflection on faithful practice in a variety of settings" (Graham et al.

2005, p 2). This “critical reflection” is carried out through the ancient practice of theological reflection. This “faithful practice” involves a broadened view of Christian ministry in which ordained clergy help facilitate the ministries of laity—at least partly through engaging them in theological reflection.

The participants in the project function in this new broadened context. Each of them is a lay member of a local faith community, and each of them provides pastoral care. This project explores their pastoral formation in light of their experience with theological reflection. As we shall see later, much of their formation prior to this project seemed to involve, in Patton’s language, implicit theological reflection. We shall also note that their experiences of theological reflection in the five sessions of the project were explicit ones and seemed to evoke further formation for their continued ministry of pastoral care.

Anglican Lay Ministry

Now that this chapter has introduced theological reflection, it moves to introducing lay pastoral caregivers, a specialized kind of lay minister and the specific focus of this project. First, the chapter offers a sketch of the broader notion of lay ministry in the Anglican tradition, which suffered much neglect in past centuries but in recent decades enjoys a renewed status. From there, I narrow the focus to Anglican pastoral care, providing contexts from theology, pragmatics, and history. The chapter ends by describing pastoral care and focusing in on the specific participants of this project in their particular context.

Historical Context: Neglected and Recent

In 1985, Episcopal theologian James Griffiss observed that, “the ministry of lay people is a dimension of pastoral care which is very new to the Episcopal Church” (1985, p 4). This

perception is a predictable one in light of the high view of sacraments and thus of ordination in the Anglican Communion, of which the Episcopal Church is a part. As Anglican theologian John MacQuarrie (1977) comments, the long tradition of professional ministry unfortunately minimized and even obscured “the universal and quite fundamental ministry of all Christians” (p 421).

Major documents of The Church of England, from its formative period onward, display a neglect of lay ministry. The first such document is The Thirty-Nine Articles, published in several editions during the 16th century. These articles were not intended to function as a new creed or even as an exposition of a creed; they were an attempt to clarify the Church of England’s positions on various points which current controversies had surfaced. Clergy were required to subscribe to them. None of the articles addressed lay ministry, though the opportunity could have been recognized, in light of the differing views on ministry and ordination expressed by Anabaptists.

The Books of the Homilies were produced as sermonic support for the positions represented in the Articles and were ordered to be procured for every parish church (Moorman, 1980, p 181). They were especially intended for unschooled and/or uncooperative clergy. Originally produced in 1542, a second edition was issued about twenty years later, covering basic subjects important in that day, such as salvation, faith, good works, love and charity, obedience, strife, and adultery. The Books served “as a repository of Anglican doctrine” and bishops often asked about their use. These Books also neglected lay ministry.

Moving ahead chronologically, The Protestant Episcopal Church of the USA, still under the influence of clericalism in the early nineteenth century, also neglected lay ministry. In 1801,

the Church issued its first independent doctrinal statement, soon after achieving political (and thus some ecclesiastical) freedom from England. Like its theological forbears in the Anglican Communion, these “Articles of Religion” address traditional Christian topics, none of which included lay ministry.

Anglican teachers of the 20th century also neglected the ministry of laity. For example, a commentary on the Thirty-Nine Articles (1919) provides theological and historical background on their significance. The author notes that the two articles addressing the ministry of the church reflect controversies with Anabaptists and the papacy, and he does not broaden the discussion of ministry beyond the themes of these two articles, thus making no comment on “the three distinct orders of ordained ministry” or on lay ministry.

Ordained ministry is the focus of a teaching textbook a generation later, which states that “ordination is the admission to the official ministry of the visible Church” (Moss, 1957, p 382). The author later describes the “official ministry” as involving “the three orders of bishops, priests, and deacons,” which he contends have functioned since the early second century (p 385). No unofficial ministries, to include the possibility for lay ministry, are mentioned.

Lay Ministry: Implicit Support

This focus on the importance of ordained clergy could seem ironic in light of the 16th century Reformation’s emphasis on the priesthood of all believers. One of the hallmarks of the Reformation of the 16th century was the assertion that all baptized persons were called to a vocation; these vocations differed, but there was “no spiritual hierarchy” (Thompsett, 1998, p 279). Under Tudor monarchs, the church created a social vision of a nation, a vision toward

which every person's moral and faith-fueled efforts should contribute (Thompsett, p 280). These developments supported lay ministry implicitly.

Lay ministry was also supported implicitly through the increased literacy resulting from the invention of the printing press. Instead of being held captive by a literate clergy controlled by a papacy, the new literate public had access to the Bible and thus to opportunities to study, ponder, critique, and debate church teachings. A further result of literacy, encouraged by the Reformation emphasis on "edification," was the dramatic rise of schools and religious education. Within a century, English society boasted a newly confident class of lay persons, fairly well read and willing to debate, even with clergy, about the meaning and future of the church (Thompsett, p 282).

Lay ministry has been implicitly encouraged by Anglican theology from the time of Cranmer onward. The very name, Book of Common Prayer, reflected the common participation of the people in worship. Cranmer's prayer after Communion includes a petition "that we many continue in that holy fellowship, and do all such good works as thou hast prepared for us to walk in," good works signaling a person's lay ministry. The classic Anglican principle, *Lex orandi lex credendi* (the law of praying is the law of believing), supports the faithful in their own efforts toward "social responsiveness, whether in the Tudor Commonwealth or the post-industrial world with its multitude of diverse cultures and races" (Thompsett, p 287).

Lay persons have been regularly active (not episodically) in the church's mission. On the home front, Anglican laity have been prominent in educational efforts: Sunday School, seminaries, grammar schools, and adult education (Thompsett, p 289). Educational efforts have also been developed for laity themselves for theological and pastoral purposes: diocesan lay

training schools, professional theological degrees for laity, theological education by extension, and especially Education for Ministry, a four-year course of part-time study that has expanded into 12 other countries. Furthermore, there has been a great increase in spiritual resources for nurturing persons for their everyday living, following a tradition of lay spiritual writers, such as Annie Dillard, Evelyn Underhill, and Julian of Norwich (Thompsett, pp 289-90).

The experience of Paul, one of the project's participants, exemplifies active lay ministry. Years ago, he lived in a somewhat isolated area with several small Episcopal missions scattered amidst the region. He first participated in Sunday worship as a lay reader of the morning's Scripture lessons. Later on, "I would hold the whole service, without a priest being involved, because at the time we were sharing priests with other missions." In recent years, he moved to an urban area, where he serves on the vestry, participates in a social service group, and often ushers during worship. He became a pastoral caregiver when invited by a retired priest's wife to consider the ministry. His journey as a lay minister includes a variety of work, all fueled by his willingness to participate.

Lay Ministry Reclaimed

Current interest in lay ministry can be traced to multiple developments—theologically, liturgically, and culturally--beginning after the Second World War. The mood and the thinking of that new wave of interest in lay ministry is captured in philosopher Elton Trueblood's early book (1952). Trueblood claimed that "the rising tide of interest in lay religion" (p 9) was emerging out of a backdrop of "dullness and decay" in faith, a faith the world needs (p 25). He called on the church to reach out to the world--economically, politically, culturally, and domestically, a task that calls for "a new order" (p 27). This challenge was so great that it called

for “a radical change” (p 28), and that change was lay religion. Trueblood compared the era following the Second World War with the 16th century Reformation. Whereas the Reformation was fueled by opening the Bible to the ordinary person, the present challenge can be met by “opening the ministry of the ordinary Christian” (p 32). As the early church achieved amazing growth “against fearful odds,” so today’s laity represent that “secret” for growth, vibrancy, and relevance.

Furthermore, lay persons in ministry have some advantages over clergy. From a purely practical standpoint, they have access to all kinds of people in many different work and neighborhood settings. Additionally, Trueblood perceived at least three other advantages: one, they avoid the clergy stigma of being patronized and minimized—people often listen and are impressed; two, they are “often closer to common life,” in workplaces and neighborhoods (p 41); and, three, lay persons often bring “a certain freshness” to tackling seemingly impossible tasks, not being adversely affected by clerical experience or bias (p 42).

Dorothy, one of the project’s participants, demonstrates this “certain freshness and closeness to “common life” as she describes her lay ministry. She says, “I see my role as a lay pastor in doing whatever I can do as a fellow Christian, a disciple of Christ, to help someone, whether that’s with emotional and relational issues or whether it’s taking eucharist; whether it’s ministering to them through our Good Samaritan program. . . . Gosh, whatever it would take . . . taking them to the doctor, taking food to the house when they’re not able to prepare something.” When I ask her if she sees herself as an extension of the clergy, she replies, “yeah, I guess I do; help in any way I can. It’s not just that I decided to do that; it’s, how can we help? Who has a need? How can we meet it?”

The preceding survey provides an historical context for Anglican lay ministry. It illustrates the claim that lay ministry has been neglected but not completely abandoned. From the beginning of the self-identified Church of England, lay ministry has been encouraged, though its full flowering occurred in the last few decades. Let us now turn to a description of its theological context offered by Anglican theologians.

Theological Context: Described and Affirmed

According to Anglican theologian Alan Richardson (1958), lay ministry is rooted in a theology of the priesthood, a priesthood theology that is a corporate, not an individual, reality. Using the imagery from 1 Peter 2:9, Richardson asserts that priesthood involves the entire Christian community, not “any priestly order or caste” (p 301). All church members are priests and thus offer themselves collectively each time they worship. No surprise, then, that Richardson considers baptism as “the ordination of a new member of the royal priesthood” (p 301) and the purpose is evangelism (again, from 1 Peter 2:9): “. . . to proclaim the mighty acts of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light.” This priesthood, in the New Testament sense, does not mean that a lay person is one who has no ministerial responsibility, one who has handed over his functions of evangelism and pastoral care to certain professional Christians who are paid to perform them” (p 301). All laity “are priests and ministers of the Church” (p 302).

Richardson further contends that the phrase, “priesthood of all believers,” means more than the Reformation focus on “direct access to God” (p 302) with no need for a human intermediary. The New Testament’s use of this notion of priesthood, which is so germane to understanding lay ministry, more broadly means responsibility to reach out to the world in at

least three interlocking ways: to be a divinely appointed “priest-nation” to the world (“to all that is not-Church”); to respond to the world’s concerns; and to offer oneself individually to others (p 302).

Furthermore, this priesthood ministry functions as an extension of the initial and continuous ministry of Christ, who offered himself, as the writer of the Hebrews letter states. Jesus conceived of his ministry as one of service (“the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve,” Mark 10:45). The church is Christ’s body and thus “continues his apostolic and priestly ministry to the world” (Richardson, p 303). MacQuarrie (1977) agrees, writing that service was the mission of Christ, as the New Testament identified it, linking Christ with the servant described in deuteron-Isaiah. The Church continues the work of Christ, and does so by serving. “All Christian ministry, whether we are thinking of the ministry of the whole people or of the ministry of those ordained to special offices is a participation in the ministry of Christ” (p 420; my emphasis).

This focus on Christ as servant and church as servant led to the emphasis on one’s baptism as also one’s ordination into the church’s ministry. There are no ‘lay’ members of the Church who are without a ministry in it; the Church is a ministerial priesthood of the laity or people of God.” The fact that a special order of deacons developed later does not blur the truth that all church members and the entire church community are called to involve themselves in Christ’s ministry. Richardson states (1958), “the whole passage I Cor. 12.4-30 [305] makes it very clear that diakonia is not a function merely of certain ‘orders’ in the Church, but that every layman [*sic*] has his part in the total ministry of the body of Christ” (pp 304-05).

Other theologians agree. As MacQuarrie writes (1977), “All Christian ministry . . . [whether lay or ordained] is a participation in the ministry of Christ” (p 420). Theologically, Graham, et al. (2005) contend, this emphasis results from viewing baptism rather than ordination as “the most important sacrament for ministry.” This view means that ministry cannot and should not be limited to clergy activities but is something done “by the whole people of God, in Church and world” (Graham, et al., p 3).

In sum, then, lay ministry flows out of the kind of theological claims made in the preceding paragraphs. That is, lay ministry is not simply a practical matter, not performed out of a need to do something to compensate for a lack of ordained ministry, (although some lay ministry does involve “making do” in the absence of ordained clergy for sacraments). Lay ministry is also not to be confused with church governance, with lay influence in major decisions of local parishes, a common practice in the United States. It is a ministry of serving others in the name of Christ, the Servant.

Theology: Laity and Clergy in Ministry

Lay ministry is not inferior to clergy ministry but a valid and needed part of the total ministry of the church. MacQuarrie (1977) writes that lay ministry is not “a pale imitation of the ministry of the clergy. The layman’s [sic] ministry has too much dignity and importance to be reduced to these terms” (p 423). Even in the medieval period, when clericalism dominated the church, opportunities existed for lay persons, as evidenced by a surviving tract instructing lay persons how to provide pastoral care for someone dying (Clebsch & Jaekle, 1967, p 5). As theologian Kung writes (1967), “the priesthood of all believers consists in the calling of the faithful to witness to God and his [sic] will before the world, and to offer up their lives in the

service of the world” (p 487). These statements do not at all reflect a second-class view of lay ministry. The clear distinction between clergy and laity was not part of the theology of the early church, which was slow to use the name, “priest,” for its leaders. The increase of the importance of clergy, Kung contends, occurred as the meaning of the Lord’s Supper changed; it gradually came to be viewed less as the communal meal of “the entire priestly people” and more as “a kind of new sacrifice, offered by the leaders of the community on the community’s behalf (p 488-89). This shift was a grave misunderstanding, reinforced by the use of priests in pagan and Jewish religious rites. The priest assumed the leadership of offering the sacrifice, which diminished the importance of the laity; “the idea of the priesthood of all believers gradually came to be almost forgotten” (Kung, 489).

The Episcopal Church’s view on ordination and sacraments reflects this ancient distinction between clergy and laity. However, the Church’s most recent edition of *The Book of Common Prayer* (1979) emphasizes the importance of lay ministry. For instance, the answer to the question, “who are the ministers of the Church?” is “The ministers of the Church are lay persons, bishops, priest, and deacons.” Lay persons are listed first, ahead of the three types of ordained clergy in the Episcopal Church. The next four questions ask about the ministry of each of these four types of ministers; the first of these questions is, “What is the ministry of the laity?” (p 855). This listing of lay persons ahead of clergy is noteworthy, especially in a denomination, such as the Episcopal Church, with a high view of sacraments and thus of the authority of clergy.

One of the most significant developments emerging out of this new emphasis on the importance of lay ministry is the Church’s use of Lay Eucharistic Ministers (LEMs). Even though Communion can be consecrated only by a priest or bishop, trained lay persons administer that consecrated Communion to persons shut in by illness or other incapacitating conditions.

Thus the responsibility for providing Communion, a fundamental experience of worship and renewal for Episcopalians, is now shared with lay persons.

Some of the project's participants express their perception of helping the priests in their ministry as LEMs. Alice simply says, "There's absolutely no way that [the two clergy] can do it all; they just can't. So they rely on the lay Eucharistic ministry to help keep them in touch with what's going on." She apparently believes that two pastors in her large congregation cannot meet all the needs. Dorothy agrees, speaking with enthusiasm of "being able to relieve our clergy from having—how many would they miss; my goodness, they can't possibly do all that could be done. The need is great when you have a population this size." Joseph uses a vivid image of his understanding of his pastoral work; he writes, "I feel like I'm pinch hitting for the priests in our organization who are overwhelmed." This perception of need might seem odd for this unusually large parish; clergy shortages often occur in small town and rural settings. Here, however, the sheer membership size of this parish creates pastoral care demands to which clergy cannot possibly respond. The lay caregivers thus provide needed ministry.

With such a vigorous view of lay ministry, what is the relationship between clergy and laity? Primarily, it is important to recognize that the ministry of any clergyperson is rooted in one's baptism and thus to one's prior calling to lay ministry. As MacQuarrie (1977) writes of clergy, "They do not cease to belong to the universal ministry given them at baptism, but add to this an additional ministry" (p 421). This additional ministry, as some advocates of lay ministry contend, is to equip laity for their ministries. Trueblood (1952) calls it cultivating "the ministerial possibilities" of fellow church members (p 46). MacQuarrie states that clergy support laity in their ministry by providing laity "the nurture of the word and sacraments" (p 423). This clergy support is not simply an ancillary duty; Graham et al. (2005) describe clergy ministry as

“being less about the application of expertise and more about facilitating the vocation of all Christians” (p 5) through processes of theological reflection. Thus, the challenge is for clergy to focus on helping lay persons to carry out their ministries.

To sum up, history and theology reflect the importance of lay ministry in the Anglican tradition. What of the more specific form of lay ministry, lay pastoral care? In the next section we explore it, both in terms of theology and a functional description.

Anglican Pastoral Care

Episcopal theologian Griffiss writes (1985), “The Anglican tradition has always laid great emphasis upon pastoral care as the first responsibility of the parish priest and of the bishop of the diocese” (p 1). Not only the clergy but also the members of the Church are called to care for each other throughout the seasons and the challenges of life. This affirmation is a richly theological one, based on an understanding of the Church as “a sacramental community . . . being formed and nurtured by God’s care . . . and . . . thereby enabled to care for others” (Griffiss, p 1). The image of divine care is more than a symbol; it is a reality which all persons are invited to experience throughout their lives, both individually and socially. It is a reality which they also are called to experience with and offer to others. Thus, the church is a community nurtured and shaped by this divine care and then sent out to care for others. To be the Church is to engage in pastoral care—receiving it and sharing it.

A Theology of Anglican Pastoral Care

An Anglican theology of pastoral care includes more than this view of the Church as a community receiving and sharing care. This theology also includes the idea that the foundational medium of pastoral care is the act of regular corporate worship. As liturgical scholar Louis Weil

writes, “It is in the Sunday celebration that all the strands of ministry and pastoral care come together” (in Griffiss, 1985, p 130). The church is a community of baptized servants who gather for the nourishment of the word and the sacrament; “from that assembly, that place of . . . identity in Christ,” they “go forth to serve according to all their diverse gifts” (Weil, in Griffiss, 1985, p 131). The primary function of the sermon, for instance, is to equip the worshipping community to care for itself and others. The entire worship service teaches and encourages the community, for local congregations are the “immediate framework” for pastoral care (Griffiss, 1985, p 3). Weil summarizes, “Pastoral care is the inevitable service of a worshipping community that has embraced the full dimensions of the symbols of faith” (in Griffiss, 1985, p 119).

James Reed’s essay (2005) elaborates on this theology of pastoral care. He states that Anglican pastoral care emerges out of theological roots relating to the nature of theology itself, the nature of the church, and the nature of the church’s relationship in the world. Below I describe each of these three and note their influence on pastoral care.

First, Reed asserts that the Anglican tradition views the nature of theology as the efforts of faith in seeking understanding; Scripture, tradition, and reason each contribute to the efforts to make sense of one’s faith. Pastoral care, then, performs two major tasks: one, it educates, developing people’s understanding of their faith; two, it promotes ethical and moral behavior, as people explore ways to express their faith responsibly, socially, and courageously.

Second, Reed notes that the Anglican tradition sees the nature of the church sacramentally. The sacraments focus people’s lives toward “all that conveys the humanizing grace of God in Christ” (Reed, p 42). Baptism and eucharist are fundamental to this focus, yet

others also convey divine grace, such as confession, which addresses awareness of failure and assurance of love, and unction, which points to God's presence and desire for wholeness. Thus, the sacraments provide pastoral care, through various means during changing stages of life.

Reed's third point is that the Anglican tradition views the world—nature and society—through the image of incarnation. This understanding means that the church “must always be ready to hear the Word that God speaks to us in our neighbors” (Griffiss 1997, p 127). As a result, caring for individuals is only one aspect of pastoral care; Anglicans also commit to social justice and to protecting nature. This view also means that pastoral care “is much more than a profession of a select few.” Laity participate in the “specific and highly focused” ministries of deacons, priests, and bishops. Laity also live out “general and all-pervasive” ministries that include various activities (Reed, p 42).

Alice's approach to pastoral care demonstrates a seamless blend of lay and clerical ministries. After her weekly visits, she sends email reports to both clergy and to the pastoral care coordinator: she shares “what my impressions were, how they were feeling, so that [the clergy] and [the lay care coordinator] are always aware of these folks and what their needs are.” Furthermore, she displays her awareness of differences in lay and clergy functions when she states, “if I feel like one of the clergy needs to stop by and see them,” she communicates that impression. Alice's efforts to inform the others demonstrate effective and coordinated lay pastoral care.

In sum, then, the Anglican tradition finds theological roots for pastoral care in its view of theology, of the church and of the world. Pastoral care emerges out of the regular experience of corporate worship; it seeks to offer understanding of faith and perspectives for ethics; it broadens

care to include persons, nature, society—provided by bishops, priests, deacons, and laity. Anglican pastoral care functions within this complex theological vista. The next section describes pastoral care broadly then narrows in on the lay pastoral care of the participants of this project.

Pastoral Care: Description & Project Participants

Broadly speaking, pastoral care can be understood both proactively and reactively; it is nurture provided reactively for “unforeseen crises” and proactively for “normal developmental processes” (Townsend, 2004, p 111). That is, pastoral care is commonly understood as a reactive activity: pastoral responses to specific and defined needs. Yet pastoral care can also be understood proactively, as the many actions taken to support individual persons, families, and whole communities throughout their life cycles. This proactive understanding of pastoral care means that major normal activities in a faith community can transmit and/or embody pastoral care: “preaching, teaching, administration, organizational programming and community development” (Townsend, 2004, p 111).

In the context of this project, pastoral care is limited; it does not include preaching, teaching, organizational programming and community development. I believe it is, however, both reactive and proactive. The lay pastoral caregivers both respond to crisis (reactive) and offer care during the normal developmental processes of illness and aging (proactive). The lay caregivers who participated in this project are nine lay members of a local Episcopal parish who provide pastoral care to persons residing in various nursing care facilities in the area. Each participant volunteered for the project. We met five successive evenings for 90 minutes at the parish facilities. These caregivers visit persons who are ill, hospitalized, facing chronic health

problems, and living out the last phase of their lives in nursing care facilities. Each of them is trained by a priest to function as a Lay Eucharistic Minister (LEM), but most of them provide much more than Communion. They also bring flowers, church bulletins, transportation to medical appointments, news from the parish, and a listening ear—all offered through a respectful presence that offers relationship, connection, and a measure of hope to those who tend to live in isolation and often loneliness. Because of the large size of the parish, it employs a staff person to coordinate pastoral care. Along with other duties, Susan provides oversight, training, and coordination. She states that she seeks “to give pastoral care at many different levels, whether it is through prayer, taking Communion to them, having a priest visit, have them receive flowers from the altar.” These tasks are all important, and they are performed by the project’s participants.

As I elaborate in chapter four, these lay pastoral caregivers are passionate and committed about providing care, and they provide this care in the context of their relationship with the persons they visit. They are not merely performing a duty, such as dispensing medicine or delivering mail; they develop a personal bond with each individual, thus the care they offer emerges from that bond. And they greatly devote themselves to this care.

The participants speak much about the personal, spiritual, and vocational growth that accompanies them as they offer pastoral care. They trace their journeys back to earlier influences—for some of them, even as children—influences that shaped their interest in and motivation for this work. Their journeys also include earlier work in other ministries of their parish. Furthermore, though most have reached retirement age, none of the participants speak of reaching the limit of their development or their willingness to continue serving. They see themselves as always growing and giving.

The participants displayed humility, a willingness to ponder, and joyful enthusiasm, each one of these attributes interacting fruitfully with the others. I perceived a refreshing sense of humility from them; as they describe it, their work is serious, yet they do not take themselves too seriously. They are honest and unassuming as they ponder their ministries and their awareness of their growth in pastoral identity. Daniel's comment exemplifies this attitude: "Our creator has loaned me . . . certain skills and time right now and good health, and this is a way to use what my creator has loaned to me." They exhibit joyful enthusiasm for pastoral care. It is not at all a burden to them but an opportunity, because they perceive it, as I mentioned already, primarily as a relationship of two human beings. Though the setting appears to be one person helping another, these caregivers state that they, too, benefit from the relationship. As Alice notes, "I feel like it's such an honor and a privilege to be with these people . . . and I thank God every night for the opportunity."

The lay caregivers who participated in this project broadened my own vistas on ministry in general and invigorated my desire to continue this ministry of facilitation. I had always believed that lay ministry is not only viable but essential in faith communities, but I had never immersed myself in this context until I engaged this project. Any hesitation I might have harbored about the usefulness of lay ministry (even subconsciously) evaporated somewhere during the five sessions, as I observed these capable and committed persons sharing, listening, pondering, laughing, and savoring each other's company. Thus, the next three chapters (three, four, and five) describe in detail the perceptions I formed as I listened to them and read their comments. These participants convincingly demonstrate the unequivocal value of lay pastoral ministry.

To sum up, this chapter introduced the history and potential of theological reflection and provided historical and theological contexts for lay pastoral caregiving. It surveyed the recent emergence of theological reflection as an explicit activity, resulting from church-related trends addressing ministry, liberative theologies, and ministry tasks, as well as a trend in educational theory toward experiential learning. Theological reflection is an ancient activity, though it has often occurred implicitly; recently its explicit practice has grown and challenges many of its practitioners. The chapter then moved to exploring lay pastoral caregivers, first by discussing the broader notion of lay ministry in the Anglican tradition, which suffered much neglect in past centuries but recently enjoys a renewed status. Then the focus narrowed to Anglican pastoral care, providing contexts from history and theology. The chapter finished with a description of pastoral care and a focus on the specific participants of this project in their particular context. The chapter supports my claim that theological reflection performs an essential function in the pastoral formation of persons doing various ministries, of which lay pastoral caregiving is one kind.

As I note above, the next three chapters (three, four, and five) describe in detail the perceptions I formed as I listened to them and read their comments. Chapter three discusses theological reflection as a process of formation, using adult learning theories as lenses for understanding the process. As we will see, participant comments witness to the importance of their own experiences in their formation before the project began, where theological reflection functioned implicitly, and to the influence of the project itself, where theological reflection functioned explicitly.

CHAPTER THREE: THEOLOGICAL REFLECTION AS FORMATION PROCESS

At the fifth and final session of the project, participants submitted to me written responses to a brief handout I had given them at the end of the fourth session. The first question on this handout was, “What two or three ideas in our visits together have impacted you most? One person wrote, “The theological ‘method’ of working through forgiveness with Abigail’s Model and Pastoral Themes—the latter very helpful to me.” Another person wrote, “Have really enjoyed exploring the case studies and looking at these studies from a theological approach as it relates to forgiveness.” These comments point to the participants’ experience with theological reflection: their awareness of it, their growing confidence in performing it, and their satisfaction with the process. Their experience functioned as a formation process.

This chapter discusses theological reflection as a process of formation, using ideas from the field of adult learning as lenses for understanding the process. The chapter begins by offering a working description of theological reflection and by outlining the model for theological reflection used in the project. Using a model helps participants stay explicit and organized in the reflective task. The chapter then explores the field of adult learning as a source for understanding the participant’s experience with theological reflection. Broadly speaking, the field of adult learning focuses on the person’s own experiences as the “stuff” of their learning. As we will see, participant comments corroborate this dynamic: they witness to the importance of their own experiences in their formation before the project began, where theological reflection functioned implicitly.

From the broad field of adult learning, I selected three theoretical orientations that provided specific lenses on the participants’ experiences. Using the lenses allowed me to perceive effects of both implicit theological reflection and explicit theological reflection. The

effects of implicit theological reflection were displayed in the “disorienting dilemma” stories recounted by two of the participants. The humanist outlook helped describe the growth experienced by two participants, which occurred before the project began. The effects of explicit theological reflection were displayed in many participant comments during the project and the oral interviews. Social learning theory helped me recognize the interactive context of the participants’ experience with each other, while constructivist learning theory helped me identify the personal meaning-making in which each participant was involved. I conclude that theological reflection contributed to these caregivers’ formation by inviting them to construct individualized meanings within the social context/experience of the project. These perceptions about the effects of implicit and explicit theological reflection support the importance of adult pastoral theological reflection as a formation experience for lay pastoral caregivers.

Theological Reflection: A Working Description and Model

Theological reflection is important precisely because it addresses both the lived experiences of caregivers and their understandings of their faith traditions. Killen and de Beer (1994) have written extensively about theological reflection and note that through it, “we put our experience into conversation with the wisdom of our Christian heritage” (p 83). Theological reflection takes seriously both of these sources of knowledge—our experience and our Christian heritage--considering each of them as necessary to one’s growth personally and pastorally. In the process of reflecting theologically, one’s experiences and one’s faith resources interact with each other, so that personal growth—and, in the context of this project, pastoral formation—will take place.

A Working Description of Theological Reflection

For Killen and de Beer (1994, pp x-xi), theological reflection is an outgrowth of the natural human drive to find meaning in life. When something happens that does not fit into the usual categories we use to make meaning, then we are driven to reflect. We ask ourselves questions, much like a journalist covering a story: what, why, how? This questioning, this reflection, slows us down; we take the time to look again at a particular event and at our typical frameworks or categories for understanding such events. This act of questioning makes us vulnerable to the emotions evoked by the event and to the uneasy sense that our established beliefs and responses are being challenged and might need to change. New meaning for our lives could possibly emerge from this reflection. As Susan comments, learning to be explicit about theological reflection “was really a stretch. . . . it was actually difficult,” yet she concludes “I enjoyed it, and I think that it will help me in pastoral situations now.”

This process of theological reflection provides a balance between the two extremes of certitude and self-assurance (Killen and de Beer, pp 4-18). The standpoint of certitude occurs when we rely heavily on our traditions; we trust only what we perceive that Scripture, the church, and religious authorities have taught us. As a result, “we can tolerate only that which fits our predetermined categories” (p 4). We are unable to ponder new experiences if they appear to fall outside our way of looking at life. The story of Saul of Tarsus hearing the voice of Jesus (Acts 9:1-10) dramatically illustrates the “absolute religious certitude” (p 6) which such an experience will challenge.

At the other extreme, the standpoint of self-assurance is fueled by relying on one’s experiences; we trust only our own experiences and opinions, thinking that the world “out there”

is too inadequate or frail to help us. As a result, Killen and DeBeer believe, our perceptions are often distorted or inaccurate, and we view the world around us (our traditions and social contexts) “primarily as burdens to be overcome or manipulated for our benefit” (p 13). The story of Jesus’ conversation with the rich young man (Mark 10:17-22) dramatically illustrates the myopia that results from self-assurance: the young man “is claiming to have done the impossible” (p 12) for the sake of maintaining a sense of controlling his life.

With either extreme, we lose the balance offered by the other. When we operate out of self-assurance, we deprive ourselves of the balance provided by our traditions. When we operate out of certitude, we deprive ourselves of the balance provided by our experiences. Self-assurance idealizes our own efforts while ignoring our obvious “embeddedness in family, culture, and traditions”. Certitude idealizes our past, believing that it “will save us if we simply submit” (p 14).

By contrast, theological reflection involves balancing tradition and experience while avoiding their extremes (certitude and self-assurance). Killen and de Beer call this balance the “standpoint of exploration.” When we feel confusion about an experience, instead of retreating into certitude or self-assurance, we slow down to explore that experience in “conversation with the wisdom of the Christian heritage” (p 19). The model of theological reflection used in this project is one method for slowing us down so that we are able to explore an experience with various resources from the Christian heritage. I introduce that model in the next section.

Graham et al. (2005) assert that theological reflection involves three tasks “in relation to practical circumstances;” that is, as theology responds to its contexts: one, the induction and nurture of members; two, building and sustaining the community of faith; and three, communicating the faith to a wider culture (pp 10-11). This project focuses on their second

task—building and sustaining the community of faith. A central feature of this project was designing and facilitating a series of group experiences in which several lay pastoral caregivers, in the context of sustaining a community of faith, could reflect theologically on their pastoral care.

In summary, then, we can describe theological reflection as a conversation between our experience and our religious heritage from which new meaning emerges. In the context of this project, the new meaning that arises from this conversation enhances the participants' sense of who they are and what they do as members of a faith community. Thus, this project assumes an integral relationship among theological reflection, pastoral identity, and pastoral practice. The quest for meaning in experience can influence caregivers' identity and practices. This possible influence is the focus of this project. Before reporting on this possible contribution of theological reflection on their pastoral identities and pastoral practices (in chapters four and five), I now present the model of theological reflection used in the project.

Johnson's Model of Theological Reflection

The model of theological reflection I used for this project is one developed by field education director Abigail Johnson (2003) to use with divinity students. The process of theological reflection occurs as persons reflect on the meaning of experiences that gained their attention for some reason. This activity creates "an open exploration" (Johnson, p 77) stimulating growth in both the understanding of those experiences and in the understanding of one's religious tradition. The three major elements of theological reflection, therefore, are experience, reflection, and change/growth.

Johnson offers a model of four movements she believes to be common to all theological reflection. The first movement, “Attending,” refers to “a particular moment that raises questions or issues” for a person (p 75). Attending involves describing the moment for yourself and from other perspectives. In the second movement, “Analyzing,” persons move beyond description into analyzing that particular moment. Analyzing involves many possible resources, “frameworks, such as sociology, psychology, history, art forms, economics, and theology” (p 75). During “Interpreting,” the third movement, insights emerge from the analysis. The reflector ponders various possible meanings of the attended moment. In the fourth movement, “Acting,” persons consider their patterns of behavior or attitudes about the attended movement. They either confirm or change their behavior based on insights of the Interpreting movement.

This model of theological reflection appeals to me because of its simplicity, clarity, and coherence. It is simple in its outline and its language; it is clear in its descriptions of the movements; it is coherent in its progress through the four movements. The participants used this model during the project to guide their explicit theological reflection. I refer to the model later when I discuss how I constructed the Likert-scaled survey and when I interpret disorienting dilemmas. The Appendix includes a copy of the model supplied to the participants, as well as descriptions of how I used it with the participants during the five sessions of the project. Theological reflection performs a vital function in formation for ministry, in particular (for this project) the development of lay pastoral caregivers.

I now move to the second part of this chapter, in which I discuss concepts from the field of adult learning theory as a way for understanding the participants’ experience with theological reflection. As I discuss below, these concepts helped me understand participant formation both

before the project, when they engaged theological reflection implicitly, and during the project, when they engaged theological reflection explicitly.

Theological Reflection as a Form of Adult Learning

I employed ideas from the field of adult learning, because I believe that learning is a component of formation. As Hess and Brookfield state (2008), formation is a goal of theological education, which is an intense learning experience. Formation is not simply a learning experience, but it involves learning. Whether a person learns in a formal theological context or simply ponders an idea informally from a conversation, sermon, Scripture, or an experience, some kind of learning occurs, and this learning contributes to pastoral formation. The study of adult learning has emerged only in the last generation, following initial research on learning in animals and in children. Researchers tend to agree that learning involves change, but, beyond this simple claim, the field is rife with opinions (Knowles et al. 1998, pp 12-17).

The field of adult learning helped me in two basic ways. First, it provided a foundational claim about the importance of experience in adult learning, a claim that I believe informs the process of pastoral formation. The foundational claim is that adult's own experiences are vital to their learning. As I detail below, participants' comments consistently validate this claim. They recount significant experiences that shaped their pastoral selves before they took part in this project, during which they reflected theologically in an implicit manner.

The second way I used the adult learning field was in choosing three learning theories (before the project began) to serve as lenses for viewing the participants' activity during the project. I speculated that learning theories based on humanist and constructivist thought, as well as social learning theory, would help me describe how pastoral formation occurred during the

project. The humanist lens proved helpful in understanding specific experiences of two participants before the project began, the two participants who experienced a “disorienting dilemma” and thus engaged in implicit theological reflection. The social learning and constructivist lenses helped me interpret many of the participants’ comments about their experiences during the project, when they engaged in explicit theological reflection. I concluded that the participants constructed personal meaning in the social context of the project.

We explore first the participants’ implicit theological reflection, which occurred before the project began, in light of the claim that experience is vital to adult learning and in light of the humanist perspective. Then we explore the participants’ explicit theological reflection, which occurred during project, in light of the social learning and constructivist perspectives.

A word about implicit and explicit reflection is in order here. I am claiming that the participants engaged in theological reflection both implicitly and explicitly. That is, participants engaged in theological reflection without their awareness of doing so (implicitly); it was a subconscious activity. Then, participants engaged in theological reflection explicitly, fully aware they were doing so; it was a conscious and deliberate, if at times frustrating, activity. Chronologically, I contend that, based on my perceptions of their comments, the implicit theological reflection occurred before the project began and explicit theological reflection occurred during the project.

Implicit Theological Reflection: Experience as Vital

Theory from Field of Adult Learning. In the broadest sense, the field of adult learning focuses on the person’s own experiences as the “stuff” of their learning. As learning theorists Sharan Merriam and Rosemary Caffarella state (1999), “The experiences of adults have always

been viewed as a critical component of learning in adulthood” (p 246). That is, in spite of various theories about how persons learn from experience, these theories tend to agree that “what we learn from one experience is applied to new experiences” (p 246).

This focus on experience in adult learning is congruent with theological reflection’s exploration of experience in light of one’s religious tradition. As mentioned above, theological reflection involves balancing tradition and experience while avoiding their extremes: the certitude of tradition and the self-assurance of experience. Thus, whenever we feel confused about an experience, we might consider retreating into certitude or self-assurance. Instead, we should slow down to explore that experience in “conversation with the wisdom of the Christian heritage” (Killen & DeBeer 1994, p 19).

The participants in this section did explore key experiences in the context of their faith, but they did so implicitly. They were not aware they were reflecting theologically on significant experiences. This activity, however, served as a learning process, stimulating formation and, for at least two participants, growth as well. We look first at formative experiences from participants’ childhoods and adulthoods, then the growth experiences resulting from “disorienting dilemmas.”

Implicit Theological Reflection: Experience is Vital. *As Children*. Several participants referred to childhood influences when describing what influenced them in their journey toward caregiving. Joseph speaks of the good impression the Catholic priest made on him by visiting his invalid father at home each week. Joseph also remembers his mother’s positive influence on him: “My mother, with regard to my faith was the one that drug us out of bed to take us to communion on first Fridays. . . . Very very dedicated woman to her family and faith. She was

an inspiration to me.” Joseph’s reflections on these significant persons helped to form his own pastoral identity.

Ruth writes, “I think I am a caring person. I have spent most of my life caring for others. So it seems natural to me.” She tells a story from early in her childhood, when she nursed a baby pig back to health on the farm: “It’s just something that I think is almost innate in me, to be a caregiver, so it’s a comfortable spot for me to be in.” Ruth’s comments indicate the influences from childhood that formed her caregiving today.

Linda recognizes the determination she acquired in response to being raised by her mother, whom she states was raised by an alcoholic parent: “I was determined NOT to follow in my mother’s footsteps.” She credits childhood experiences with her local congregation as providing early nurture: “I’ve also been raised in the church and have felt very strongly that I have a Christian job cut out for me.” Later, as she began college, she faced the challenge of “shyness” by taking psychology classes which “has helped me to be able to do things that I never could have as a shy person.” Linda sees her determination and faith shaping herself as a pastoral caregiver.

Three other participants’ comments indicate the influence of childhood experiences on their caregiving today. Paul believes that he’s always been a caring person by nature but the experience of hearing others comment on his caring served to validate and encourage him: “Even back in high school, I’ve always had people say . . . you’re always interested in helping other people. And I guess that’s one of my strong points, and I like it.” Alice cites the positive influence of her parents’ hospitality during her childhood, hosting people at their home, which allowed her to become familiar and comfortable with persons older than herself: “We had to

learn how to behave and listen and, you know, spend time with older people and be polite and caring for them. And that was the example that I had.” Betty recalls her childhood loneliness, which has evoked in her an empathy for isolated persons in care facilities. Theological reflection occurred implicitly as these three participants mulled over the meaning of their childhood experiences in light of their current ministry.

Implicit Theological Reflection: Experience is Vital. *As Adults.* Some participants also cited experiences as adults that influenced them pastorally. As with childhood experiences, I believe they have reflected theologically in an implicit manner on these adult experiences. Linda states that “a life’s worth of education, and just living with people” prepares her to respond pastorally to a difficult situation. She also notes that she herself has received pastoral care following surgery: “I’ve been there. I’ve had four hip surgeries among other things, so I really know the walk that they walk, and it’s wonderful to be able to help other people.” Joseph’s pre-retirement profession involved holding in confidence much personal information about neighbors: “They did confide in me and they knew that what they said stayed there. I think that’s probably . . . a natural kind of thing for me to do, because of having done that for so many years. Ruth worked for years as a nurse, cared for her mother until she died at age 104, and now cares for her ailing husband. The participants themselves credit these adult experiences as significant in their pastoral formation.

Disorienting Dilemmas: Experience Stimulating Growth. Implicit theological reflection on a specific kind of adult experience seems to have deeply influenced the growth and thus the pastoral formation of two of the participants. Using the language of adult learning specialist Mezirow, this experience is “a disorienting dilemma,” an experience which a person “cannot accommodate into the prior life structure” (Merriam & Caffarella, 1999, p. 327). This dilemma

can provoke critical reflection, which occurs internally—within oneself—and externally—in reflective discourse with others. The product or outcome of such reflection upon a disorienting experience is transformation (or development, as Kegan and Taylor sometimes phrase it). Both Susan and Dorothy identify a dramatic event as provoking an internal crisis that led to a personal inner transformation, expressed in renewed faith and commitment to ministry.

The Humanist Lens. The lens of the humanist perspective helps me understand the process and outcome of the disorienting dilemmas reported by two of the participants. In short, these dilemmas provided the setting for significant personal growth, which is the hallmark of the humanist outlook.

The humanist orientation looks at learning from the standpoint of the potential for growth inherent in all persons. Everyone has the freedom and the responsibility to achieve their potential. People naturally want to learn and will do so when contexts encourage learning and the growth that accompanies it (Merriam & Caffarella, p 258).

The humanist outlook, then, views learning as more than a cognitive process, something done with the mind. Learning and growth involve one's entire sense of self. Each person is unique and has the capacity to be aware of herself, to make real choices, and thus to enhance themselves (Tisdale, 2005, p 548). In the midst of tragic circumstances, Susan and Dorothy became self-aware, made real choices, and enhanced their holistic sense of self, with outcomes affecting their pastoral work.

The humanist orientation's emphasis on fulfilling individual potential reminds me theologically of the *imago Dei*, the claim that all persons bear the divine image and thus deserve respect, opportunity, and community. This theology contrasts significantly with the self-

centeredness of modern Western culture's individualism, which a humanistic viewpoint can sometimes encourage. Instead, the divine call to serve the world in love and justice leads to increasing love and justice, which allows all persons to fulfill their potential, the potential given them as creatures made in the very image of God (whatever we might understand that image to involve).

Disorienting Dilemmas and Growth. When Susan's spouse lost his job, "we were pretty much brought down to our knees. We did not know if we were going to lose everything or not; it was very scary." They turned to their local congregation for support, which took several forms: "we realized that we could not do it by ourselves, that we had to do it with God." They felt much support from many persons there, but the support was more than social—they also engaged in spiritual & religious activities in ways that apparently wrought positive effects on their faith outlook and faith journey. She reports that their faith was enriched and broadened. By the time her spouse found employment (two years), their faith was "much better" and continues: "we learned how to reprioritize our lives." Susan comments, "I've been transformed in my faith," which includes "much more compassion for people."

Dorothy's crisis hit her in a hospital room with her dying sister, who was "unexpectedly at age 40 diagnosed with stage four colon cancer. . . . At that point, my whole world changed." Dorothy tells of sitting at the bedside of her sleeping sister when hospital staff told her the unexpected news that her sister would soon die of stage four cancer. Dorothy's first reaction was a profound sense of isolation and a drive to make contact with someone in her family. When no one was available, Dorothy's shock and grief intensified: "It was the dark night of the soul for me . . . and where is God?" Her sister was seen as the "spiritual one" of the family; for the rest of the family, religious faith and activities were a polite but not essential part of their living.

Thus, Dorothy found herself questioning God, who seemed cruel and distant at that painful moment in the hospital room: “Where are you, God? Why are you doing this?!! I was angry; yes, I even said, ‘damn!’” Why was God taking the “best” one of the family?

Dorothy then reports an important change in her perception of the tragedy. Her sister encouraged her to strengthen her faith, which she states was nominal at the time. Through her sister’s inspiring faith and fervent praying, Dorothy reached “my turning point, when I knew that God had heard me.” Instead of continuing to feel alone and angry, she began to sense a divine presence, which comforted her. She credits this event with evoking a dramatic change in her own outlook on life: “as I’ve developed as a Christian, I was drawn to want to serve. . . . I’ve been filled with such a compassion for people that I’ve never had before.” Her sister’s display of calm and confidence in her last days continued to inspire Dorothy and her family: “They have all returned to the Lord now,” she states.

To sum up this section, the participants’ comments point to much implicit theological reflection occurring before the project. This reflection occurred for some of them during childhood and adulthood, with positive influences on their pastoral formation. For two of them, disorienting dilemmas provoked spiritually-taxing crisis of faith that eventually resulted in the kind of growth seen from the humanist perspective.

The next section reports on explicit theological reflection, using the lenses of two other learning theories, constructivist and social learning. These lenses reveal that the participants during the project engaged in making personal meaning in the context of their social interactions.

Explicit Theological Reflection: Social Learning and Constructivist Perspectives

The participants' numerous and enthusiastic comments about their interaction supports the usefulness of social learning theory, and their statements about pondering new and/or enriched meanings for pastoral care supports the usefulness of constructivist learning theory. These two lenses help us understand major dynamics of the participants' explicit theological reflection during the project. The perspectives thus serve a specific purpose; they do not help me elucidate details of the participants' actual formation. They do, however, provide me with ways of seeing and understanding participant behavior as they engaged in theological reflection.

Social Learning Theory. In brief, this theory asserts that “people learn from observing others” (Merriam & Caffarella, 1999, p 258).⁶ Learning occurs through observing people in one's immediate environment. Bandura, a leading proponent, contends that mere observing, without imitation, can result in learning. This theory highlights the importance of social context in learning, as persons interact with their environments.

Social learning theory helps me understand some of the participants' experience with the project, because I believe that church members often learn their theology (and probably their psychology, too) from interactions with each other. Social settings can be effective sources of influence on individual persons, for good or for ill. When functioning well, local congregations, like other social groups, can influence individual members toward behavior that supports, encourages, and advocates for each other. This mutuality is more than a pragmatic experience; for me, it is also a theological imperative; the church is to share in life together—its struggles, tragedies, anxieties, joys, and service.

⁶ These authors also state that social learning theory grew out of behaviorist theory, adding cognitive aspects in the 1960s with the work of Bandura, pp 258-59.

Social Learning During Theological Reflection. The lens of social learning theory provides a window into one of the major dynamics of the participants' explicit theological reflection during the project. At its most basic level, the participants expressed appreciation simply for the opportunity to assemble as a group. As the pastoral coordinator states, "I love the fact that we got our lay ministers together. I've been looking for opportunities to do that, so it was a great opportunity for them to all get to come together, and just work together. . . . They do their ministries individually, and that they've been wanting to interact." Another participant comments that this experience "has really cemented" her conviction about "what a need there is for continued adult education."

The participants' experience together in these five sessions seems to have been multifaceted. For one thing, they simply enjoyed each other's company: "I so enjoyed this fellowship with other LEMs." Another participant echoes this sentiment: "lots of those people, I enjoyed being with." They also valued hearing from each other; one participant affirms that she was "absolutely enriched by listening and sharing . . . and discussing all of that and sharing our thoughts." The most affirming and helpful action for one was "when we went around the table and could hear other's reflections—this was very affirming." Another participant's input is similar: When the facilitator asked us to share our group discussion with the other group and vice versa." This need to hear from each other is so strong in one participant that her/his "most distanced" moment one evening was "when we couldn't hear what the other group of four was sharing"!

Sharing with each other is a consistent theme. Their pastoral coordinator observes that "they've been wanting to interact, and I think that's why you saw such good interaction." In response to the feedback question, "When did you feel most engaged?" sharing is the dominant

response: “When the entire group was sharing,” “interaction with the group,” “small group discussion,” “during discussion,” and the lengthy “as we each spoke candidly about the situation generally. I feel it’s good for all to comment and then further discuss.” This need to share surfaced in one response to the “most distanced” question: “when one individual dominates the conversation. This causes others to shut down.” Overwhelmingly, as one participant writes, “sharing was affirming.”

The participants also reported discovery in their sharing. As one says, “I feel that we always learn from each other.” For another, the “most affirming action” one night was “open discussion—the many perspectives and ideas.” Another reports, “I heard some of the others talk about routinely going to the nursing homes and doing other things, perhaps getting involved with family conflicts and trying to figure out ways to help them; that’s not been so much what I’ve dealt with.” She learned about other needs and opportunities for pastoral care.

One participant’s enthusiasm for the project began with hesitation, but the social rewards after the first night were sufficient to convince him of the value of the project. He states, “When I went in [to begin this project], I had to ask myself, Is this gonna be in your realm of what pastoral care is? And after we met the first time, the time went by so fast, and I was trying to absorb so much, that it was amazing to me—the weekly meetings would be over before you [I] would think about it.”

Responses on the Learning Feedback Surveys (see Appendix) strongly indicate the interest and importance the participants placed on hearing and thus learning from each other. In responding to the question, “When did you feel most engaged with what was happening?” participants wrote, “during discussion,” “small group discussion,” “interaction with the group,”

“when the entire group was sharing,” and “sharing in our group of four.” Similarly, in answering the question, “What action that anyone took (participant or facilitator) did you find most affirming or helpful?” one person wrote, “When the facilitator asked us to share our group discussion with the other group and vice versa,” and another wrote, “we seem to give and take with each other—I think we feel supportive and supported.”

That pair of words—supportive and supported—captures what I think is the essence of social learning. Participants reciprocate in valuing and trusting each other. Such mutual trust and valuing creates an atmosphere that optimizes the potential for learning from one another. One person even wrote of feeling left out, because (s)he could not hear everything the other small group was saying! This comment was written at the end of the second session, so I think it illustrates the rapid pace at which the participants bonded in this experience. Three weeks later, as they pondered the entire experience, one person provided a theological perspective on the experience: “God created us to be in a relationship with Him [sic] and others.”

Other participants report positive results of the five sessions. “Everyone got a lot out of it,” the coordinator concludes. One participant speaks of “how much I get out of sessions like this.” Another participant describes the time together as “absolutely enriched by listening and sharing.” Another writes, “I think we feel supportive and supported,” a phrase indicating that they both gave and received. “I think that it’s made me aware of some of the other people that are involved in the ministry,” says another. “I got to know them better, particularly _____. I’ve known _____ for a long time; she’s a delightful person, and she does a lot of work.”

To sum up, the lens of social learning theory provides a window into one of the major dynamics of the participants’ explicit theological reflection during the project. The participants

report that they enjoyed each other's company, they appreciated the opportunity to assemble, they highly valued hearing from and sharing with each other, which led to learning from each other and a sense of great benefit from the time together.

A major outcome of this social learning, as reported by the participants, can be explained by another adult learning theory: constructivist. In the context of their social interaction, each participant engaged in explicit theological reflection, which included constructing their own meanings. The next section details this meaning-making.

The Constructivist Outlook. To cite Merriam and Caffarella (1999) again, "Basically, a constructivist stance maintains that learning is a process of constructing meaning; it is how people make sense of their experience" (p 261). It is a cognitive process that occurs both individually and socially. Individually, it is a mental activity that relies on a person's current and previous structure of knowledge; it is internal and cognitive. Socially, it is an interactive dynamic, involving persons in dialog who make meaning in the process.

This outlook appealed to me, because I value the experiences that each caregiver brings to five sessions, and I value the importance of the meaning that each person will develop in response to those events. Each person has the ability and the freedom to develop her/his own meanings in the many discussions designed into the project. The constructivist orientation is the one that sees the potential for experiences shaping one's perspective, which was my hope for the participants as they experienced theological reflection.

Meaning-Making During Theological Reflection. The lens of constructivist learning theory provides another window into one of the major dynamics of the participants' explicit theological reflection during the project.

One way the constructivist outlook exhibited itself was in the participants' valuing of the freedom for each person to form her/his own views—to construct personal meanings. When responding to the question about the most affirming and helpful action during a session, one participant writes, "I found the variety of reactions shared to be quite interesting and helpful." Another participant agrees, saying that most helpful action was "open discussion—the many perspectives and ideas." A third response sounds similar: "When we went around the table and could hear other's reflections—this was very affirming."

Other questions elicited similar appreciation. One participant felt most engaged during "exchange of views among participants." What surprised one participant most: "The variety of reactions." Another participant was surprised that he and his spouse "read the same material and had our attention caught by different aspects;" each one focused on something different." Another participant reports feeling distanced with one task yet was fascinated with one of the outcomes, remarking, "this gave me another perspective." One of the two or three most impacting ideas for one participant is, "the many different ways/approaches of class members to forgiveness, and their approaches to forgiving themselves & others. " Again, the participants value the freedom for each person to form their own views—construct personal meaning.

This valuing of freedom is illustrated in the group's overwhelming concurrence against one participant's strongly-expressed biases. Most of the responses to the "most puzzling or confusing action" question on the night these biases were expressed clearly addressed their preference for an open forum. One participant writes, "problems discussed without openness or trying to see more than one side or approach." Another writes, "Listening to _____ tear a thought apart and doing all the 'supposing' he did—seemed very negative but at the same time very practical." A third comment is, "One of our group of eight seemed to be looking for ways

to find fault with the reading material provided.” The participants valued the right of each person to express her or his own views. As the comments demonstrate, they appreciated the opportunity they had during every session to give voice to their own opinions while also hearing the views of others. They wanted to listen, learn, and then construct their own personal meaning.

In a more objective yet still useful way, the Likert-scaled data also seems to reflect the group’s valuing of personal freedom with opinions. On the Likert scale data, the last four statements (12-15) ask about their own views/feelings. Those last four statements involve one’s own interpretation of their experiences, personal and observed, with forgiveness. That is, one’s interpretation is one’s own meaning constructed from those experiences. In this way, the data could indicate constructivist theory in two ways.

One way is seen in the variety of interpretations given to the four statements: the nine participants did not at all choose the same responses (interpretations, meanings) in the four statements. For statements twelve and fifteen, five of the seven possible choices were chosen; for statement thirteen and fourteen, six of the seven possible choices were chosen. Each participant was invited to provide her/his own (constructed) opinion, and the diverse data indicate that they did so: their wide range of responses reflects the constructivist outlook at work.

The other way that the data could indicate constructivist theory is in the significant aggregate changes in participants’ responses after the five sessions. The post-session data shows, in a range of 54, changes of four points in two of the statements (14 & 15), a change of eight points in statement 12, and a change of 10 in statement 13. These changes are 7.4 percent, 14.8 percent, and 18.5 percent. Besides indicating significant change, in this context the changes also appear to demonstrate more shifting of views, which I contend is a function of

constructive activity. That is, these participants changed their choices, which shows changes in their interpretation—the meaning they have constructed.

In summary, then, the lens of constructivist learning theory provides another window into one of the major dynamics of the participants' explicit theological reflection during the project. Participants value the freedom for each person to form her/his own views—to construct personal meanings. Part of this report on the participants' explicit theological reflection, however, includes their frustrating journey toward confidence in using the reflection model. An account of that journey follows.

Theological Reflection: From Frustration to Formation

The group's experience with theological reflection began with frustration and perplexity but grew into some confidence, interest and, at the end, a measure of excitement.

The frustration and perplexity emerged early, during their first work with a case study. Their task was to use Johnson's four-movement model to respond to the case presented to them. When they reported back to the full group about their small group discussions, it was quickly apparent that they had focused on the first and last movements of Abigail's model and almost totally neglected the second and third movements. They spent most of their time with Attending (first movement) and acting (fourth movement), that is, with commenting on what they perceived was "going on" with the married couple in the scenario and then commenting on what they thought the wife should do. In other words, they focused on details of the case (part of the Attending movement) and on what the persons in the case could do or not do (part of the Acting movement), but they said and wrote almost nothing about the second and third movements (Analyzing and Interpreting).

When I shared this observation with the group, they agreed that it was accurate. One group member stated that she was puzzled by the Analyzing movement, then a few others chimed in their agreement. They stated that they did not know what to do in the second and third movements; they did not know how to analyze and interpret the case.

This inability was reflected in one of the feedback surveys completed at the end of this session. One person wrote that (s)he felt most distanced from what was happening “in reading Abigail’s model for theological reflection—very hard to understand.”

I offered the group an interpretation of this phenomenon. I could have agreed with them—they didn’t know how to analyze and to interpret—but I believe that such a comment would have discouraged them and also been inaccurate. Instead of agreeing with them that they did not know how to analyze and interpret, I offered them the interpretation that they do access such resources (or “frameworks,” as Johnson calls them) but might do so implicitly (e.g., embedded assumptions).

This perspective on their seeming ignorance (and implicit failure) seemed to make a significant difference in the mood of the group and thus in their motivation for continuing. One person might have referred to my interpretation when (s)he wrote, “I thought it very helpful when Robert [the project facilitator] would comment on what we as a group perhaps weren’t able to express.”

Some of the comments from the next session’s feedback survey indicate almost a sense of relief in feeling more comfortable with Johnson’s model. By introducing the concept of “pastoral themes” during this session, the group was given a tool which helped them “prime the pump” of their own theological vocabulary and awareness. “Pastoral themes” became the

group's specific focus for Johnson's Analyzing movement. The result of this exercise seemed to increase greatly their confidence in their ability to reflect theologically.

This confidence is reflected in at least four of the written comments in the feedback survey. In responding to the question, "When did you feel most engaged with what was happening?" one participant wrote, "When we were working on theological insights and pastoral [*sic*] themes." Another person wrote, "Theological reflection with whole class, using "Pastoral Themes."

Similar comments were written in response to the question, "What action that anyone took (participant or facilitator) did you find most affirming or helpful?" One person wrote, "The entire evening, but especially after understanding better the 'theological connections.'" Another person wrote, "Showing us how we were already using theological connections." A third person wrote, "Hearing that we are providing what is requested or observed to our folks. Meeting their needs." This comment is vague, but I think it refers to my interpretation of them doing implicit theology and to the work on pastoral themes that session. In addition, in response to the question, "What surprised you the most?" one person wrote, "That I've finally gotten the 'new language' usage"; which I think is a reference to the work on theological reflection, which dominated that session.

The growth and confidence in doing theological reflection was also reflected in comments from a handout written ahead of time and brought to the fifth (final) session. The first question on this handout was, "What two or three ideas in our visits together have impacted you most? Three participants included aspects of theological reflection in their answers. One person wrote, "Have really enjoyed exploring the case studies and looking at these studies from a

theological approach as it relates to forgiveness.” Another participant refers to Pruyser’s pastoral themes,⁷ which (s)he calls “The questions to help spot expressed concerns as bases for exploring God’s concerns for, interest in, and opinions about a situation—examples being: 1. What, if anything is sacred or holy or totally beyond everyday life for this person? 2. What is the real foundation for this person’s life—self, family, money, position, education, friends, or something else, & where is God recognized?” A third person wrote of “The theological ‘method’ of working through forgiveness with Abigail’s Model and Pastoral Themes—the latter very helpful to me.”

Susan’s positive comments, as she responded to the final interview question, are the most extensive. “Yeah; I think what it did for me--and it was really a stretch—was how to look at pastoral situations from a theological point of view. I’ve never been trained in a theological way, so getting that practical approach out of the way—it was actually difficult, in the case studies and in the questions you had, it was difficult for me to grasp it, to where you were coming from, and how we were to be looking at things from a theological standpoint, and I really like that. I enjoyed it, and I think that it will help me in pastoral situations now, to pull myself back from the practical point of view and to think of it more in a theological approach. It’s excellent.” I replied in an attempt to restate what I heard her saying: “So, you still want to be practical—that’s one of the things you’re really good at—and you want to add the theological?” She then replies, “Add it; absolutely, especially in pastoral care; it would be incredible; I’ve just never been trained like that, like you have. Mine’s always been business; it’s a very different point of view. It’s not that being from a practical approach is bad—it’s good, it can keep you grounded, help you make concrete decisions when you need to—but at the same time, this is a wonderful

⁷ Participants were introduced to Pruyser’s pastoral themes as a resource Johnson uses in her theological reflection model.

balance, in the work that I have to do here. It's really made me look at things very differently. It had quite an impact on me.”

Susan displays enthusiasm for her newly-discovered theological resource while at the same time continuing to value her previously-acquired “practical” frameworks, such as business. She is not surrendering any earlier viewpoints but simply supplementing them with a clearer—more explicit--awareness of her theological resources.

In addition to the participants' own statements suggesting the influence of theological reflection on their formative processes, some of the Likert data also indicates such influence. The aggregate data collected from each of the three sections of the forgiveness survey could suggest an increase in the participants' facility to reflect theologically. This tentative conclusion is based on the percentage of change in each of the three sets of statements in the survey. Recall that each set represents one of three movements in the Johnson's theological reflection mode 1 used in this project. The first section corresponds to the model's first movement, Attending; the second section corresponds to the model's second movement, Analyzing; the third section goes with the third, Interpreting.

This data shows that the participants, after the five sessions, endorsed statements describing two of the three movements of theological reflection at a higher rate than before the five sessions. They endorsed Attending statements 12.96% more than before the sessions, and endorsed Interpreting statements 12% more than before the sessions.

I propose that these increased endorsements could indicate that the participants increased their attentiveness to forgiveness possibilities (the Attending movement) and similarly increased their interpretive activity about forgiveness insights (the Interpretive movement). These

increases in attentiveness and interpretation seem to point to a stronger and more active engagement with these two movements of theological reflection. That is, they were paying more attention to situations involving the potential for forgiveness, and they were more involved in developing insights about forgiveness. Both of these increases could mean that their facility with theological reflection has been enhanced.

The statements corresponding to the Analyzing movement underwent notable changes, too. Their post-session responses show an 8.5% change to their choices of frameworks. These changes could indicate shifts in the participants' choices of frameworks for considering their options; this shifting of choices might point to a formative process, which could influence their pastoral identity and practices.

Thus, I propose that these changes in the Likert-scaled statements could result from the participants' work in theological reflection, because each of the statements corresponds to one of the movements in Johnson's model. The data could point to a process of formation that was either evoked or enhanced through the participants' theological reflection.

In sum, then, the participants seem to have grown in their understanding of and then their experience with theological reflection. The initial encounters were met with frustration and perplexity but grew into some confidence, interest, and appreciation.

This chapter discussed theological reflection as a process of formation, using adult learning theories as lenses for understanding the process. The chapter began by offering a working description of theological reflection and by outlining the model for theological reflection used in the project. Using a model helps participants stay explicit and organized in the reflective task. The chapter then discussed adult learning theory as a way for understanding the

participant's experience with theological reflection. In the most basic sense, adult learning theory focuses on the person's own experiences as the "stuff" of their learning. Participant comments corroborated this dynamic: they witness to the importance of their own experiences in their formation before the project began, where theological reflection functioned implicitly.

Along with the lens of basic adult learning theory, I used two distinct theories that provided specific lenses on the participants' experiences. I concluded that the explicit theological reflection during the project contributed to these caregivers' formation by inviting them to construct individualized meanings within the social context/experience of the project. This conclusion supports the importance of adult pastoral theological reflection as a formation experience for lay pastoral caregivers.

Now that I have discussed theological reflection as a process of formation for the participants, the next task is to explore specifically the effects of that formation. That is, how did theological reflection possibly contribute to the caregivers' pastoral identities and their caregiving practices? Chapters four and five respond to that question. Let us turn to them now.

CHAPTER FOUR: THEOLOGICAL REFLECTION AND PASTORAL IDENTITY

Dorothy's pastoral identity was strongly influenced by participating in an unusual event, which motivated her to reflect on her own abilities. She volunteered to participate in a mission trip to the Dominican Republic but told the youth leader that she had no skills: "how am I gonna be of any use? Maybe I'm just taking up space; somebody else needed to go." The youth leader reassured her, asking her to focus on caring for others.

As she reports, her experience in worshipping with native Dominicans affected her profoundly: "And my reward, and my gift, my epiphany—whatever—was standing in that little Dominican church and seeing all around me the most beautiful praise and true worship. . . . recognizing some of the words being sung in Spanish . . . and just saying, yeah, the Holy Spirit . . . is right here in Santo Domingo. It's wherever; it's not just back . . . in Louisville." I wonder if the perception Dorothy formed during this experience resulted from her implicit work in reflecting theologically on that experience in light of her extant beliefs and attitudes.

Dorothy's experience seems to have influenced her pastoral identity, her sense of who she is as a lay minister. She states, "I've been filled with such a compassion for people that I've never had before." She is involved with several groups and ministries with the parish, and sees them all as opportunities to show compassion: "I know from personal experience that God loves me much more than I could ever have imagined, and I want others to know this." A sense of joy accompanies her work. Her passion is fueled by her growing confidence, her compassion, and the joy she perceives, which seem to be results of her personal and implicit work in theological reflection .

This chapter and the next one (chapters four and five) respond to the question, How did theological reflection possibly contribute to the caregivers' pastoral identities and their caregiving practices? This chapter reports on pastoral identity, based on my perceptions of participants' comments. As I describe below, pastoral identity is a person's sense of pastoral self in relation to others: "Who am I as a pastoral person?" It is a condition that is simultaneously a process and a condition continuously formed interactively between one's self and one's relationships. How did theological reflection contribute to the participants' sense of pastoral self-in-relationships? This chapter explores that question.

The chapter begins with a brief discussion of the nature of human identity in general and pastoral identity in particular. The bulk of the chapter reports on my perceptions of how theological reflection contributed to the participants' pastoral identity. It focuses first on implicit theological reflection, which occurred before the project and resulted in enhancing two aspects of pastoral identity for the participants. In answering the important question, "Who am I as a pastoral caregiver?" the participants' comments as a group revealed that they are passionate and committed to pastoral care and that they prize their relationships in pastoral care. Both of these aspects of pastoral identity seem congruent with a humanist learning outlook. The chapter then focuses on explicit theological reflection, which occurred during the project and contributed to individualized aspects of pastoral identity for four of the participants: enhanced resources, personal challenge, growing confidence, and managing perfectionism.

Before any reports on effects on pastoral identity, we need to set these reports in their proper context. It is important to recognize that the brief duration of this project influenced the effects of theological reflection on the participants. The effects seem small. Based on my experience as facilitator, I conclude that five 90-minute sessions is too brief a time for lay

pastoral caregivers—or maybe anyone, for that matter—to develop adequate skill and comfort with theological reflection. If seminaries and divinity schools bemoan the limitations of three years of graduate school in preparing students for ministry, then this project of five ninety-minute meetings clearly cannot elicit much noticeable change.

That period, however, was long enough to demonstrate for them the value of theological reflection and to excite and interest them in its value. That period was also long enough to stimulate their pastoral formation a little and to elicit comments that indicate some possible influences on the participants' pastoral identity and practice. This chapter reports on these possible influences.

Who Am I? Identity and Pastoral Identity (Theory)

Modern psychological understandings of human identity often credit the theoretical work of psychoanalytic theorist Erik Erikson. Erikson claimed that human identity emerges as persons answer the simple question, “Who am I?” with responses that are “personally satisfying and publicly acceptable” (Fowler & Hahn, 2005, p 565). That is, human identity results from a quest for meaning in terms of both a person's intrapsychic and social experiences. The quest is to achieve a kind of sameness and continuity within oneself as well as sameness and continuity with one's meanings in relation to other persons.

In elaborating on his concept, Erikson contended that identity is simultaneously a process and a condition. The condition is based on the process and occurs as persons continuously integrate accrued meaning; as such, identity involves a dynamic quality, as persons continuously interact and change with environments, which also change. These interactions influence a person's sense of self as well as a sense of how others seem to experience the person. These

influences, which allow a person to synthesize, adapt, and integrate, are basically unconscious but are noticeable by oneself and by others.

Pastoral identity is a specific kind of identity that seems to develop in ways similar to Erikson's description of identity as a condition resulting from dynamic processes. For instance, Thorton (2005) contends that one's pastoral identity develops from both personal and professional influences. Personal influences include self-awareness, self-esteem, self-actualizing, and self-transcending; professional influences include role models and mentors as well as church requirements, roles, and certifications. Genetics, family dynamics, and culture each also impact every person, creating a unique configuration of several influences on pastoral identity. This formation also involves some combination of a person's sense of norms and functions: norms derived from authorities (Scripture, church views, etc.) and from specific functions derived from social sciences.

Marshall's assertions (1994) about pastoral identity seem congruent with Erikson's claim that human identity involves a condition shaped by processes. She states that identity involves "a stabilizing internal core" which "is shaped in the ongoing context of external relationships" (p 15). Her term, "stabilizing internal core" could be an elaboration on Erikson's term, "condition," and her term, "ongoing context of external relationships," which include regular discourse and communal engagement, could refer to at least one of the "processes," which Erikson contends influences "condition." Thus, pastoral identity involves a person's sense of pastoral self as that self interacts with others in conversation and community.

Marshall's assertions about pastoral identity's dual foci of self and others also seems entirely consistent with Hess and Brookfield's view (2008) that pastoral formation involves

focus on self (spiritual awareness) and others (social attitudes). Both pastoral identity and the formation processes that enhance them focus on the person in her/his social context. Though the language varies from author to author, I believe they are describing the same interplay between one's inner self and one's social relationships. Thus, Hess and Brookfield's description of formation for a person—"the awakening and deepening of spiritual awareness" is described for pastoral identity by Marshall as the "stabilizing internal core." Similarly, Hess and Brookfield describe (2008) the person's social context in formation as "the development of human qualities of empathy, compassion, and love deemed central to pastoral work" (p 4) whereas Marshall describes it for pastoral identity as "the ongoing context of external relationships."

In sum, pastoral identity, like human identity in general, is a sense of one's pastoral self emerging from a continuous process and condition of meaning-making developed interactively between one's self and one's relationships. Pastoral identity seeks to answer the question, "Who am I as a pastoral caregiver?" in ways that maintain a sameness and continuity of meaning both within oneself and in relation to other persons.

Who Am I? Participants Speak of Pastoral Identity (Experience)

Theological reflection seems to have contributed to the participants' pastoral identity in two basic ways: implicitly before the project occurred and explicitly during the project. This section reports on the implicit theological reflection that occurred before the project began. Influences of explicit theological reflection follow in the next section.

In looking for results of implicit theological reflection that took place before the project, my informal use of Grounded Theory⁸ yielded two major themes, each of which illustrates an aspect of their pastoral identity. One theme is the participants' passion and commitment to pastoral care, and the other theme is their prizing of their relationships with the persons for whom they care. That is, the answer to the question, "Who am I as a lay pastoral caregiver?" is two-fold: I am a person passionate and committed to pastoral care, and I prize my relationships in pastoral care.

Who Am I? Implicit Reflection Prior to Project: Two Aspects of Pastoral Identity

As stated above, I understand pastoral identity to be one's sense of pastoral self as shaped in social contexts. It results from the interaction of a person's intrapsychic and interpersonal activities; it is a recursive function of the personal and the social. As I prepare to detail below the two major aspects of identity, I assert that each of the aspects illustrates one of the facets of pastoral identity. That is, the intrapsychic aspect is illustrated in their passion and commitment for pastoral care. The interpersonal aspect is illustrated in the other major theme, their prizing of relationships in pastoral care. The following section reports on these two aspects of identity, formed through implicit theological reflection before the project occurred.

Who Am I? A Person Passionate and Committed to Pastoral Care. Three participants in this section speak of their passion and commitment for pastoral care. The motivations they identify vary: sharing divine gifts; duty but uncertainty; inclination and personal satisfaction;

⁸ "Grounded theory is a form of comparative explanation-building popularized in sociology by Glaser and Strauss (1967), related to ethnography, though data may be gathered by diverse techniques such as interviewing, case studies, participant observation, and other means. Grounded theory is context-based and process-oriented, and advocates of grounded theory seek a continuous interplay between data collection and theoretical analysis. Both grounded theory and ethnography focus on meanings emerging from the phenomena studied rather than conceptualized a priori by the researcher." From G. David Garson at <http://faculty.chass.ncsu.edu/garson/PA765/grounded.htm>.

childhood experiences. Their journeys toward this ministry are not at all uniform. In each case, though, I detect that, whatever got them started, they commit themselves deeply to this ministry. Their passion and commitment far outweighs any sense of duty or occasional sense of drudgery they might feel about providing pastoral care.

Alice speaks of her passion for pastoral care developing as a child: “I’ve always enjoyed older people, and I was exposed to older folks growing up, when my parents entertained.” Then that passion increased as she cared for her mother, who had Alzheimer’s disease. Later, she “didn’t know anything about it” when a pastor invited her to “get into the lay ministry.” She comments, “of all the things that I do, it brings me more peace and joy and comfort, and it makes me so aware of how God works in these people and then in my own life.” Her passion is fueled by her comfort as she interacts with older persons and also by the joy and peace she senses as she provides care.

Paul identifies his own inclination and satisfaction as influencing him to offer pastoral care. At first, he wasn’t sure “if I would be qualified for that or not,” yet he adds, “I’ve always been a caregiving person, and I just thought that would be another way I could serve the church and serve the parish.” He writes that one of his motivations for providing care is “to help satisfy my need to comfort someone;” in the oral interview he states, “part of it is personal satisfaction that I get out of being able to give pastoral care to a person.” Later in the interview, he elaborates: “You can’t be involved in a spiritual activity without getting excited, and when you get excited, you feel like you’re doing something.” His passion is fueled by his interest and by his strong sense of satisfaction.

Linda's passion for pastoral care seems to be the result of her own implicit work in reflecting theologically. Her theological reflection focused on two facets of her life. One of these facets is her desire to share her gifts with others. She says, "I have been born with many, many gifts. . . . And I've always felt that, because they were gifts from God, that I needed to give back as much as I could." She feels not only gifted but also responsible for best efforts: "I've always felt that I needed to do my best with the gifts that God has given me." Even now, though she is in her mid-70s, she still reports, "I drive myself," to use her gifts well for God and others.

The other facet of her life upon which Linda seems to have reflected theologically is her personal experience with recovering after surgery. Because she has undergone four hip replacements, she observes, "I've been given as much care as I've given, at times." Receiving care herself has intensified her awareness of the need and importance of such care; it has also intensified her desire to provide care herself. Thus, her passion and commitment for pastoral care emerges from her sense of giftedness, of responsibility, and of personal experience in receiving care, which I believe are outcomes of her personal and implicit work in theological reflection .

In sum, one contribution which implicit theological reflection seems to have made on participants' pastoral identity is their passion and commitment to pastoral care. Part of the answer to the question, "Who am I as a pastoral caregiver?" is "I am a person passionate and committed to pastoral care." Though they are aware of this aspect of their identities, they are likely not aware that they reflected theologically in developing this aspect; that reflection occurred implicitly. Furthermore, this aspect is an intrapsychic facet of their identity. An interpersonal facet of their identity will be discussed next: they see themselves as persons who prize relationships in pastoral care.

Who Am I? A Person Who Prizes Relationships in Pastoral Care. The other major aspect of their pastoral identity to which implicit theological reflection contributed is their relational perception of pastoral care. They see care as founded on their relationships with persons receiving care. For them, pastoral care rises out of those relationships, and does not seem to be an ancillary aspect of pastoral care. This relationship model is a rich one, for it deepens our understandings of what occurs between a care giver and a care receiver. The image is not an impersonal one, not a “dispensing” image, such as a clerk receiving money to purchase items, a nurse’s aide distributing meals to patients, or a person placing newspapers in mailboxes. For these participants, the pastoral care they provide occurs in a relational setting, in a context of a meaningful relationship with persons receiving care. This image is interpersonal; pastoral care is relational: “I am a person who prizes relationships in pastoral care.” In the following section, I report on four participants who speak clearly about prizing relationships in pastoral care. Joseph stresses relationships implicitly, Paul does so explicitly, Alice describes ways she demonstrates her prizing, and Betty discusses childhood influences and the emotional price of prizing relationships.

Joseph implicitly stresses the priority of the relationship, no matter what help he might give. Caregivers need to know their limits: “you can get over your head real quick.” In such cases, “about all a person could do . . . is just share your experiences, your strength, your own hopes.” He believes that sharing a life experience is more helpful than giving advice or suggesting a book to read. He cites the help he offered families on two occasions when a young person committed suicide; his own son had died by his own hand, so Joseph believed he had credibility and his own experience to offer the families. He’s convinced that books are not what people want; they want the human contact. Suggesting a book is “kind of blowing people off,

for lack of a better word. They want your ear; they want to sit down, like we're sitting, and to discuss rationally what's going on with them, or they wouldn't have asked."

Paul explicitly states that providing pastoral care involves building relationships: "you get into a personal relationship with the people you visit;" it's more than giving Holy Communion to the person. Further, the effects run both directions: the caregiver influences the one visited "or you've been influenced by some of the people you've been ministering to." Some of these visits have impressed him strongly: "Sometimes it gives you great great satisfaction just being there when they want someone to be there with them. So when you share, it's really a good time, when you both kind of feel the Spirit, the Holy Spirit coming down and being with both of you." Paul's visits are not "dispensing sessions," to give a handshake, a church bulletin, and/or communion. He perceives the importance of the relationship between himself as caregiver and the person he's visiting.

Alice demonstrates her prizing of relationships in her descriptions of her pastoral care. For instance, she describes reliability as an important aspect of her ministry: "I'm very diligent about seeing them once a week, and they know they can count on me on Wednesdays. My day is set aside for them." Another aspect of her ministry is trust, which she describes in the context of her visits to a woman whose "daughters never come to see her" and whose former friend ignores her—"there is a breach there that has gone on for years." As a result, Alice says, "I build trust, and she looks forward to seeing me, and she now comes out of her room, and we can walk up and down the halls."

She also brings flowers or baked goods, for which the woman shows great appreciation and replies, "I can't do anything for you." Alice tells the woman, "Oh, yes! Every time I come,

you have no idea how much you give me in the way of love and appreciation. . . . Just our time spent together, just doing things together, and knowing that I'm never turned away when I come to see you." She also brings other family members to visit some of her persons: "When the children come this summer, we'll go around and see each person, and say hello, and take a little something, and it just makes them feel like they are included and that we really are friends, I think." That is, Alice stresses their relationship as mutually benefitting.

Betty's attention to the relational nature of care seems rooted in her childhood experience of loneliness. "I grew up as an only child. I was one of the original latchkey kids. My dad was killed real early in the war [World War II]. Mom had to provide for us; she was an orphan herself, so she didn't have any kind of backup network. I wasn't allowed to go to any other children's houses after school. . . . I was supposed to go to school, get home and call her and tell her I was safe. That's not a loneliness that goes away; it becomes part of your personality—who you are. And I sense so much of that going into the nursing homes." Betty wonders if "maybe the reason I grew up so lonely is because I was able to develop an empathy with people who are lonely. God being able to make good out of any "situation." She seeks to "really focus on God," then "bring some of that to these people." She wants to offer hope.

She is also motivated by her three most important theological beliefs, which are "the love of God and the forgiveness through Christ" and "his desiring fellowship as a result of the first two." The fellowship she imagines extends out to other persons, informing her pastoral care: "if I'm gonna treasure the preciousness of God's love for me, I better darn well get off my duff and love other people!"

Betty also notes that empathic relationships are emotionally risky: “you really get attached to these people. . . . You can’t go see them every single week, year after year, and not get attached to them. And then you walk in, and there’s either somebody else in the room or else there’s a lock on the door. That’s a grieving process that has to be dealt with . . . this year particularly, because we lost a lot of people.” She grieves the loss of a meaningful relationship, one formed through regular contact, albeit in a restricted setting, but a relationship that gave satisfying human contact and meaning for Betty. She gives no indication, however, that she would consider stopping this ministry in order to avoid the grief.

To sum up, these participants comment at length about the relational aspect of their pastoral care. They visit people not simply to dispense or deliver something but to relate meaningfully with them. This prizing of relationships illustrates the interpersonal aspect of pastoral identity; their pastoral self involves loving their neighbors as themselves, valuing the person more than the ministry they provide. This relational aspect of pastoral care inheres to the participants’ identity as caregivers.

We now turn our attention to influences of explicit theological reflection on the participants’ pastoral identities. These influences occurred during the project rather than before it, and they are both generalized and specific. That is, the Likert data indicates some generalized influence: the participants as a group report some change in their pastoral identities, both in terms of their internal core and their external relationships. Other influences were specific to individual participants, as exhibited in comments from the oral interviews of four participants

and supported by the collective Likert data.⁹ First I report on the generalized influences, then on the individualized influences.

Who Am I? Explicit Theological Reflection During the Project

Generalized Influences on Pastoral Identity. Increased endorsement of five of the Likert-scaled statements¹⁰ could indicate some generalized influence on the participants' pastoral identity. That is, the Likert data, which was collected in aggregate, could show pastoral identity changes in the group as a whole. This suggestion is not based on a formal use of statistics but on an informal exploration of the statements in light of my understanding of pastoral identity. This suggestion is tentative, because it is not clear what evoked these increases in endorsing these five statements. Here are the Likert-scaled statements and their changes in percentages.¹¹

2. I've faced significant opportunities to work on forgiving someone. 9.26%
3. At times, I've recognized another person's challenge to forgive. 31.48%
4. I have forgiven someone for a serious hurt. 14.8%
12. I have strengthened or enriched some of my forgiveness ideas. 14.8%
13. Some of my deep feelings about forgiveness have changed. 18.5%

⁹ The Likert data is presented in aggregate, rather than individually, and is anonymous. In this form, it seems to support these individual participants' witness to pastoral identity changes due to explicit theological reflection.

¹⁰ As noted earlier, the Likert data was gathered through a survey consisting of 15 statements to which each participant responded by circling a number between one ("Strongly Disagree") and seven ("Strongly Agree"). The statements were designed to correspond to the Attending, Analyzing, and Interpreting movements of Johnson's model theological reflection.

¹¹ It is important here to focus on process rather than content. The changes in responses are process changes, which occur in the context of the topic of forgiveness, the content. To conclude that the participants merely acquired more information about forgiveness would be a misstep. The content of the project is forgiveness, but the focus of the project is not its content but its process—theological reflection. Many other topics could have been used as the content of the project, and any of them would have served the purpose of stimulating the participants to reflect theologically.

I offer three tentative perceptions about this data as possibly revealing changes in pastoral identity. These perceptions relate to the two aspects of pastoral identity, the “internal core” and the “external relationships.” First, statements 12 and 13 focus on participants’ “internal core,” their intrapsychic processes—their self. The statements refer to the participants’ ideas and deep feelings, which are intrapsychic processes and which changed by a cumulative average of 16.66%. These increases seem to indicate that the participants had engaged in important personal reflection on their ideas and feelings about forgiveness. This dynamic could influence their pastoral identities.

Second, statements two and four also focus on participants’ “internal core” indirectly but focus on “external relationships” directly. To face a forgiveness opportunity requires mobilizing one’s intrapsychic self to pay attention to it, regardless of the outcome. To forgive someone often includes a behavioral component, but the decision to forgive begins internally. Participants’ “external relationships” are also reflected in statements two and four, because the situation described in both statements is overtly interpersonal. Thus, these two statements involve both aspects of pastoral identity—the personal (intrapsychic) and the interpersonal (social). The two statements averaged a 12% increase in agreement, which points to the possible influence of the participants’ theological reflection.

Both pastoral identity and pastoral practice seem to be reflected in statement three. This statement received by far the highest increase, 31.48%, possibly because the participants’ focus on theological reflection alerted them to this awareness. Such attention, it seems to me, is an example of Attending, the first movement of Johnson’s theological reflection model. I suggest that the participants’ heightened attention to forgiveness opportunities in others points to influences on both their pastoral identity and practice. In terms of identity, recognizing another’s

forgiveness challenge sounds like a personal (intrapsychic) activity: “I’m a pastoral caregiver who notices another person’s challenge to forgive.” It could mean that participants perceive themselves, as a result of the project, as more alert to pay attention to these challenges.

In terms of practice, this awareness is an important part of the participants’ preparation to provide care. Some pastoral care needs could be provided without knowing of them specifically, but awareness of them greatly enhances a caregiver’s ability to respond to them. Such recognition can help a participant to properly assess a care receiver’s situation and then to prepare to offer help in appropriate ways.

In sum, then, increased endorsement of five of the Likert-scaled statements could indicate some generalized influence on the participants’ pastoral identity. That is, the Likert data, which was collected in aggregate, could show pastoral identity changes in the group as a whole. This influence affected both the personal and the interpersonal aspects of their identities. We turn now to report on individualized influences on pastoral identity.

Individualized Influences on Pastoral Identity. Four of the participants made statements that seem to point to the influence of their theological reflection during the project. In written comments, one participant tells of feeling enriched with faith-related sources for assessing care seekers’ situations. In another written comment, a participant relates her/his personal struggle to enact a forgiveness process, which has kindled her/his interest in her faith’s understanding of forgiveness and how that understanding might enable her to continue the process. In the oral interviews, Paul reports on the change in his confidence in providing care. For Linda, the change focused on her self-care in managing her perfectionism. The following section elaborates on

these participants' statements and supports them with the generalized Likert-scale data for three of the participants.

Pastoral Identity as Enhanced Resources. Reflecting theologically seems to have stirred increased awareness in one of the participants of available resources for providing pastoral care. (S)he comments, "I probably tend to use my background profession as I see individuals—I could improve this by doing more with theological bases—perhaps integrating the two." Doing theological reflection apparently has broadened this participant's view of resources for assessing care receivers. This broadening indicates an internal change, influencing pastoral identity by providing the participant with enriched theological perspectives on persons (s)he serves. Also, the comment about "doing more with theological bases" seems to indicate the participant's acquiring a richer sense of a pastoral self and, by extension, imagining caregiving that is intentionally pastoral.

Likert-scale data from the entire group could suggest that other participants also believe that they enhanced their resources for providing care. The significant increases in endorsing statements two, three, four, twelve, and thirteen could be interpreted as indicating that participants perceive themselves with enhanced resources. This tentative conclusion is possible, because each of these five statements addresses either an important interpersonal experience (statements two, three, and four) or internal change (statements twelve and thirteen). These results of these efforts can enhance participants' resources, thus affecting their pastoral identity.

Pastoral Identity from Personal Challenge. Reflecting theologically seems to have helped another participant in a personal struggle with a long-standing interpersonal wound: "I am still struggling to forgive a friend who betrayed me a long number of years ago." The

participant's understanding of divine grace continues to inform her/him: "God's forgiveness is offered to us, and in turn that outpouring of grace compels us to forgive." This understanding helps the participant to envision a resolution: "But knowing that God's forgiveness compels us to forgive will hopefully let me move forward toward reconciliation."

Johnson's model of theological reflection provides a way of observing this participant's struggle with this interpersonal wound. The participant clearly is Attending to this wound. Her/his experience in the project offered her frameworks for Analyzing the experience (e.g., divine grace) and for Interpreting the experience ("that outpouring of grace compels us to forgive"). These movements have begun to influence the participant's options for Acting ("hopefully let me move forward toward reconciliation").

The Likert data seems to support the possibility that other participants have also grown in their pastoral identities by facing a personal challenge. The clearest indication of this possibility is statement four, "I have forgiven someone for a serious hurt," which saw a nearly 15 % increase in endorsement. Statement two, which saw a nearly 10 % increase, could also indicate growth in pastoral identity through personal challenge: "I've faced significant opportunities to work on forgiving someone."

Pastoral Identity as Growing Confidence. Paul's statement about his growing confidence in his ability to provide care points to the influence of his theological reflection on himself as a caregiver. He states, "I guess my biggest change was listening to the other people we were with; they had the same doubts that I did about pastoral care: are we able to carry out what we really want to do as a pastoral leader . . . ?" As a result of working case studies in his groups and hearing others' input, he concludes: ". . . everybody has the same problems. There's not a new

problem that's been brought up out of all of the seven or eight people of us together. All of us people had the same doubts, and they were out to get all the information and to learn as much as they possibly could." He perceived in the other participants the same eagerness to learn and feel support as he experienced. The result: "And I felt totally a lot more qualified to be a pastoral care leader after the five sessions we had." His social learning experience did more than provide him with a forum for accumulating information about pastoral care. It also reassured him that he shared the same doubts and needs as the other caregivers. This reassurance evoked in him a sense of increased confidence for providing care.

I propose that Paul's growing confidence, stimulated by his reflecting theologically on himself as a caregiver, is a matter of pastoral identity. Paul's experience exemplifies, more than any other statements made by participants, the formation dynamic of intrapersonal/interpersonal interaction, which influences pastoral identity. Caregivers need to perceive enough self-assurance to function effectively. Self-assurance, as part of a person's perceptions of ability and agency, is an important aspect of one's identity. Thus, the social learning that erased Paul's doubts allowed him to experience increased confidence for providing pastoral care.

The Likert data seems to support the possibility that other participants have also grown in their confidence as caregivers. This growing confidence could be exhibited in the increased endorsement of statements one and three: "People have asked me to help them work on forgiving someone" and "At times, I've recognized another person's challenge to forgive." These statements seem to show increased awareness of forgiveness challenges, an awareness that could indirectly improve participants' confidence as caregivers. They could feel more confident in this one aspect of potential pastoral care.

Pastoral Identity as Managing Perfectionism. Linda's discussion of self-forgiveness and perfectionism illuminates her sense of pastoral identity: "... forgive ourselves for what we forgot to do or what we didn't do well, or we feel we didn't do well." This topic was the most frequent one in her response to the last interview question, "has your pastoral care giving changed any through our time together?" She muses, "... you can't do things like this without forgiveness, first of yourself." She describes herself as "just ... being a perfectionist and wanting everything to be just so. And I'm my own worst enemy in that respect. I'm talking mainly about me, because I will have a lot of patience with other people." She sees caregiving as a demanding challenge: "when you get that close to personal things, as caregiving is, you always are thinking from your [her sentence ended here] . . . what you need to give to others—from inside you." She speaks of her need to attend to her own spiritual self, her "stabilizing internal core," as Marshall terms it, in order to feel adequately prepared to serve others: "The great need for self-forgiveness before attempting another. One cannot do well in a pastoral care-like situation when burdened with self-guilt, anger, frustration, resentment."

Her awareness of her perfectionism seems to help her display sensitivity to others who might feel inadequate; she tells of encouraging a recently-divorced person in providing pastoral care: "She's wonderful! She really is a caregiver. She just needs help to feel secure enough in herself to do it." Apparently Linda's own perfectionism does not inhibit her from helping others with a similar challenge.

This perfectionist tendency in Linda is a matter of her pastoral identity, I believe. Her statements indicate that she is highly conscientious—she wants to provide pastoral care in the best ways that she can imagine are possible for her. A motto for her might be something like, "I seek to serve my care receivers to the absolute best of my divinely-infused abilities." An

implicit sub-text for her motto might be, “I will fail God if I don’t do everything right in my caregiving.” She recognizes that her perfectionism interacts with her personal life; she explicitly refers to the challenge of her husband’s Alzheimer’s disease: “and so I pray for wisdom,” she concludes, “to be led more in the ways that I know I should be heading.”

In sum, then, the comments from these four participants indicate changes in their pastoral identity as a result of reflecting theologically during the project. The changes were intrapersonal, but they were stimulated through their social learning. Of the written statements, one involves the person’s enrichment of faith-related sources for responding to persons seeking care, and the other involves the person’s own struggle to enact a forgiveness process, which has kindled her/his interest in her faith’s understanding of forgiveness and how that understanding might enable her to continue the process. For Paul, the change focused on his confidence in providing care. For Linda, the change focused on her self-care in managing her perfectionism. The Likert data seems to support the possibility that other participants’ pastoral identity was influenced in ways similar to the reports of Paul and the two anonymous written statements.

This chapter reported on contributions of theological reflection on participants’ pastoral identities. It described pastoral identity as the interaction of an “internal core” with “external relationships,” a sense of pastoral self in relationships. It noted that theological reflection occurred implicitly before the project began and explicitly during the project. The implicit effects seemed consistent with all participants: their passion and commitment for pastoral care, and, two, their prizing of relationships in pastoral care. The explicit effects seemed individualized, as indicated from four participants’ comments but also had support from the generalized Likert data. Now that we have explored the influence of theological reflection of

participants' identity, in the next chapter we turn to exploring its influence on their thinking about pastoral practices.

CHAPTER FIVE: THEOLOGICAL REFLECTION AND CAREGIVING PRACTICES

In the final written exercise of the project, one of the three questions participants answered was, How might your pastoral care be different now? Some of the participants' responses, though vague, indicate changes in their outlook on pastoral care and about new plans for care. One participant writes, "I look at pastoral care with a much larger scope now," though (s)he provides no details. Another writes of the desire to "make myself more available to those who need me." A third person declares that "this experience will help in knowing what to say in many situations." Another participant recognizes that he has a wide set of options for his pastoral care: "it's made me more aware that there are other things that we can do than deliver the eucharist, even though we've been involved in some other things, anyway—the flower delivery and other things; we're here at the church for just about anything. . . . But you know, it's made me aware that there are other things that we can do and are willing to do and can do."

In spite of the vague nature of most of these responses, what seems clear is some kind of change in the participants' outlook on their pastoral practice. Deeper questioning could have revealed in what ways, for instance, the one participant looks at pastoral care with a much larger scope, and how the other participant would make her/himself more available, and what kinds of things the third participant would say "in many situations." Although these details are absent, the participants' experience in theological reflection appears to have contributed to the formation of their caregiving practices.

How did theological reflection contribute to the participants' pastoral identities and their thinking about caregiving practices? Chapter four offers answers to this question in terms of pastoral identities. Here in chapter five, we explore theological reflection's influence on the

participants' thinking about their caregiving practices. As the comments above indicate, some of the participants seem to credit their experience together in reflecting theologically with stimulating some kind of shift in contemplation about their caregiving. This exploration uses two lenses for viewing the participants' many comments. The first lens is the four classic functions of pastoral care from Clebsch and Jaekle—healing, sustaining, guiding, and reconciling. This lens provided a way of recognizing and discussing the various kinds of pastoral care the participants reported providing. The second lens is the psychologist Prochaska's five-stage model of change, which asserts that change involves much more than a specific action. Through the lens of this model, change did not occur with the participants as specific behaviors; rather, change occurred in terms of the participants contemplating and planning for specific behavior changes. The chapter begins with a brief discussion of the concept of pastoral practice, then moves to presenting participant practices through the lens of Clebsch and Jaekle, and finishes with a report on apparent changes, using the lens of Prochaska's change model.

Pastoral Practice: Theory

The importance of attending to self and others in forming pastoral identity also inheres to developing pastoral practice. For example, pastoral counselor Hartung contends (2005) that developing discrete skills for pastoral caregiving involves a tension between being and doing. He notes that the aspect of being/becoming is more important than doing to organizations such as the Association for Clinical Pastoral Education (ACPE) and the American Association of Pastoral Counselors (AAPC). In this view, self-understanding is the foundation from which pastoral techniques naturally emerge. Such self-understanding includes qualities acquired

through experience in a faith community (faith, integrity, and wisdom) and qualities acquired through psychological maturity (selfhood and interpersonal skills).

On the other hand, pastoral caregiving also involves doing, thus forcing the question of how specific skills and techniques emerge from the ethereal qualities acquired through faith resources and social sciences. In other words, “does the pastor learn pastoral care by learning technique, or by becoming a more ‘whole’ person?” (Hartung, 2005, p 1255). To complicate the issue, no one universal set of techniques exists, because techniques reflect the contexts/cultures in which they function, whether or not caregivers recognize this reflection.

Because this project situates itself in the broad context of formation for ministry, and because of formation’s focus on spiritual awareness and interpersonal attitudes, I embrace the “being” preference (that is, pastoral identity) over the “doing” preference. Caregiving becomes pastoral when those who offer it function out of a pastoral identity (“being”); they see themselves as offering something that is distinctly pastoral. And what makes their offerings pastoral are the fruits of theological reflection, as I will describe shortly. In other words, “the capacity to think and act theologically is central to Christian life and critical for pastoral identity” (Aleshire, 1995, p 26). Caregiving becomes pastoral as persons reflect theologically, which is essential to the formation of their pastoral identity. Giving primacy to pastoral identity does not mean, however, that the project will neglect pastoral practices. Practices are important, because they emerge from one’s identity and thus reflect, as Marshall and Hess/Brookfield note, one’s attitudes towards others.

Let us now turn to examining participants’ pastoral practices. First, I use Clebsch and Jaekle’s typology of four historic pastoral functions to discern pastoral practices in the

participants. The authors' typology serves as a lens for specifying many of the participants' practices: they provide appropriately-contextualized expressions of healing, sustaining, guiding, and reconciling. Then to explore change in pastoral practices, the chapter draws on Prochaska's five-stage Transtheoretical Model of Change to serve as a lens for recognizing change in participant data. I conclude that no specific changes were enacted during the project but that participants expressed many plans to make changes (Prochaska's Stage 3).

Participants' Pastoral Care Practices

One helpful way to explore the pastoral care of the project's participants is to discuss them in light of the classic typology of pastoral care functions¹² described a generation ago by Clebsch and Jaekle (1967). While their typology has been predictably critiqued and revised from post-modern perspectives, it is nonetheless useful in this project, because of its delineation of pastoral care functions that are fundamental and thus enduring.

The authors contend that pastoral care in each period of church history was dominated by one of four basic pastoral functions: healing, sustaining, guiding, and reconciling. The authors also assert that these four functions can find appropriate expressions in contemporary contexts and "each function uses more than one mode, and a multitude of means" (p 10). I agree that these four functions find contemporary expression in various means and modes, as comments from the participants indicate. Dorothy and Susan report on healing prayer, as a classic form of healing, while Alice reports on a contemporary form—encouraging someone to socialize.

¹² Clebsch and Jaekle built on Seward Hiltner's earlier work, *Preface to Pastoral Theology*, in which Hiltner names healing, sustaining, and guiding as activities within the shepherding perspective of a minister of a congregation; Holifield, "Seward Hiltner," in *Dictionary of Pastoral Care and Counseling*, p 508.

The Healing Function of Pastoral Practice

Dorothy states that she serves on the parish's healing team, which reportedly meets right after Sunday morning worship in a chapel room next to the main sanctuary. Anyone wishing for prayers about physical and medical conditions enters the chapel and describes her/his situation to the team, who then offers prayers for the person. The healing prayer team also prayed for a woman in a hospital suffering from a stroke; Dorothy remembers, "she could get those words out, 'healing prayer team,' and we went to the hospital immediately and laid hands on her and prayer, and covered her in much prayer."

Susan tells of witnessing a number of persons receiving prayers for healing: "I've seen healing prayer going on. It happens every day, seeing God work within these people's lives. It's awesome." She names healing prayer as the second of her three most important beliefs for her personal faith: "that has come through here in my work in pastoral care, to see that happening every day; it's just amazing." She also recounts the parish's prayer support for her brother, dying of cancer: "'we went through all that with him. The church prayed for him during that time, and I can remember our whole family feeling so uplifted, and my brother, too; he came here and was prayed for with the priests, and it was wonderful, what he experienced. And I can remember how incredibly powerful that was, to be prayed for, and to see the healing that I've seen go on in this church.'"

Alice provides a story of her pastoral care with a woman in a care facility that exemplifies one of the "new and fresh expressions" of the pastoral function of healing for which Clebsch and Jaekle hope (p 42). Alice knows that, because of the woman's dementia, restoring her mental functioning is not possible. What is possible, though, is to help her advance—advance beyond her current level of functioning. "I build trust, and she looks forward to seeing

me, and she now comes out of her room, and we can walk up and down the halls, and she's in the same area with Mr. _____, so I'll say, 'Let's walk down to see if we can stick our head in his door. Well, she would never have done that before. And we chit chat with her neighbors.'

Alice accepts the woman's capabilities and works within them to encourage their optimal use.

When the woman expressed deep appreciation and a sense of unworthiness for baked goods that Alice brought her, Alice proposed that the woman could return the favor by continuing to visit other nursing care residents, even when Alice is not present: "what would help me is if you would go out, when you leave your room, you show kindness to other people. Then that's something that I pass on, and you help me by doing that with people when I'm not around. And she's very receptive to all that." Alice editorializes: "I encourage her to step out."

In sum, the participants exhibit the healing function of pastoral care in the classic form of healing prayer, as Dorothy and Susan report, and in Alice's new form of encouraging someone to socialize.

The Sustaining Function of Pastoral Practice

The sustaining function of pastoral care historically focused on "a fourfold task of helping persons troubled by an overwhelming sense of loss" (Clebsch & Jaekle, 1967, p 43). Sustaining began with preserving as much as possible from a person's situation, then moved to consoling the person in light of her/his destiny under God, then worked toward consolidating the person's remaining resources for her/his deprived life, and finally sought to redeem the person's life "in the fact of irretrievable deprivation" (p 43).

Joseph tells briefly of offering solace to families in their parish after the suicides of two young adults in separate incidents. Having lost his own son had limited familiarity with both families. He states, "I was able to go to them and at least be able to express my condolences and

also some things that helped us, that's kind of helped me live after ____ [his son]." Joseph offered sustaining pastoral care.

By contrast, Susan tells of receiving sustaining care. During her adult brother's battle with cancer, the family pulled together and sought help from the congregation. "We went through all that with him. The church prayed for him during that time, and I can remember our whole family feeling so uplifted, and my brother, too." Even though her brother died, the family felt sustained through the ordeal: "He came here and was prayed for with the priests, and it was wonderful, what he experienced. And I can remember how incredibly power that was, to be prayed for."

One contemporary expression of the sustaining pastoral function could be responding to the chronic and progressive losses experience by persons as they age and, for some of them, as they live cut off from their families in nursing care facilities. The regular pastoral care which these participants provide can help sustain such persons' sense of personal dignity, meaning, and hope in the context of their progressive declines, which can be global, involving not only their physical and mental conditions but also their social networks, their financial situations, and, as a result, their spiritual condition.

The sustaining function is also reflected, at least indirectly, by responses to the "Exploring Pastoral Care Actions" survey at the conclusion of the project. One participant writes of an increased desire to find "more of unchurched believers in the nursing homes we visit." The purpose of this search seems to be to offer sustaining care, for the participant continues, "I really feel that the Holy Spirit has been able to use us to bring peace to those we visit." A sense of peacefulness would clearly be a goal of sustaining pastoral care. Another participant addresses the same outcome, I believe, from a "how to" perspective: "making the

person who you are caring for [sic] comfortable & gaining trust in you.” Sustaining care would lead to a sense of comfort emerging from a sense of trust between care provider and receiver.

The Guiding Function of Pastoral Practice

The guiding function of pastoral care focuses on achieving “some wisdom concerning what one ought to do when he [sic] is faced with a difficult problem of choosing between various courses of action or thought” (Clebsch & Jaekle, pp 49-50). Two of its four historic forms, I believe, adapt well to many of today’s cultural and pastoral contexts.¹³ One is stressing the eternal backdrop of important decisions: —“regarding human decisions as highly significant before God” (p 55). The other is listening, which can be done three ways: to clarify thoughts, to unburden internal pressure, and to reflect for inner meaning.

Two of the participants’ comments, written in response to the question, “How might your pastoral care be different now?” seem to address guiding as the stressing the eternal backdrop of important decisions. One of them writes, “Be better prepared to answer their spiritual questions.” This response seems to display the participant’s heightened awareness of spiritual quest possibilities with some care seekers, a quest that would include some perception of an eternal backdrop. The reply also displays the participant’s decision to respond to a care seeker’s questioning. The other participant’s comment is more direct: “I would like to discuss with clarity and encouragement questions of eternal life & concerns during serious illness and/or impending death.” Here the participant expresses a perception that major illness and/or death provide important opportunities to clarify and to encourage a care seeker, opportunities that often involve one’s perception of an eternal backdrop for one’s life and destiny.

¹³ The other two forms, devil-craft and advice-giving, do not adapt well to current cultural and pastoral contexts. The use of devil-craft reflects a worldview not accepted or useful in industrialized cultures, and advice-giving reflects a hegemonous hierarchical outlook not consistent with current contexts of diversity and mutual respect.

Most participant comments focus on the listening form of guiding. In responding to the question, “How might your pastoral care be different now?” one participant writes, “I can reference theological connections for questions from my people,” which seems to be a description of listening to clarify and/or listening to offer insight. Another participant also seems to be ready to listen for clarification, for part of what (s)he wants to do differently now is to “ask needed questions,” a behavior requiring careful listening. Yet another participant wants to offer care differently through “the questions to help spot expressed concerns as bases for exploring,” which includes two questions inspired by Pruyser’s seven pastoral themes: “1. What, if anything is sacred or holy . . . for this person? 2. What is the foundation for this person’s life?” In responding to the last question of the oral interview, this participant states, “I’ll try to understand more the foundations of people’s lives, particularly what do they hold of the sacred. . . . “I don’t think I ever thought about that question in exploring people’s world view. . . . I never thought particularly along the lines of . . . what does this person hold as sacred.” This comment sounds like an interest in enhancing his skill in listening to clarify.

Other participants’ responses also seem to focus on listening. One writes of the desire to “utilize and reference the pastoral themes and the theological connections in determining how to proceed. What does this person need and want from me.” Another replies to the question of changed caregiving with, “Well, I think that just listening to other people, how they view situations, and the things that we talked about in the whole program of grace and forgiveness and communication and trying to evaluate if there’s a problem, the steps we’ll be trying to take to make sure that we are assessing correctly what their needs are. . . .” Listening to clarify seems to be the intent. Yet another participant says, “I found out you have to have patience and you have to listen more than you take control.” A pastoral care goal for one participant involves

listening: “To use the Abigail model as a tool when the situation indicates ‘my help’ is needed by someone for whom I’m providing care. I want to be more open & discerning to those I am pastoring.”

The Reconciling Function of Pastoral Practice

The reconciling function of pastoral care helps “alienated persons to establish or renew proper and fruitful relationships with God and neighbor” (Clebsch & Jaekle, p 56). Though Episcopal lay caregivers are not ordained and thus cannot speak words of absolution for sin (a duty reserved for priests and bishops), they surely are able to offer a broad range of pastoral care that is not strictly sacramental. Such care can occur through listening, as discussed above; through offering prayers with/for the seeker; and through administering Holy Communion, which is one of the church’s most potent and dramatic acts of reconciliation. I would think that even the inter-personal warmth of the ministry encounter itself could mediate a sense of the encouragement and hope inherent in reconciliation.

A few of the participants, commenting on visits made before this project, indicate an awareness of the potential for reconciliation, especially between family members. Betty states that, for some persons in facilities she visits, “no one comes to see them,” even though family lives in the vicinity. Alice speaks of her knowledge of strained relationships between a woman she visits and the woman’s daughters. She also observes, “It’s amazing to me how many people are in nursing homes or assisted living, and their families live in town, and they see them very rarely.” Dorothy reports on learning from other participants that they at times have addressed family conflict. Thus, if the reconciling function seeks to help “alienated persons to establish or renew proper and fruitful relationships with God and neighbor,” as Clebsch and Jaekle define it,

then the data shows some awareness of the addressing the potential for reconciliation no plans for action taken to establish or renew relationships.

This awareness increases significantly, however, in data gathered near and at the end of the project. In written and oral statements made after the fourth and fifth sessions, participants comment on the importance of and the need for reconciliation at times. In answering, “How might your pastoral care be different now?” one participant sees the ripple effects of strained relationships and wants to involve all persons effected: “more than the two individuals are involved in an offense—the extended family who may have allegiance to the other connected party. I think it’s important to include all these parties in the process.”

Another participant writes of increased willingness to offer care for potential reconciliation: “I would not be as reluctant to reach other to someone suffering unforgiveness and/or relationship breaches [*sic*].” Dorothy speaks of an increased awareness of and confidence in pursuing reconciliation. Of the five sessions, she says, “it made me aware that perhaps I might face more diverse kinds of situations or opportunities than I have faced, as some of them talked about, the families and the turmoil that’s gone on there.” She states that she has not encountered family turmoil in her ministry, “but I can see where it would” be a possibility in the future. “And having those, understanding forgiveness better, and understanding those three . . . kinds, steps, phases, whatever, of forgiveness, I think will help a lot I’d be better equipped to and feel more confident about getting more involved in resolution with perhaps some conflict.”

Three of the participants directly speak of their enhanced awareness of the importance of relationships and thus of reconciliation. In responding to the question, “How might your pastoral care be different now?” one participant writes, “With regard to forgiveness I would stress that

more than the two individuals are involved in an offense. The extended family who may have allegiance to the other connected party. I think it's important to include all these parties in the process."

Another participant writes in general terms: "There has to be a willingness to forgive, to face, to relate. Forgiveness is a process, it is ongoing. Practicing it can lead to peace, reconciliation." For another, the question evokes both a practical and a theological response: "I would not be as reluctant to reach out to someone suffering unforgiveness and/or relationship breaches because of the tools gained through this study. I have benefited from this focused study, reflection, and interactive discussion. I have realized we are all connected and all should relate to each other."

As a commentary on participant responses regarding reconciliation, none of the participants' comments, oral or written, reflect awareness of the relational and thus reconciliatory aspect of Holy Communion. In the Episcopal Church, the pastoral function of reconciling is enacted every time Holy Communion is celebrated, yet none of the participants expressed the Episcopal Church's strong focus on this reconciling theology. In other words, the act of corporate worship finds its deepest roots and broadest branches in the experience of sharing in the bread and the cup. Corporate worship is not merely a social convenience but a theological and spiritual expression and reality of God's presence among God's people. Mitchell writes (1985) that this worship manifests the nature of the Church as the body of Christ; thus, "the most important role for everyone [whether bishop, priest, deacon, or laity] is to be the celebrant community" (p 129). This action is more than symbolic; it is "liturgically impressive" and "theologically significant" (p 130). Writing specifically of Communion, Price and Weil (1979) declare: "We best discover and enter into the depths of our own private, unique existence before

God in the company of our neighbors. Holy Communion is a deepening of all our personal relationships: with God first, but with our neighbors also, as an inseparable part of the same action” (p 210).

There is no way to know whether the participants say nothing about the profound meaning of this central congregational activity because they already assume it or because they were not attending to it at the time they wrote these responses. It is nonetheless an important regular resource for reconciliation for active Episcopalians.

Some of the comments in the above section, in which participants state their interest in or intent to change their caregiving in some way, leads to discussing ways to identify changes in pastoral practice. To that discussion we now turn.

Theological Reflection’s Influence on Caregiving Practices

None of the participants reported making any specific change in a pastoral practice. Rather, they indicated changes they desire, plan, and hope to make in the future. In one sense, then, the data might demonstrate that no changes in pastoral practice occurred. Changes did indeed occur, however, if we view the notion of change from a more textured vantage point. One such vantage point is Prochaska’s Transtheoretical Model of Change.¹⁴ I used this model for identifying change in practices.

Prochaska’s Model: Lens for Identifying Change

This model “describes how people modify a problem behavior or acquire a positive behavior.” It contends that change involves much more than action; action is only one of five

¹⁴ This overview of Prochaska’s change model is taken from the website of the university where the model was developed; <http://www.uri.edu/research/cprc/TTM/detailedoverview.htm>.

stages of change. Furthermore, this model also contends that change is not an event but a process, a series of phenomena that occur through time. Change, then, is a process that involves development through the five stages. It is a model of intentional and individual change, rather than a model focusing on external factors, such as social and biological influences. As such, it addresses thoughts, feelings, and behavior, and relies on self-report.

In this model, action is the fourth stage, preceded by the precontemplation stage, the contemplation stage, and the preparation stage, then followed by the maintenance stage. These stages are fairly self-explanatory. In the precontemplation stage, persons do not intend to make a change in the next six months. They usually avoid addressing their high risk behavior—not talking, reading, or even thinking about it. In the contemplation stage, persons intend to make a change in the next six months or so. They are cognizant of the pros and cons of the change, but are more drawn to the cons, which can promote a strong ambivalence and procrastination.

In the preparation stage, persons intend to make a change soon, usually in the next month. Often they have taken some important action in the preceding year, and they have a plan of action. In the action stage, persons make specific explicit changes to their life-style in the past six months. In the maintenance stage, persons working to prevent relapsing back to an earlier stage. They employ change processes less frequently than do persons in the action stage. Their confidence in continuing the change increases, and they are less tempted to relapse.

While this model is designed to address high risk behaviors, I think it is nonetheless useful for identifying aspects of change in “normal” populations, to include lay pastoral caregivers. By viewing change as a process rather than an event, some of the participants’

comments can be understood as reporting on some of the phenomena of change that occurs over time.

Changes According to Prochaska

From this vantage point of Prochaska's change model, the participants seem to be at Stage 3—the Preparation (Ready) Stage, in which persons tend to take some action within 30 days. Although I did not ask persons to bracket their responses with any time frame, such as 30 days, I still find this model useful for its complex and temporal approach to change.

The influence of theological reflection on the participants' pastoral practice appears to consist mainly of two kinds. One is an increased awareness of opportunities to engage persons in forgiveness opportunities. The other is numerous reports of contemplating and planning on general and specific changes and/or additions to their pastoral care practices. Details of these findings follow.

Theological Reflection's Influence: Preparing for Caregiving Changes

The single most direct exploration of changes in pastoral identity and practice was elicited by the brief handout, "Exploring Pastoral Caregiving Actions," which included two questions. The first question was, "What do you want to do differently as a caregiver . . . OR . . . What do you want to do more of?" The second question was, "How might your pastoral care be different now?" These questions invited the participants to move into Prochaska's Preparation (Ready) Stage. The same invitation was offered through another question, "How might your pastoral care be different now?" (from another handout). Their written responses indicated that they were indeed planning to do something different. One common behavior of persons working

in Stage 3 is telling family and friends that they want to change a behavior; this question created a forum for participants that is similar to telling one's family and friends.

Most of those plans reported in participants' responses, however, were general in nature rather than specific. The distinction here between general and specific plans could be a distinction between an objective and a task: a task is a specific action taken to help meet an objective. If this distinction is valid, then these comments report on new or renewed objectives in pastoral practice; the specific tasks done to achieve these objectives are not specified. Thus, one person wrote, "This experience will help in knowing what to say in many situations" yet did not give any specific examples. Another person wrote, "I would not be as reluctant to reach out to someone suffering unforgiveness and/or relationship breaches" but, again, gave no details. Again, a participant stated, "Making the person who you are caring for comfortable & gaining trust in you!" And another: "Be better prepared to answer their spiritual questions." And yet another: "I want to be more open & discerning to those I am pastoring." These responses seem to be objectives—general in nature—rather than specific tasks. And they seem consistent with Prochaska's Stage Three.

Several of the participants identified an interest in using their theological reflection skills as they provide care. One person wrote, "I probably tend to use my background profession as I see individuals—I could improve this by being more theologically based—perhaps integrating the two. Be more aware of including scripturally based interactions." The writer sees the value of her/his "background profession" and wants to find ways to integrate it with scripture and theology.

Another participant wants to “utilize and reference the pastoral themes & the theological connections in determining how to proceed.” One response displays awareness of and interest in Johnson’s model of theological reflection: “Do more listening, analyzing, interpreting . . . and acting.” Another response exhibits appreciation for two of Pruyser’s seven pastoral themes (which Johnson uses in her model): “Try to better understand the foundation of the person’s life: (1) what is sacred or holy or totally beyond everyday life for the person? (2) Does the person see God as having an interest in or opinion about the persons’ concerns?” One person’s comment, without naming any of the theological language of the project, seems to be renewed in her/his interest in theological and/or spiritual themes: “I would like to be able to discuss with clarity and encouragement questions of eternal life and concerns during serious illness and/or impending death.”

One participant’s very detailed written comment represents the most comprehensive statement of the participants on readiness for change in both pastoral practice and pastoral identity:

I need to gather together all my past pastoral care knowledge and experience to be most helpful and competent in preparing for each assignment, so that I go to it with confidence, all needed knowledge, and the needed attitude for that case. (Ask needed questions, give good responses, pray meaningfully, plan any needed follow-up). Success will be in doing God’s will! Our preparation should avoid any pitfalls, guilt-laden ministers. We must forgive ourselves when calls do not feel successful to us. We do the footwork; God completes the job.

The writer sounds committed to thorough preparation for and execution of a pastoral care call/visit, as (s)he understands preparation. The response includes some specific practices (though they could include much more detail, variety, options, etc.)—“Ask needed questions, give good responses, pray meaningfully, plan any needed follow-up).” Written at home before

the fifth and final session, it seems to indicate the influence of theological reflection during the project.

In summing up, Prochaska's model of change greatly enriches the notion of change and thus allows me to recognize change in more textured ways than we often see. The participants' responses indicate many of them at Stage Three, planning on a specific change soon. Others' comments reflect contemplation of change—Stage Two. Their experience in theological reflection did not have any specific changes, but it did stimulate contemplating and planning for changes.

This chapter explored the possible contributions of the participants' theological reflection on their thinking about caregiving practices. This exploration used two lenses for viewing the participants' many comments. The first lens is the four classic functions of pastoral care from Clebsch and Jaekle—healing, sustaining, guiding, and reconciling. This lens provided a way of recognizing and discussing the various kinds of pastoral care the participants reported providing. The second lens is the psychologist Prochaska's five-stage model of change, which asserts that change involves much more than a specific action. Through the lens of this model, change did not occur with the participants as specific behaviors; rather, change occurred in terms of the participants contemplating and planning for specific behavior changes.

To review chapters four and five, my perceptions and chosen lenses indicate that theological reflection seems to have contributed to the participants' pastoral identities and their thinking about caregiving practices. Whether the theological reflection occurred implicitly, as it seems to have done before the project, or explicitly, as it apparently did during the project, the participants' comments demonstrated the usefulness of theological reflection in contributing to

their formation. The changes here are small, and this seemingly minor nature of the changes need not invalidate my conclusion that theological reflection stimulated pastoral formation for the participants. The project ended 29 days after it began, which means that it was short in duration—short enough to likely evoke only minor noticeable contributions. Longer projects, I suspect, would likely evoke more easily noticeable and more significant contributions to formation. In its own context, this project appears to indicate that facilitating theological reflection for lay pastoral caregivers did contribute to the formation of both their pastoral identities and their caregiving practices.

CHAPTER SIX: CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

This project grew out of the conviction that one of the tasks of ordained clergy is to help enhance the ministries of the laity. Ordained clergy certainly perform “first line” pastoral care, such as leading worship, giving sermons, planning and conducting outreach and mission projects, and offering guidance and comfort to persons in the various transitions and tragedies of life. Ordained clergy also, however, provide a kind of “second line” care, that of encouraging and assisting in the development of other pastoral caregivers. Graham et al. (2005) go so far as to say that educational developments in the West have resulted in a view of Christian ministry that simultaneously reduces the importance of ministry as applying expertise while increasing the importance of ministry as “facilitating the vocation of all Christians” (p 5). This “second line” of care—this task of facilitating—is the focus of this project: to explore one way in which ordained clergy might develop pastoral identity and enhance pastoral practices among a congregation’s lay pastoral caregivers.

In light of this focus, my research question was: How does facilitating theological reflection for lay pastoral caregivers contribute to the formation of both their pastoral identities and their thinking about caregiving practices? Each chapter of this paper responded to a successive portion of the proposal. This chapter begins with a summary of the project and a review of what I learned.

A Summary and Review

Chapter two introduced the history and potential of theological reflection and provided historical and theological contexts for lay pastoral caregiving. It noted that theological reflection is an ancient and often implicit activity, growing in explicit use in recent years. Lay pastoral

caregiving is rooted in the broader setting of lay ministry, which suffered much neglect in past centuries in the Anglican tradition but now enjoys renewed emphasis.

Chapter three discussed theological reflection as a process of formation, using adult learning theories as lenses for understanding the process. Adult learning theory provides a way of recognizing the importance of the participants' own experience in their pastoral formation before the project began, when theological reflection functioned implicitly. The effects of implicit theological reflection were displayed in the "disorienting dilemma" stories recounted by two of the participants, and the humanist outlook helped describe the implicit growth experienced by two participants, which also occurred before the project began.

By using a specific model during the project, participants reflected theologically in an explicit manner, and two distinct adult learning theories allowed me to perceive two major dynamics of this reflection. One, the participants' reflection occurred in a social/interactive context; they listened and learned from each other. Two, out of this context, participants constructed their own meanings as a result of their theological reflection. I concluded then that theological reflection contributed to these caregivers' formation by inviting them to construct individualized meanings within the social context/experience of the project. This conclusion supports the importance of adult pastoral theological reflection as a formation experience for lay pastoral caregivers.

Chapters four and five responded to the question, How did theological reflection possibly contribute to the caregivers' pastoral identities and their thinking about caregiving practices? Chapter four reported on pastoral identity, based on my perceptions of participants' comments. Their comments seem to indicate "before" and "after" features to their pastoral identities. That is, some of their statements point to two aspects of their pastoral identities which were formed at

the time the project began. These two aspects are: one, their passion and commitment for pastoral care, and, two, their prizing of relationships in pastoral care. Some of the other comments, from four of the participants, discuss specific influences on their identities as a result of the project. Thus, the participants' formation before the project seemed somewhat uniform—the passion and commitment and their prizing of relationships—whereas their formation stimulated by theological reflection during the project seemed customized to each person's particular values and self-perceptions at the time.

Chapter five reported on caregiving practices, using two lenses for viewing the participants' many comments. The first lens was the four classic functions of pastoral care from Clebsch and Jaekle—healing, sustaining, guiding, and reconciling. This lens provided a way of recognizing and discussing the various kinds of pastoral care the participants reported providing. The second lens was the psychologist Prochaska's five-stage model of change, which asserts that change involves much more than a specific action. Through the lens of this model, change did not occur with the participants as specific behaviors; rather, change occurred in terms of the participants contemplating and planning for specific behavior changes.

In sum, then, my perceptions and chosen lenses indicate that theological reflection seems to have contributed to the participants' pastoral identities and their thinking about caregiving practices. Whether the theological reflection occurred implicitly, as it seems to have done before the project, or explicitly, as it apparently did during the project, the participants' comments demonstrated the usefulness of theological reflection in contributing to their formation. Any changes seem small, and this seemingly minor nature of the changes need not invalidate my conclusion that theological reflection stimulated pastoral formation for the participants. The project ended 29 days after it began, a short period—short enough to likely evoke only minor

noticeable contributions. Longer projects, I suspect, would likely evoke more easily noticeable and more significant contributions to formation. In its own context, this project appears to indicate that facilitating theological reflection for lay pastoral caregivers did contribute to the formation of both their pastoral identities and their caregiving practices.

Questions About Exploring Pastoral Formation

This section presents questions and reflections about research on pastoral formation. It first offers questions I ponder as I have reflected on my role in the project, to include a report of missed opportunities for exploring formation influences with three participants. Then the section presents questions about the potential of formation research in other contexts and foci. It concludes by discussing pastoral leadership and formation in terms of selection and maturity.

Questions About This Project

One question I have about conducting this project involves the effects I had on the participants' responses. That is, how did my questions influence participants' responses? How might they have answered differently if I had worded questions differently? The questions were designed to invite open-ended responses, to elicit not "yes" or "no" but to summon forth the participants' own ideas and views. In spite of this intent, did I inadvertently limit their range of possible responses by the way I framed questions?

Another question I've pondered is, What might I have done differently that could have enhanced their experience with theological reflection? As I reported earlier, the participants clearly struggled with Analyzing, the second movement in Johnson's model. I did not anticipate this struggle; I did not expect them to flounder with it, to feel confused and lost about how to

analyze a moment. Could I have anticipated their difficulty and been better prepared to help them with the model?

In pondering this question, a resource came to mind that possibly could have helped me do a better job in assisting the participants to reflect theologically. If I were doing this project again (and I plan to do something like it with my own parish's caregivers), I wonder how Nancy Ramsay's table of assumptions informing diagnosis (Ramsay, 1998) might help me. Ramsay's table provides a highly useful overview of philosophical and ethical assumptions made by three major psychological/systemic paradigms (medical-psychiatric, humanistic-growth psychology, and transgenerational family systems) and also offers a paradigm from a Reformed ecclesial perspective. She delineates each paradigm with nine distinct and common features, such as the nature of the human, the individual in relation to the community, and guiding values or worldview. This table allows readers to compare specific assumptions from each paradigm. For instance, for the topic, "Nature of the Human," each of the three major psychological/systemic paradigms view human being as a bio-psycho-social phenomenon, but they differ on human motivation.¹⁵ Ramsay's Reformed ecclesial paradigm views human being also endorses human being as a bio-psycho-social phenomenon but adds a spiritual component and sees motivation in terms of a conflict between trusting God's love care and refusing that trust.

I wonder how the table could assist persons doing reflection, particularly at Johnson's second movement—Analyzing. That is, the table identifies many common options and thus frameworks for understanding the dynamics of a situation. The table might help persons to recognize some of their own implicit assumptions, as well as provide them with four major

¹⁵ In the medical-psychiatric paradigm, humans are motivated by conflicting drives, where humans are motivated by a single drive toward self-fulfillment in the humanistic-growth paradigm and by conflicting forces for togetherness and individuality in the family systems paradigm; Ramsay, p 50.

perspectives for analyzing a situation. Persons engaged in reflecting theologically could consider, for example, what views of human nature they hold, implicitly or explicitly. To what extent would the Reformed ecclesial paradigm, with its assertion of conflict between accepting and refusing trust in God, appeal more to these pastoral caregivers than the psychological paradigms? When might they, however, “also find insight from a psychological paradigm that revises theological perspectives”? (Ramsay, p 56). Based on my perception that my project’s participants struggled significantly with identifying resources and frameworks, Ramsay’s table could be highly useful. Additionally, I think Ramsay’s table would also be useful in Jennings’ third order reflection, because it presents four sets of norms that clearly influence theological proposals.

Missed Opportunities: Potential Disorienting Dilemmas

A further question I have about my role in the project is, What important stories and influences might have emerged if I had paid more attention to short reports from three participants? These reports seemed to have the potential of involving a disorienting dilemma, which, according to Mezirow’s theory of adult learning discussed in chapter three, stimulates persons to transformation, a process that seems congruent with pastoral formation. Exploring these stories with them would have allowed us to enrich our understanding of the effects of these events on their pastoral formation.

One of the participants referred to her daughter’s childhood battle with leukemia, which she survived. Did this prolonged event, involving numerous visits to doctors and hospitals, provoke a disorienting dilemma in her? Her spouse, who also participated in the project, did not mention their daughter’s illness at all. The mother’s report of the event does not seem to

indicate a disorienting dilemma. Yet how scary and disorienting must such a family crisis be? Are her statements, about the reassuring effect of her faith, retroactive—made 30 years after the crisis, with her daughter now a healthy adult and working with her in their own small business? As the interviewer, I could have invited her to talk more about that crisis and her fears for her daughter's life. I could have maintained my awareness of Mezirow's "disorienting dilemma" construct and used it as a lens for hearing her story. Without more information from her, however, I cannot draw a clear conclusion.

Another participant story has the potential for involving a disorienting dilemma, but the details for verifying it as such were missing. It was another missed opportunity for me. Alice told of moving her mother into her home after she was diagnosed with Alzheimer's disease. Her mother asked Alice, "Where is our church?" Or, "I want to go to church." Alice's commentary on her mother's interest in church is, "She got us back into church." I could have explored this event, which sounds like an important turning point for Alice, both in terms of her own reactions to her mother's progressively deteriorating illness as well as in terms of changes in her relationship with this local faith community. Looking back on her statement, "she got us back into church," I see it as a pivot point, a key shift in her lifestyle, which would include a shift in her life perspective as well. This kind of change, a move from "out of church" somehow into active and varied involvement with her parish, would require an enormous change in perspective and lifestyle. Was such a change a result of facing the disorienting dilemma of her mother's illness in the renewed context of her local faith community? I don't have enough information to know. I missed the opportunity to notice the potential here. I could have attended to this statement, but I missed it; I let it pass.

I missed a third opportunity to explore a potential disorienting dilemma. One of the participants' had lost an adult child a few years ago through suicide. Did this tragic death bring on a disorienting dilemma for the participant? His brief comments about the death did not indicate a dilemma. I did not pursue it, either.

My observation here about the potential for growth-stirring disorienting dilemmas in these participants' stories helps me note an important aspect of theological reflection. That is, theological reflection begins with Attending, paying attention to a selected event and/or experience. The overlooked potential in these stories highlights the challenging nature of Attending. Attending does not happen automatically; it occurs as a function of perspective. Attending has to do with seeing, and seeing has to do not so much with "what's there" but with "what I notice." Attending, then, involves the challenge to notice. This challenge reminds me of the statement I first heard 30 years ago: "If the only tool you have is a hammer, everything looks like a nail." I need to possess and use a variety of tools, a spectrum of perspectives. What an irony that I had read about disorienting dilemmas before the project began, yet I didn't notice the potential for them in these three stories.

To summarize, these short reports from three participants could indicate a transformative experience stimulated by a disorienting dilemma, an experience important to their pastoral formation. If we had explored their stories further, I wonder what the participants and I might have discovered about their personal challenges, perspectives, and their pastoral formation.

Questions About Other Projects and Settings

What might studies similar to this one discover about theological reflection and lay ministry formation? This project certainly cannot make any universal claims about the influence

of theological reflection on lay ministry formation. Thus, how might outcomes vary if I facilitated this same project with another group of lay pastoral caregivers? What results might surface if other ordained clergy facilitated similar experiences with theological reflection with groups of lay caregivers? What else would emerge that might illuminate understandings of formative processes and even about the nature and practice of lay ministry?

Similarly, what might occur with formative processes if participants engaged in such theological reflection for an extended period of time instead of this brief four-week period? Adult learning theory endorses developmental learning, learning that occurs over time as adults critically reflect on an idea and/or situation and then formulate and enact a behavior based on that reflection. How might a longer period of group reflection stimulate formative processes? Further, what might happen if caregivers reflected theologically on a regular basis—weekly, monthly, quarterly? If they continued reflecting as a group, social learning theory predicts that they would benefit from each other's ideas, stories, etc.

To shift the focus to the other role in this project, I ask how might the identity and practices of ordained clergy be affected if they engaged regularly in facilitating theological reflection for others, lay and ordained?

Instead of focusing here on possible influences on the lay ministers, I am curious about influences on the ordained ministers. Clergy's experiences in facilitation would affect them in ways that are difficult to predict but, I believe, would enrich their respect for lay ministry and for the many gifts, wisdom, and skill that laity bring to their ministries. Similarly, what are current attitudes of ordained clergy regarding ministry—both for laity and for themselves? To what extent do clergy endorse Graham et al.'s spectrum of ministry (expertise on one end and

facilitation on the other end)? Do clergy see this spectrum as a threat to their work? As a relief (e.g., “Finally I get some help!!”)?

Given the opportunity, how might I encourage ordained clergy to facilitate lay ministries? Would I use a didactic approach: “here’s what needs to happen”? Would I use a prophetic approach: “We must do this to fulfill our vocations!” Would I use facilitation, e.g., “What do you believe about lay ministry and its formation? How are clergy involved?” Is each approach useful and effective in specific contexts? Are didactic and prophetic approaches effective only when time is limited? Is facilitation better than the other two? I would like to imagine, for instance, that clergy could enjoy the same sense of relief, excitement and learning from group experiences of reflection that my nine lay participants felt. I must use caution, however, in making assumptions; I need to allow any future experiences I would have to inform me.

Now that I have discussed these questions about my role in the project and about other possible projects, in the next section I ponder questions about pastoral formation and leadership. Do persons choose this ministry, or are they chosen by other faith community leaders? What role does their pastoral maturity play in selecting and providing ministry?

Questions About Leadership and Formation

How did the participants in this project get involved in caregiving? Based on their reports, some were invited and encouraged to do so. Did some of them volunteer? This question falls outside of the purview of this project, but doing the project evokes this question in me, in light of my own leadership role in my parish. How are persons chosen for this ministry? Should they volunteer? Should they be chosen, based on leaders’ assessments of their aptitude and related achievements? These questions possess relevancy for me in my current situation, and I

suspect other clergy face similar situations. That is, in the parish I serve part-time, a person has volunteered to provide lay pastoral care, but the lay leader of the care team and I feel concern about this volunteer's own psychological and social maturity. This kind of ministry needs persons who can give to others without expecting anything in return. This volunteering person, in the several years of involvement in our parish, exhibits a strong tendency to take rather than to give, and to voice unrealistic expectations from the parish.

There is evidence in the Second Testament of both styles—choosing and being chosen—for acquiring new leaders. In the primitive church, for example, the acknowledged leaders (“The Twelve”) instructed “the whole community of the disciples” to choose a group of workers “whom we may appoint to this task” of daily food distribution. The choice was made by the entire community and then validated by the leaders. Yet in one of the Pauline letters is a reference to persons who are aspiring to leadership, so the writer lists several descriptors for those desiring leadership. Possibly both dynamics were at work: leaders and communities might have considered a person who expressed an interest. Yet, leaders and communities might also have observed ministry achievement and potential in persons who did not express an interest, and then invited such persons to take on the ministry.

The same dynamics between choosing and chose could function today as well. For example, one of the participants states that his work in lay pastoral care began when someone told him that she believed he would function well as a caregiver. By his account, he had not considered caregiving until she encouraged him to consider it. My own parish recruited lay persons as teachers for a children's chapel program. Some persons volunteered (responded to the parish-wide call for help), and some persons I specifically asked to help. All of these persons have shown skill, ability, and consistency in this program. The clergy in my parish have

discussed lay leadership at various times. One of those ongoing conversations has focused on the parish's overall leadership needs and opportunities. We bring up names of specific persons and talk about their potential, their demonstrated abilities, their motivation, and their availability.

The interaction between choosing and chosen can create unfortunate tension and unpleasant outcomes. A particular layman in my parish has eagerly and consistently volunteered to provide a specific task for more than four years. The parish pastor has received numerous complaints from several parish members during the past three years about this man's behavior. The complaints charge that he interacts with others with a stern authoritative manner, leading to some persons refusing to work with him. Because his work occurs in the context of worship, most of the clergy and parish have witnessed this unacceptable behavior for themselves.

The pastor has worked patiently with this man for three years, hoping that his interpersonal manner would improve. The man's behavior, however, remains the same, and he consistently defends it. The pastor made the difficult and important decision to cease this man's performance of this lay work. As of this writing, the man gives no indication of understanding how his behavior affects others and no interest in improving it.

Whether a person volunteers for this ministry or is asked to consider it, another question I ponder is, Are persons more likely to involve themselves in pastoral care ministry if they are retired or do not work outside the home? Of the nine participants, at least six of them no longer work for an income. Clearly when a person's lifestyle includes a fair measure of uncommitted time, the person at least has the opportunity to volunteer for lay ministry. This trend seems consistent with the pastoral care team at my parish. This trend toward retiree volunteerism displays itself also in the men's group at my parish, in which the majority of active members are

retired. Maybe this trend simply means that retired persons might be more available for the ministry but not necessarily more inclined to provide it. If this interpretation is accurate, then it reminds me not to overlook persons who work outside the home as potential prospects for this and other lay ministries. After all, most of the persons providing other lay ministries—choir, worship assistants, teachers, etc.—are not retired.

I have already noted that a person might move into lay pastoral care after serving their community in several other ways. Thus another question I have is, In what way(s) might their prior (and, in some cases, continuing) volunteer/lay work in the parish contribute to their pastoral formation? For instance, Dorothy spoke of doing a little, then doing more, then getting asked to do yet more; both her confidence and her joy grew. Is there an implicit and informal “formation” process for lay pastoral caregivers? Do persons who eventually involve themselves in caregiving precede this ministry with performing others, which help form their pastoral identity? Do other church leaders, both lay and ordained, look for persons with these kinds of experiences? My project did not explore this possible social dynamic.

To summarize, this section presented questions and reflections about research on pastoral formation. It first offered the questions I ponder as I have reflected on my role in the project, to include a report of missed opportunities for exploring formation influences with three participants. Then the section presented questions about the potential of formation research in other contexts and foci. It concluded by discussing pastoral leadership and formation in terms of selection and maturity. I now turn to discussing the four anticipated contributions I identified for the project before it began. How did the project influence my four anticipated contributions?

Anticipated Contributions of This Project

Recall that I anticipated this project could contribute to pastoral ministry in at least four ways. First, the project could demonstrate that lay pastoral caregivers can enhance both their pastoral identities and their pastoral caregiving practices. Second, I wanted the project to demonstrate the viability for clergy of developing lay leadership through theological reflection, not only reflection on forgiveness but also on any number of other topics. Third, the project could imply that caregiving among members of a local faith community can be enhanced through theological reflection. Fourth, the project could have implications for faith communities beyond the local level, as districts, synods, regions, and dioceses explore the potential of theological reflection for their leadership. Now that the project is completed, how do I perceive that these four anticipated contributions fared?

First, the project could have demonstrated that theological reflection can enhance lay pastoral caregivers' pastoral identities and their caregiving practices. I believe the project did demonstrate this outcome. As I noted earlier, the results are small in scope, based on the short duration of the project. Nonetheless, these results are noticeable and notable, supporting the importance of adult pastoral theological reflection as formative for lay pastoral caregivers.

The following three points highlight this demonstrated value of theological reflection for the participants. One, it revealed the importance of personal experience in the pastoral formation of each participant before the project began. This pastoral formation occurred through implicit theological reflection; the participants reflected subconsciously. Two, in contrast to their implicit reflection before the project, they reflected theologically in explicit ways during the project. Though they expressed confusion and uncertainty at first, they later voiced some

confidence and satisfaction with Analyzing, the challenging second movement of Johnson's reflection model. Third, during the project, their ongoing pastoral formation was fostered primarily through their individual meaning-making in the context of their social interactions.

The second anticipated contribution has to do with other clergy facilitating theological reflection for lay leadership. My experience in this project validates the potential for other clergy and laity to have similar experiences. The semi-humorous aphorism, "If I can do it, anyone can do it," carries some truth in it. Facilitating theological reflection is clearly a complex and challenging task; indeed, as Graham, et al. state, it has emerged in recent years as one of the basic ministries for ordained persons to perform. The complex and challenging nature of this ministry "of facilitating the vocation of all Christians through process of understanding, analyzing and reflecting" (Graham, et al., p 5), however, need not discourage clergy from undertaking it. When clergy put to use resources and attitudes such as included in the Appendix below, they can feel some confidence for managing their hesitation, and they can thus contribute to the enhancement of others' vocations.

The third desire was that the project could imply that caregiving among members of a local faith community can be enhanced through theological reflection. In an Anglican context, as I noted earlier, this hope emerges theologically out of the claim that the Church is "a sacramental community of people who are being formed and nurtured by God's care . . . and who are thereby enabled to care for others" (Griffiss, 1985, p 1). Thus, all Church members are called to care for others. This third anticipated contribution also emerges out of my claim that theological reflection often occurs implicitly, without persons' awareness. This reflection, though subconscious, nonetheless enhances persons' spiritual formation, and this formation can sometimes include interest and skill in caring for others. That is, any member of a faith

community undertakes theological reflection, whether explicitly or implicitly, at various times during their faith journey, and this reflection could enhance their interest in and skill in caring for others.

This desire that members of local faith communities, through implicit theological reflection, can enhance their own caregiving was illustrated, I contend, in the stories of Dorothy and Paul. Each of them took on lay pastoral caregiving after providing various other lay ministries in their parishes.

Dorothy speaks explicitly that her lay ministry began with other activities: “I see my role as a lay pastor in doing whatever I can do as a fellow Christian . . . to help someone.” After an unspecified period of providing help to others, she was invited to become a lay pastoral caregiver. Her comments point to theological reflection, carried out implicitly, as influencing her to increase her range of ministry tasks; she describes feeling a great sense of reward in helping others on a long-term basis: it’s been “a real blessing to see how they deal with some of the serious things they deal with—illnesses and incapacitation.” I think that her perception of these persons’ responses to such challenges activated her implicit theological reflection, which then influenced her pastoral identity and her caregiving further.

Paul’s journey toward lay pastoral caregiving was preceded by years of providing other forms of lay ministry, to include the highly visible and responsible one of leading worship on Sunday mornings (Morning Prayer, not Holy Eucharist) in the absence of a priest. Furthermore, he states that pastoral care has “always been there; it just was never labeled as pastoral care. . . . If someone needed help, then you went and would do what you thought you could do.” I believe that Paul’s many experiences in leading worship and meeting needs provided ample

opportunities for implicit theological reflection, which then would enhance his pastoral identity and caregiving.

This desire for the project—that faith community members can enhance their caregiving through implicit theological reflection—is being realized currently with at least one person in my own local parish. The implicit theological reflection of one of the long-standing lay leaders seems to have led to her decision to assume leadership for an important program with far-reaching pastoral care influence. Her vision exemplifies the broader notion of pastoral care, the two pastoral care tasks Reed identifies: one, pastoral care educates, developing people's understanding of their faith; two, it promotes ethical and moral behavior, as people explore ways to express their faith responsibly, socially, and courageously.

This woman's theological reflection was stimulated, I contend, by her attending to her young grandchildren's growth and development . They have reached primary school age and have received little religious education. She herself was reared in this parish and recalls her own experience with an active religious education program for children and youth of all ages. In the years before her grandchildren were born, the parish's population of young persons dwindled, with a resulting decrease in religious education venues for them. In the last several years (since their birth), however, that population has increased significantly. Two months ago during the three worship services one weekend, this woman noted this increase and challenged the parish to respond by providing education opportunities for these young persons. Three weeks ago, she told me that she had been pondering and praying about what could be done; she concluded that she herself could assume a leadership role in meeting this perceived need. She stated that she will accept the duties of what parishes sometimes call "Christian education coordinator."

I believe that her decision can be understood as Acting, the fourth movement of Johnson's theological reflection model. I also believe that this decision was preceded by Johnson's other three movements. That is, she was first active in Attending, paying attention to the experience of her grandchildren with religious education, an experience that was hampered by the parish's lack of offerings for her grandchildren. Then, she was active in Analyzing, pondering this experience in light of various frameworks: personally, she was convinced of the value of her own early religious education; from history and theology, she perceived the importance of such education in the development of persons of faith; ethically and sociologically, she wanted her grandchildren to acquire religious resources to assist their many decisions as responsible citizens; pedagogically, she knew that religious education in parish settings requires long-range commitment, vision, and participation of several responsible and capable adults. This Analyzing then affected her Interpreting: what might all this mean? Even though she has already devoted many years to the parish in a variety of roles (parish board chairperson during the selection of the most recent rector; chair of the recent capital campaign; religious education teacher, etc.), and even though she and her husband are retired, her Interpreting included an awareness of her own potential for contributing to a renewal of the religious education program. Thus, in the Acting movement, she has volunteered to head up this renewal. She wants to contribute to the broader context of pastoral care in this parish.

In sum, then, this woman demonstrates the influence of implicit theological reflection on lay persons' willingness and commitment to provide pastoral care. Her concern for her grandchildren's religious education stimulated her to reflect theologically, resulting in a decision to provide leadership in (using Reed's delineation of pastoral care tasks) educating persons in the faith and in promoting ethical/moral behavior.

These three examples—Dorothy, Paul, and the woman in my parish—illustrate the influence of theological reflection engaged implicitly. What might occur if members of faith communities engaged in theological reflection explicitly? If members of my parish, for instance, reflected theologically, personally and/or interactively, with the guidance of someone skilled in facilitating theological reflection, how might that experience influence their sense of identity as parish members called to care for each other? My hope is that many lay persons can benefit from the practice of explicit theological reflection. The influence of theological reflection on laity is not limited to pastoral caregivers. Any interested person can engage in reflecting theologically, and I believe the experience(s) can enhance her/his identity and practices as a responsible member of a faith community.

The fourth anticipated contribution was that the project could have implications for faith communities beyond the local level, as districts, synods, regions, and dioceses explore the potential of theological reflection for their leadership. In these broader arenas, the possibilities seem promising for encouraging and enacting theological reflection as an ongoing part of leadership development. Below I cite two national examples and one local example of such possibilities already in operation.

Theological reflection is already operating, both implicitly and explicitly, within two parish-supporting programs in The Episcopal Church. Each program focuses on a particular experience or moment, to use the language of Johnson's reflection model. That is, each program emerges from *Attending*, the first movement in Johnson's model: a particular moment that raises questions or issues. What do we notice, and why does it attract us?

Thus, one of these programs, Fresh Start,¹⁶ attends to the moment of clergy leadership transitions within a parish. Certainly such a transition leads to much Acting, Johnson's fourth and final movement in her model. Fresh Start's goal, then, is to assist the new clergy, the lay persons (the congregation), and the diocese to engage in thoughtful Analyzing and Interpreting, both of which will significantly influence the Acting movement, which, in this context, involves the ways lay leadership and the new clergy work together in the mission of that congregation. The Analyzing movement in Fresh Start uses three explicit frameworks, which the program calls "three key principles": the theory of transition, the importance of relationship-building, and the need for self-care. Lay leaders from the parish, along with the new clergy leader, explore their future ministries together in light of these frameworks. Theological reflection in Fresh Start might occur more implicitly than explicitly.

Another Episcopal program that exemplifies the use of theological reflection is CREDO.¹⁷ Using Johnson's model again, CREDO begins by Attending to the question of vocation for clergy: "Who am I? Who is God calling me to be?" The stated mission of CREDO points to the fundamental place of theological reflection in the program: it offers people opportunities "to examine significant areas of their lives and to discern prayerfully the future direction of their vocation." CREDO engages in Analyzing through frameworks such as self-care, time management, and calling. This Analyzing leads participants into Interpreting, "a discernment and visioning process", which then leads to the Acting movement--a CREDO plan: "a personal covenant . . . a personal baseline and strategy for effective implementation." Theological reflection in CREDO might occur more explicitly than implicitly.

¹⁶ <http://bloy-house.ladiocese.org/fresh-start-for-lay-leaders.html>. See also www.episcopalfreshstart.org

¹⁷ www.episcopalcredo.org/

One local example of this broader arena for doing theological reflection is my own efforts within my diocese. Along with my work in one parish for this project, I have been in conversation with a lay leader in another parish to provide a similar experience for some of its lay leaders. Also, my diocese's annual convention accepted my proposal to enact a shorter version of this project, but bad winter weather led to cancelling all workshops, including mine. In spite of the cancellation, two parish pastors have spoken to me about their interest in facilitating a similar project with their congregations. Additionally, the lay pastoral care team of my own parish is ready for me to carry out a similar project with them in the context of new leadership—a new care team coordinator as well as myself. I believe that further personal opportunities in the diocese will continue to surface.

To sum up these four anticipated contributions, I believe that the project helped both to validate the potential for and to recognize some realizations of theological reflection for laity and clergy in various contexts. First, chapters three, four, and five provide significant discussion about the contribution of theological reflection to the nine participants. Second, my experience as facilitator stands as one effort that can encourage other clergy toward similar projects, in fulfilling their facilitation ministries. Third, the comments of two of my participants and the story of one of my own parish's lay leaders demonstrate the influence of implicit theological reflection on lay members of faith communities. Fourth, the usefulness of theological reflection beyond the local parish level is illustrated with two national Episcopal programs and with my own diocesan-level efforts.

“How might your pastoral care be different now?” was the last question to which participants provided written responses. One person writes, “I look at pastoral care with a much larger scope now.” Another participant states, “I can reference theological connections for

questions from my people.” Someone else writes, “Being more attentive to the ‘why’ of behavior--encouraging more questions from the people.” Each of these responses, it seems to me, exemplifies major influences of this project on the nine participants. Their vision of pastoral care was broadened. Their theological resources were enhanced. Their attentiveness to their “flock” was enriched.

These influences occurred in the context of theological reflection. Clearly, the length and intensity of their engagement with theological reflection was brief. Five 90-minute sessions is too short a time for lay pastoral caregivers—or maybe anyone, for that matter--to develop adequate skill and comfort with theological reflection. That period, however, was long enough to demonstrate for them the value of theological reflection and to excite and interest them in its value. That period was also long enough to stimulate their pastoral formation a little and to elicit comments that indicate some possible influences on the participants’ pastoral identity and practice.

This project grew out of the conviction that one of the tasks of ordained clergy is to help enhance the ministries of the laity. Ordained clergy certainly perform “first line” pastoral care, such as leading worship, giving sermons, planning and conducting outreach and mission projects, and offering guidance and comfort to persons in the various transitions and tragedies of life. Ordained clergy also, however, provide a kind of “second line” care, that of encouraging and assisting in the development of other pastoral caregivers. This “second line” of care—this task of facilitating--was the focus of this project: to explore one way in which ordained clergy might develop pastoral identity and enhance pastoral practices among a congregation’s lay pastoral caregivers.

Thus, this project emerged out of my firm belief in the significance of lay ministry in all of its expressions. May this project serve to encourage clergy to facilitate and laity to engage in the formative process of theological reflection.

REFERENCES

- Alder, LG (1969). "Training of Laymen for Ministry through Ordinary Conversation." *The Journal of Pastoral Care XXIII:2*, 65-76.
- Aleshire, DO (1995). "What Should Pastoral Identity and Pastoral Calling Mean?" *Journal of Supervision and Training in Ministry 16:22-28*.
- Bicknell, EJ (1955). *A Theological Introduction to the Thirty-Nine Articles of the Church of England*. Third ed rev by Carpenter, HJ. London: Longmans.
- The Book of Common Prayer and Administration of the Sacraments and Other Rites and Ceremonies of the Church Together with The Psalter or Psalms of David According to the use of The Episcopal Church*. 1979. New York: The Church Hymnal Corporation.
- Brookfield, SD, & Preskill, S (1999). *Discussion as a Way of Teaching: Tools and Techniques for Democratic Classrooms*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Brown, SR (2005). "Functions of Theory in Pastoral Care and Counseling." In Ramsay, NJ, expanded edition ed., and Hunter, RJ, general ed., *Dictionary of Pastoral Care and Counseling* (p 1273). Nashville: Abingdon.
- Browning, RL, and Reed, RA (2004). *Forgiveness, Reconciliation, and Moral Courage: Motives and Designs for Ministry in a Troubled World*. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans.
- Burton, AL, & Weinrich, CA (1990). "So Great a Cloud of Witnesses: The Use of Family Systems Process in Forming Pastoral Identity & Facilitating Pastoral Functioning." *Journal of Pastoral Care 44:4*, 331-341.

- Clebsch, WA, & Jaekle, CR (1967). *Pastoral Care in Historical Perspective: A Study with Exhibits*. New York: Harper Torchbooks.
- Cross, FL, & Livingstone, EA, eds (1978). *Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church*. Oxford: University Press.
- Dick, Bob (2005) "Grounded theory: a thumbnail sketch." [On line] Available at <http://www.scu.edu.au/schools/gcm/ar/arp/grounded.html>
- Enright, RD (2001). *Forgiveness is a Choice: A Step-by-Step Process for Resolving Anger and Restoring Hope*. Washington, DC: American Psychological Association.
- Flanigan, B (1992). *Forgiving the Unforgivable*. New York: MacMillan.
- Fowler, JW, & Hahn, NF (2005). "Identity." In Ramsay, NJ, expanded edition ed., and Hunter, RJ, general ed., *Dictionary of Pastoral Care and Counseling* (pp 565-567). Nashville: Abingdon.
- Garson, GD (2008). <http://faculty.chass.ncsu.edu/garson/PA765/grounded.htm>.
- Graham, E, Walton, H, & Ward, F (2005). *Theological Reflections: Methods*. London: SCM Press.
- Griffiss, JE (1997). *The Anglican Vision*. Cambridge, MA: Cowley.
- Griffiss, JE, ed (1985). *Anglican Theology and Pastoral Care*. Wilton, CT: Morehouse-Barlow.

- Hartung, BM (2005). "Technique and Skill in Pastoral Care." In Ramsay, NJ, expanded edition ed., and Hunter, RJ, general ed., *Dictionary of Pastoral Care and Counseling* (pp 1255-56). Nashville: Abingdon.
- Hefling, C, & Shattuck, C, eds. (2006). *The Oxford Guide to the Book of Common Prayer: A Worldwide Survey*. Oxford: University Press.
- Hess, ME, & Brookfield, SD, eds. (2008). *Teaching Reflectively in Theological Contexts: Promises and Contradictions*. Malabar, FL: Krieger Publishing.
- Howe, L (2000). *A Pastor in Every Pew: Equipping Laity for Pastoral Care*. Valley Forge, PA: Judson.
- Johnson, A (2003). "With All Your Heart, Soul, and Mind: Deepening Theological Reflection." *Journal of Supervision and Training in Ministry* 23:70-83.
- Jones, LG (1995). *Embodying Forgiveness: A Theological Analysis*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans.
- Knowles, MS, Holton, EF, & Swanson, RA (1998). *The Adult Learner*. 5th ed. Houston, TX: Gulf Publishing.
- Kung, H (1967). *The Church*. Garden City, New York: Image Books (Doubleday).
- Littel, FH (1976). *The Macmillan Atlas History of Christianity*. New York: MacMillan.
- MacQuarrie, J (1977). *Principles of Christian Theology*. Second ed. New York: Scribners.
- Magnuson, CM, & Enright, RD (2008). "The Church as Forgiving Community: An Initial Model." *Journal of Psychology and Theology* 36:2, pp. 114-123.

- Marshall, JL (1994). "Toward the Development of a Pastoral Soul: Reflections on Identity and Theological Education." *Pastoral Psychology* 43:1, pp 11-28.
- Marshall, JL (2004). "Methods in Pastoral Theology, Care, & Counseling." In Ramsay, NJ, ed., *Pastoral Care and Counseling: Redefining the Paradigms* (pp 133-154). Nashville: Abingdon.
- Marshall, JL (2005). *How Can I Forgive? A Study in Forgiveness*. Nashville: Abingdon.
- McCullough, ME, Pargament, KI, & Thoresen, CE, eds. (2000). *Forgiveness: Theory, Research, and Practice*. New York: Guilford Press.
- Merriam, SB, & Caffarella, RS (1999). *Learning in Adulthood: a Comprehensive Guide*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Mezirow, J (2000). *Learning as Transformation: Critical Perspectives on a Theory in Progress*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Mitchell, LL (1985). *Praying Shapes Believing: A Theological Commentary on the Book of Common Prayer*. Harrisburg, PA: Morehouse.
- Moorman, JRH (1980). *A History of the Church in England*. Third edition. Harrisburg, PA: Morehouse.
- Moss, CB (1957). *The Christian Faith: an Introduction to Dogmatic Theology*. London: S.P.C.K.
- Patton, J (1985). *Is Human Forgiveness Possible?* Nashville: Abingdon.

- Patton, J (1995). *From Ministry to Theology: Pastoral Action and Reflection*. Journal of Pastoral Care Publications.
- Price, CP, & Weil, L (1979). *Liturgy for Living*. The Church's Teaching Series. San Francisco: Harper & Row.
- Pruyser, PW (1976). *The Minister as Diagnostician: Personal Problems in Pastoral Perspective*. Philadelphia: Westminster.
- Ramsay, NJ (1998). *Pastoral Diagnosis: A Resource for Ministries of Care and Counseling*. Minneapolis: Fortress.
- Ramsay, NJ, ed (2004). *Pastoral Care and Counseling: Redefining the Paradigms*. Nashville: Abingdon.
- Richardson, A (1958). *An Introduction to the Theology of the New Testament*. New York: Harper & Row.
- Thompsett, FH (1998). "The Laity." In Sykes, S, Booty, J, & Knight, J, eds. *The Study of Anglicanism*. Revised edition. London & Minneapolis: SPCK/Fortress, pp. 277-293.
- Thompson, RW (2008). "Facing Each Other: A Pastoral Theology of Forgiveness Between Marital Partners." Unpublished Th.M. thesis, Brite Divinity School, Texas Christian University, Ft Worth TX.
- Thornton, EE (2005). "Pastoral Identity." In Ramsay, NJ, expanded edition ed., and Hunter, RJ, general ed., *Dictionary of Pastoral Care and Counseling* (pp 567-68). Nashville: Abingdon.

Tisdale, JR (2005). "Humanistic Psychology: Theories and Research." .” In Ramsay, NJ, expanded edition ed., and Hunter, RJ, general ed., *Dictionary of Pastoral Care and Counseling* (pp 546-49). Nashville: Abingdon.

Townsend, LL (2004). "Ferment and Imagination in Training in Clinical Ministry." In Ramsay, NJ, ed, *Pastoral Care and Counseling: Redefining the Paradigms* (pp 109-131). Nashville: Abingdon.

Trueblood, E (1952). *Your Other Vocation*. New York: Harper & Row.

Worthington, Jr., EL (1998). *Dimensions of Forgiveness: Psychological Research and Theological Perspectives*. Philadelphia & London: Templeton Foundation Press.

<http://www.uri.edu/research/cprc/TTM/detailedoverview.htm>.

<http://bloy-house.ladiocese.org/fresh-start-for-lay-leaders.html>

www.episcopalcredo.org/

www.episcopalfreshstart.org

APPENDIX

1. Recruitment Letter to Participants
2. Consent to Participate in Research
3. Informed Consent Document
4. The Assessment Tools: the open-ended questions and the Likert-scale statements.
5. The Case Studies
6. Learning Feedback Survey (for end of 2d & 3d sessions). Purpose: to elicit participant feedback that will help me enhance and clarify my guidance and their group processes.
7. “Pulling It All Together” Handout. Purpose: to prepare participants for final session.
8. Exploring Pastoral Caregiving Actions
9. Description of the Five Sessions
10. Reading Assignment References
11. Abigail Johnson’s Model of Theological Reflection.

1. [RECRUITMENT LETTER]

December 2009

Hello, Member of St. Francis in the Fields' Pastoral Care Team:

This is a short note inviting you to volunteer for a research project designed for pastoral care team members. The project is the final step in my Doctor of Ministry degree program and focuses on the personal and professional development of lay pastoral caregivers, such as you.

If you decide you want to take part, here's what's involved. We will meet at the parish for five separate 90-minute sessions (no more than once a week) for a total of 7 and one-half hours. We will read short pieces on the topic of forgiveness and discuss them together. We will share with each other our own ideas and experiences with forgiveness, both personally and as pastoral caregivers. There will be two short questionnaires to fill out before and after the five sessions, plus a one-on-one interview with each of you (30 minutes or less) we will do sometime after the fifth session. The project will explore how the readings and discussions (sometimes called theological reflection) might affect our sense of who we are and what we do as pastoral caregivers.

Other than the time for reading and the sessions themselves, there is no cost to you for this study. There is also no form of compensation for participating. If you decide to withdraw from the study once we get started, you may do so with no penalty.

Again, this is voluntary; participating is not a requirement for your pastoral care ministry. If you are interested in taking part in this study, please contact Sandy Wood at St. Francis in the Fields, 502.228-1176 or email her at swood@stfrancisinthefields.com

Thank you for considering this project!

For now,

Robert Thompson

St. Luke's Episcopal Church

(You might remember seeing me on Sunday mornings in April, May, and June, assisting Robin and Debbie in worship, as part of my Anglican formation process).

2. CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH

Title of Research: THEOLOGICAL REFLECTION FOR LAY PASTORAL CAREGIVERS: INFLUENCE ON IDENTITY AND PRACTICE.

Funding Agency/Sponsor: St. Francis in the Fields Episcopal Church; Harrods Creek, KY.

Study Investigators: Joretta L. Marshall, Ph.D., professor of Pastoral Theology and Counseling, Brite Divinity School; Rev. Robert W. Thompson, St. Luke's Episcopal Church, Anchorage, KY.

What is the Purpose of the Research? To study how your awareness of your pastoral identity and your skills in caregiving might be influenced by theologically reflecting on forgiveness.

How many people will participate in this study? Six to twelve persons will participate in this study.

What is my involvement for participating in this study? To participate in this study, you will meet with all the other participants together at the parish facilities for five sessions at 90 minutes per each session. Before and after the five sessions, you will fill out two questionnaires designed to record your personal views of and experiences with forgiveness, both personally and in your pastoral ministry. During each session, you will engage in group discussions designed to help you think about your views of and your experiences with forgiveness. The researcher (Robert) will provide specific guidelines for the discussions (such as respecting every person's opinions). Contributing to the discussions is encouraged but voluntary. After the fifth session, you will meet with Robert for an interview lasting 30 minutes or less; during the interview, you will be invited to share your thoughts about the experience. The interview will be audio-taped for Robert's research. You are free to withdraw from the study at any time.

How long am I expected to participate in this study and how much of my time is required? The study involves five sessions of 90 minutes each, for a total of seven and one-half hours; those five 90-minute sessions are all that is required. The sessions will occur at a rate of no more than once a week. The sessions might occur weekly or they might skip a week or two at times, based on holidays and other competing requirements. We will consult our schedules early and plan the dates for the five sessions.

Is my participation voluntary? Yes, your participation is voluntary. You should not feel pressured or forced to take part in the study.

Will I be given a copy of the consent document to keep? Yes, you will have a copy of the consent document to keep. This is required by federal law.

Can I stop taking part in this research? Yes. You may stop participating in this study at any time with no penalty to you or anyone else.

What are the withdrawal procedures? First, contact the researcher, Robert, 502.365-4144 (home) or 214.924-6288 (cell). Second, Robert will provide you with a withdrawal form, which documents your choice to stop participating in the study. Third, you sign the form and return it

to Robert. Fourth, Robert will return to you any questionnaires you might have already submitted to him.

What are the risks of participating in this study and how will they be minimized? There is always some risk in any study. One type of risk is psychological or emotional. That is, as you think about your own experiences with forgiveness, you might remember an unpleasant or even abusive event or relationship with someone, particularly a friend or family member. Recalling such an event could stir up sadness, anger, fear, or other negative feelings. If you believe that the study surfaces an issue that you want to talk to someone about, or if the researcher (Robert) believes he notices something that could be a problem for you, we will discuss it and find professional help for you.

There is also in this study a risk to your privacy. As you think about your own experiences with forgiveness, you might share a story with one person or with the group, which leads to the possibility that someone might tell your story to someone else, which compromises your privacy. To minimize this risk to privacy, I will remind all participants in the study of the importance of confidentiality (“what is said here stays here”) and provide a confidentiality protection covenant which each participant will sign. The only exception to this confidentiality would occur if the researcher (Robert) perceived that any of you participants might be in danger of harming yourself or someone else; at that point, the researcher (Robert) has a moral and ethical duty to take steps to ensure protection and safety.

How will my confidentiality be protected? I will protect your confidentiality by designing all responses to be anonymous. The identity of each person will be protected through omitting each person’s name from the written questionnaires which she and he submit to the researcher (Robert). Furthermore, the research will look at the combined responses of the group, not of specific persons. The research will compare “before” and “after” responses of the group. Responses from specific persons will not be cited. The demographic data (age, gender, years at the parish) could be used, in this small group, to identify a participant, but will only be used to study any possible trends based on age, gender, or years at the parish. The audio-taped interviews will be restricted to research purposes only.

What are the benefits of participating in this study? This study can provide at least three benefits, all of which emerge from your five sessions of reading, pondering, listening to each other, and expressing your own views. One benefit could be the renewing of your relationships with your companions in lay pastoral caregiving; you might feel closer to each other and thus feel renewed support in your shared ministry. Another benefit could be a renewing of your personal sense of call and mission as a lay pastoral caregiver. The several activities could help you feel personally invigorated in your ministry as a caregiver. A third benefit could be an enriched view of forgiveness theologically and in your caregiving ministries; you will possibly feel more prepared theologically to help persons who seek help with forgiveness. There is also the possibility that you would complete the project and conclude that you have received no benefit from it. This outcome is always a possibility in research, so you need not feel like you have somehow failed.

Will I be compensated for participating in this study? You will receive no compensation for taking part in this study. Also, there is no cost to you for participating; all costs will be covered by other means.

Instead of participating in this study, is there an alternative procedure I can choose? This study does not provide for an alternative procedure.

Who should I contact if I have questions about the study?

Dr. Joretta L. Marshall, Professor of Pastoral Theology & Counseling, Brite Divinity School;
817.257-7575.

Dr. Christie C. Neuger, Professor of Pastoral Theology/Counseling; Brite Divinity School;
817.257-7575.

Rev. Robert Thompson, St. Luke's Episcopal Church; cell phone 214.924-6288.

3. INFORMED CONSENT
TO PARTICIPATE IN HUMAN SUBJECT RESEARCH

1. The purpose of this study is to explore how reflecting theologically on forgiveness might affect the pastoral identity and the caregiving practices of lay pastoral caregivers. The study involves human subjects who participate in weekly meetings for five weeks (no more than once a week). Participants will engage in reading, hearing didactic material, responding in writing to handouts, discussing material in group formats, and observing/doing role play.
2. Some personal risk or discomfort is possible as participants recall and reflect on personal views about and experiences with forgiveness. Such risk or discomfort is likely minimal and can be reasonably managed by each participant. All activities are designed to enhance participant's theory and practice of providing pastoral care to persons exploring forgiveness possibilities.
3. Participation in this research is voluntary, and persons who consent to participate may later choose to conclude their involvement in the project at any time without penalty. No financial compensation is offered for participation.
4. The survey taken both before and after the project will be stored in a private and undisclosed location and then destroyed after five years.
5. Confidentiality will be protected by using no participant's name or other identifying information either in written publication or in a public presentation. All survey data will be presented as aggregate numbers. Any specific quotes of individual statements will be cited as anonymous.
6. Confidentiality will be honored for all participants except in cases of potential risk or harm to participants or others.
7. The project will involve approximately eight to 14 participants.
8. If participants have questions about this research or their rights, or if participants choose to withdraw from the project, please contact: Dr. Debbie Rhea, Associate Dean for Health Sciences & Research, phone 817.257.6861; Dr Brad Lucas, Chair of the IRB, phone 817.257-6981; or Robert Thompson, researcher, phone 502.365-4144.

9. If you are satisfied with your understanding of the information in this document and agree to participate in this research project, please sign and date both copies of the form

Printed Name of Participant _____ Date

Signature _____

Printed Name of Researcher _____ Date

Signature _____

4a. ASSESSMENT TOOL: OPEN-ENDED QUESTIONS

[used at the first of session one and for the interview after session five]

1. When you think of yourself as a pastoral caregiver, what do you think about?

2. How do you understand your ministry as a pastoral caregiver? That is, what drives you and draws you to provide pastoral care?

3. What kind of spiritual activities do you engage in? How do you believe these activities influence your caregiving ministry?

4. When a person seeks your help for a difficult situation, what do you rely on to decide how to help?

5. In your own faith, what three beliefs/views really stand out as most important?

[For the post-sessions interviews:

6. Has your pastoral care giving changed any through our time together? If so, in what way(s)?]

4b. ASSESSMENT TOOL: FORGIVENESS SURVEY

For each statement, please circle the number that best represents your view.

Strongly Disagree				Not Sure				Strongly Agree
1	2	3	4	5	6	7		

- | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1. People have asked me to help them work on forgiving someone. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| 2. I've faced significant opportunities to work on forgiving someone. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| 3. At times, I've recognized another person's challenge to forgive. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| 4. I have forgiven someone for a serious hurt. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| 5. I have helped someone work to forgive another person. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |

[For #6-#11] As I seek to understand, offer, and help others with forgiveness, I value help from:

- | | | | | | | | |
|-----------------------------------|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 6. The Bible. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| 7. Our parish's views. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| 8. Psychology and counseling. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| 9. Church history and traditions. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| 10. Our society/ philosophy. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| 11. Other (name it) _____ | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |

[For #12-#15] In the process of pondering forgiveness and sometimes forgiving someone:

- | | | | | | | | |
|--|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 12. I have strengthened or enriched some of my forgiveness ideas. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| 13. Some of my deep feelings about forgiveness have changed. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| 14. I still feel puzzled/concerned about an aspect of forgiveness. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| 15. I see forgiveness differently than I did 7 or 8 years ago. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |

5. CASE STUDIES

What Do I Do?

A woman from your church in her early 40s asks to talk to you: "It's really important," she tells you, and you can see by the look on her face that she does feel burdened about something. When you meet with her, she says she needs help with forgiving an elderly man in the church. Both of you know that he was recently diagnosed with a terminal illness and has been declining rapidly.

The woman tells you that the elderly dying man has sent word to her that he wants to see her. "But I don't want to see him!" she announces emphatically. She explains that years ago she worked as the housekeeper for this man and his wife, who has since died. Though the man never threatened her sexually or physically, he consistently mocked her lack of education and her low socioeconomic status.

"I was usually pretty good at tuning him out," she told you, "but I couldn't stand it when it affected my kids." Neighborhood children, who overheard him disparaging her would then tease her children at school. "My kids used to ask me, 'Mama, are we poor? Are we stupid?' When I heard that, I felt nothing but hate for him!"

The woman later finished nursing school and stopped working as their housekeeper. Her negative feelings for him gradually faded. "But now, after all these years, he wants to see me. I don't know what to do!" She tells you that she feels a "Christian" obligation to see him, but her former resentment of him is haunting her again. She feels confused, uncertain, and afraid. "There's a rumor that he wants to ask me to forgive him." She has at least five requests of you:

She asks you, "Just what is forgiveness, anyway?"

She also wants to know what she can do to achieve forgiveness of this man.

She asks for something to read about forgiveness.

She wants you to write her a prayer she could pray to help her.

"Anything," she says; "I need any help you can give me."

FOR DISCUSSION:

1. What events and experiences in this woman's story do you want to pay attention to?
2. As you explore her situation:
 - a. What do you know and believe about forgiveness that might help?
 - b. What sources have you used to develop your understandings of forgiveness?
3. As you explore her situation, what meanings, ideas, feelings, and views are coming to you?
4. What are the woman's options? How could you help her explore her options?

A CASE STUDY

[From Marshall, J (2005), *How Can I Forgive? A Study in Forgiveness*, Nashville: Abingdon, pp 45-46.]

Isabel and Pablo have been married for almost twenty-five years. Their youngest child is about to leave home to enter college. Isabel and Pablo have spent most of their financial and emotional resources on assisting their children, and they have not attended nearly as well to their own relationship. Resentment has built over the years, with Isabel wishing that Pablo would pay more attention to their children and to her instead of to his career. For his part, Pablo has been longing to move into the upper management of the organization where he works.

Isabel and Pablo have come to an impasse recently. Pablo has been offered a position that would require him to travel more and to work away from home at times. Isabel has been looking forward to their children moving out of the house and to spending more time with Pablo. Each of them is having a hard time hearing the other person and responding to the other's wishes. The impasse is stirring up much hurt and pain. Isabel has now suggested to Pablo that they seek a separation.

A CASE STUDY

[From Marshall, J (2005), *How Can I Forgive? A Study in Forgiveness*, Nashville: Abingdon, pp 46-47.]

Eileen ended up in the emergency room of the hospital with a broken rib caused when her partner, Richard, hit her in a fit of rage. Richard had returned home after work and found the children angry and upset. In turn, Richard grew angry and took it out on Eileen, because he assumes that it is Eileen's responsibility to take care of things at home while he is at work.

This is not the first time physical abuse has occurred in their relationship. Richard never hits the children and is quick to feel remorse and ask for forgiveness. Eileen understands that Christians forgive one another and that marriage is for life. Richard believes that he is the head of the household and responsible for keeping things in order.

A CASE STUDY

[From Marshall, J (2005), *How Can I Forgive? A Study in Forgiveness*, Nashville: Abingdon, pp 35-36.]

Elizabeth is a forty-five-year-old member of your parish and teaches at a local community college. She and her two children, who are now grown, have been active in your parish for many years. Elizabeth and her husband divorced several years ago, and her parish friends walked with her through that season of grief and loss.

Recently Elizabeth's uncle died, and now Elizabeth is recognizing a bundle of feelings that lived below the surface for most of her life. She never told anyone in her family that this uncle sexually abused her. No one knew, even her former husband, that this uncle "visited" her numerous times when she was growing up. As an adult, she decided that the abuse was something in the past, and it was something she should "forgive and forget."

This strategy seems to have worked until now—now that family members and friends are talking about the love that this uncle shared with them. Elizabeth finds herself feeling anger, guilt, shame, and grief. Painful memories press on her waking hours and interrupt her sleep.

She would like to talk about the impact of these experiences on her life over the years, but she is also aware of what might happen. Will her mother feel guilty about not noticing the abuse? How will other family members react? How will they feel about her uncle, and even about her? Will her former husband say he wishes she would have told him sooner? Will some persons be angry, thinking the whole thing should be left unsaid?

Elizabeth wonders now how to forgive.

6. LEARNING FEEDBACK SURVEY

DURING OUR TIME TOGETHER TONIGHT:

-When did you feel most engaged with what was happening?

-When did you feel most distanced from what was happening?

-What action that anyone took (participant or facilitator) did you find most affirming or helpful?

-What action that anyone took did you find most puzzling or confusing?

-What surprised you the most? (that is, your own reactions to what went on, something that someone did, or anything else that happened).

(Adapted from Hess and Brookfield, p 7, pp 85-86)

[to be used at the end of sessions two and three. Purpose: to elicit participant feedback that can help facilitator to clarify methods, assumptions, etc.]

7. PULLING IT ALL TOGETHER

Take a few minutes before our final session to reflect on and write responses here.

As you think back on our group experiences, the reading, and your own pondering:

1. What two or three ideas have influenced you most?

2. How would you describe forgiveness between family and close friends?

3. How might your pastoral care be different now?

Given as assignment for fifth session.

Purpose: to invite reflection on participants' experiences during the first four sessions

8. EXPLORING PASTORAL CAREGIVING ACTIONS

As a result of our work together as pastoral caregivers:

1. What do you want to do differently as a caregiver . . . OR . . . What do you want to do more of?

2. What is a pastoral caregiver goal for you now?

9. DESCRIPTIONS OF THE FIVE SESSIONS

Session One. For this opening session, I identified four goals: one, to create a climate in which trust, respect, and curiosity can emerge as interpersonal foundations for the five session; two, to administer and collect the two pre-sessions' assessment tools; three, to introduce the process of theological reflection; and four, to prepare the participants for the next session.

We began the first session by introducing ourselves, which served to familiarize me with the participants and also probably helped to renew their familiarity with each other (later comments bore out this probability). I then focused on developing group process, emphasizing the importance of listening respectfully and maintaining confidentiality, as well as describing three kinds of discussion comments and presenting Palmer's "community of truth" model (see Appendix).

Then I administered and collected the assessment instruments, reinforcing the anonymous nature of their data by instructing them to omit writing their names on the instruments. One of the instruments elicited quantitative data, and the other elicited qualitative data; I will discuss them in detail later.

Having completed these necessary and important preliminary actions, I then moved the group into an experience of reflection on a case study (see "A Case Study in Forgiveness" in Appendix). I provided no explicit guidance for their reflection except to divide them into groups of three for several minutes, then re-assemble them for a full group discussion.

At this point, we brought this session to a close. I reviewed our activities and provided each participant with a short reading to complete before the next session. We then observed silence and recited the Lord's Prayer together.

As the group prepared to depart, enthusiasm for the session was evident in their thanks to me. One participant commented on the surprise he felt about the time going by so quickly that he didn't notice. He also stated that he had been skeptical at first but was fully engaged now, greatly appreciating the chance listen to the others and to share his own thoughts.

Sessions two, three, and four all use the same goals and format. Goals: One: To respond to participants' feedback (to clarify facilitator guidance & to enhance group processes); at the start of sessions three and four only. Two: To reflect theologically on forgiveness through a reading and a case study. Three: To give out assignment for next week (for sessions three & four, a reading assignment; for session five, a reflection/writing assignment). The basic format for sessions two through four is the same: the group will respond to the assigned reading and then reflect theologically on a case study.

Session Two. The group met the theological reflection goal first by discussing, in small groups then in full group, the short reading assigned at the end of the first session. After this discussion, I provided them the Johnson model for theological reflection and explained it to them. Then they engaged in a case study, using Johnson's four-movement model as a template for their reflection on the case study.

As a whole, the group seemed to struggle with Johnson's model. They spent most of their time in the Attending and Acting movements; that is, with commenting on what they perceived

was “going on” with the married couple in the scenario and then commenting on what they thought the wife should do. When one participant directly stated that she was puzzled by the Analyzing movement, a few other participants chimed in that they, too, were puzzled. I responded with an attempt to reassure them, stating that I believe they do use such Analyzing resources already but might do so implicitly rather than explicitly.

After this discussion, each participant filled out and returned to me the “Learning Feedback Survey” (see Appendix). I then provided them with a short reading assignment to complete before the next session. We closed with the Lord’s Prayer, which was recited first in German by one participant and then in English by the full group.

Session Three. This session began with me reporting to the participants the results of their “Learning Feedback Survey,” completed at the end of the previous session. The feedback clustered into two basic themes. First, the participants greatly appreciated their conversations; they highly valued hearing from each other. Second, they also enjoyed engaging the case study of the married couple in conflict, because they were focusing on an actual situation.

After this feedback report, the group discussed the assigned reading, first by reviewing and clarifying the main ideas, then by discussing personal reactions.

For the theological reflection part of this session, I first provided them with the handout, “Questions and Pastoral Themes,” to help with strengthening their confidence and skill in Johnson’s Analyzing movement of her model. One small group used this handout to find pastoral themes in recent lectionary Scripture readings; another small group used the handout to discern theological terms/ideas in the Eucharistic Prayers of the Episcopal Book of Common Prayer. Acting as scribe, I wrote their many responses on butcher paper for all participants to see; their verbal feedback indicated that their confidence and skill was enhanced through this exercise.

The group continued its theological reflection by focusing on a case study. As they discussed, I could hear them incorporating ideas and phrases that we have written on the butcher paper, so they seemed to be increasing their facility with Johnson’s Analyzing movement of her model.

Closing activities included giving out and the collecting another “Learner Feedback Survey,” then giving out a short reading for next session’s discussion. The Lord’s Prayer was recited first in Latin by two women, then in English by the full group.

Session Four. As with session three, this session began with me reporting to the participants the results of their “Learning Feedback Survey,” completed at the end of the previous session. As with last session’s feedback, the group expressed high value for sharing with each other. The group also expressed increased comfort with noticing pastoral and theological themes (thus, consistency in their written comments, their verbal comments, and my perception).

After this feedback report, the group discussed the assigned reading, first by reviewing and clarifying the main ideas, then by discussing personal reactions. A few participants wondered aloud about how to put into practice the main ideas in the reading.

Then I acted as scribe again for theological reflection, summarizing their comments on butcher paper. I also categorized their comments—sorting between “scripture/theology” on one side and “social science/common sense” on the other—to help them clarify their resources (or “frameworks,” as Johnson terms them). Then we focused solely on pastoral and theological themes, using recent lectionary scripture lessons and Lenten collects (prayers).

To close, I provided them with a handout, “Pulling It All Together,” to fill out later and bring back to the fifth/final session. Then we recited the Lord’s Prayer, first in Old English (clumsily!), then in modern English.

Session Five. This final session involved five goals: One: To reflect theologically on a case study. Two: To explore pastoral care practices. Three: To consolidate their learning experiences from the entire project. Four: To complete and turn in post-project assessment tools. Five: To provide for a sense of closure and affirmation for their pastoral caregiving.

The participants began this session in theological reflection, briefly on terminally ill scenario and more extensively on “Elizabeth,” a victim of sexual abuse. They noted and named pastoral and theological themes and resources, particularly regarding the complexity of forgiveness for Elizabeth, with less hesitation than during the second session, a sign to me that their awareness of such resources and their ability to recognize them has grown.

Then the participants explored pastoral practices by responding to two questions on a handout I provided them: “What do you want to do differently OR want to do more of, now as a pastoral caregiver?” and “What is a pastoral caregiving goal for you now?” To gather post-session quantitative data, they then filled out and returned to me the Likert-scale questionnaire—the same one they filled out at the first session. To add to post-session qualitative data, I collected “Pulling It All Together,” the handout I gave them at the end of the previous session. They also received a copy of six questions for the oral interviews, which I invited them to schedule with me at a later time; all of them expressed interest in participating in an oral interview.

I asked them to express any final thoughts, which elicited affirming comments about the usefulness of our five sessions together and an interest in meeting with me several months later to “check in” with each other and continue the conversation about theological reflection and pastoral care. We closed by reciting in unison a pastoral caregiver’s prayer.

10. READING ASSIGNMENT REFERENCES

Taylor, BB (2000). "Arthritis of the Spirit." In *Reflections on Forgiveness and Spiritual Growth*, AJ Weaver & M Furlong, eds. Nashville: Abingdon, pp. 87-90.

Thompson, RW (2008). "Facing Each Other: A Pastoral Theology of Forgiveness Between Marital Partners." Unpublished Th.M. thesis, Brite Divinity School, Texas Christian University, Ft Worth TX; pp 43-50; discussion of forgiveness as facing that invites, facing that clears away, and facing that enriches.

Willimon, WH (2000). "Our Kind of Crowd." In *Reflections on Forgiveness and Spiritual Growth*, AJ Weaver & M Furlong, eds. Nashville: Abingdon, pp. 79-85.

11. ABIGAIL'S MODEL FOR THEOLOGICAL REFLECTION

Four Movements

1st Movement: ATTENDING.

Attending a particular moment that raises questions or issues.

What do we notice, & why does it attract us?

2nd Movement: ANALYZING.

Analyzing that particular moment “with frameworks,

such as sociology, psychology, history, art forms, economics, and theology” (p 75).

3rd Movement: INTERPRETING.

Interpreting the analysis. Based on what we've been considering,

what might all this mean? Insights emerge.

4th Movement: ACTING

Either confirming or changing our actions based on insights of the interpreting movement.

Johnson, Abigail (2003). “With All Your Heart, Soul, and Mind: Deepening Theological Reflection.” *Journal of Supervision and Training in Ministry* 23, pp 70-83.

VITA

Robert W. Thompson served local congregations in Idaho and Virginia before serving soldiers and family members for 20 years as a chaplain in the US Army. He now works as a mental health chaplain at the Veterans Affairs Medical Center in Louisville, KY, and as associate rector of St. Luke's Episcopal Church in Anchorage, KY.